



**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, 22 Tachwedd 2006
Wednesday, 22 November 2006**

Cynnwys
Contents

- 3 Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau
Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest
- 4 Adroddiad y Gweinidog
Minister's Report
- 20 Rhagolwg ar Is-ddeddfwriaeth
Secondary Legislation Forward Look
- 20 Adolygiad Polisi Anghenion Addysgol Arbennig—Rhan Tri—Casglu Tystiolaeth
Policy Review of Special Educational Needs—Part Three—Evidence Gathering
- 26 Adolygiad Polisi Anghenion Addysgol Arbennig—Rhan Tri—Casglu Tystiolaeth
Policy Review of Special Educational Needs—Part Three—Evidence Gathering
- 33 Adolygiad Polisi Anghenion Addysgol Arbennig—Rhan Tri—Casglu Tystiolaeth
Policy Review of Special Educational Needs—Part Three—Evidence Gathering
- 43 Adolygiad Polisi Anghenion Addysgol Arbennig—Rhan Tri—Casglu Tystiolaeth
Policy Review of Special Educational Needs—Part Three—Evidence Gathering

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, Denise Idris Jones, Sandy Mewies, Janet Ryder, Owen John Thomas.

Swyddogion yn bresennol: Joanest Jackson, Cyngorydd Cyfreithiol y Pwyllgor; Vaughan Johnson, Pennaeth Dros Dro yr Is-adran Cyllido Myfyrwyr; Steve Marshall, Cyfarwyddwr yr Adran Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau; Peter McAllister, Pennaeth Addysgu, Polisi Addysgu; Elizabeth Taylor, Cyfarwyddwr, Y Grŵp Plant ac Ysgolion.

Eraill yn bresennol: Lisa Adams, Sgil Cymru; Sally Elliott, Cadeirydd, Rhwydwaith Fforwm; John Graystone, Prif Weithredwr, Fforwm; Steve Kelshaw, Coleg Sir Gâr; Gaynor Morgan, Coleg Sir Gâr; Rachel Pass, Sgil Cymru; Brian Robinson, Pennaeth, Coleg Sir Gâr; Karen Robson, Cymraes y Flwyddyn, Athrofa Prifysgol Cymru Caerdydd; Alison Shephard, Ysgol Arbennig Trinity Fields; Cliff Warwick, Pennaeth, Ysgol Arbennig Trinity Fields.

Gwasanaeth y Pwyllgor: Steve George, Clerc; Joel Steed, Dirprwy Glerc.

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

Officials in attendance: Joanest Jackson, Legal Adviser to the Committee; Vaughan Johnson, Acting Head of Student Finance Division; Steve Marshall, Director of Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills; Peter McAllister, Head of Learning, Learning Policy; Elizabeth Taylor, Director, Children and Schools Group.

Others in attendance: Lisa Adams, Skill Wales; Sally Elliott, Chair, Fforwm Network; John Graystone, Chief Executive, Fforwm; Steve Kelshaw, Coleg Sir Gâr; Gaynor Morgan, Coleg Sir Gâr; Rachel Pass, Skill Wales; Brian Robinson, Principal, Coleg Sir Gâr; Karen Robson, Welsh Woman of the Year, University of Wales Institute Cardiff; Alison Shephard, Trinity Fields Special School; Cliff Warwick, Headteacher, Trinity Fields Special School.

Committee Service: Steve George, Clerk; Joel Steed, Deputy Clerk.

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

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

[1] **Peter Black:** Welcome to the meeting. In an emergency, the ushers will indicate the nearest safe exit. Headsets are available for translation and amplification; the ushers can explain how to operate them. Members may wish to note that simultaneous translation is available on channel 1 on the headsets, while channel 0 is for the floor language. I ask everyone to switch off their mobile phones, BlackBerrys and any other electronic device, as they interfere with the transmission of proceedings.

[2] I remind Members not to press the buttons on the microphones and to wait for the light to come on before speaking so that we get everything that you say for the Record of Proceedings.

[3] I have had apologies from Irene James for the whole of this meeting, and from Jeff Cuthbert, who will be absent for the first part of this meeting. Denise Idris Jones is

substituting for Irene James for part of the meeting.

[4] **Denise Idris Jones:** I will be here for all of it.

[5] **Peter Black:** Right. Sandy Mewies will substitute for Jeff Cuthbert, until he arrives; we will then have the changing of the guards.

[6] I invite Members to make declarations of interest under Standing Order No. 4.6. I see that there are none to be made.

9.01 a.m.

Adroddiad y Gweinidog Minister's Report

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

[8] **The Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Davidson):** I am pleased, as usual, to present my report to committee. The report covers specific areas identified by Members, ongoing programmes of work, and issues of current interest. I promised to keep Members informed of our progress in introducing the foundation phase, and you will wish to note that the final monitoring and evaluation report will be published on 4 December at a national foundation phase conference at the Millennium Stadium. Committee members have already been invited to attend the conference, at which I shall be launching my action plan to build the foundation phase, which will set out the steps that we shall take leading up to, and following, the statutory introduction of the foundation phase from September 2008. Copies of both documents will be provided to all Assembly Members on the morning of the conference.

[9] I take this opportunity to inform members of the committee of the release today of guidance on inclusion and pupil support. You have been sent, I understand, an advance copy of the guidance.

[10] The consultation period for 'Appetite for Life' ended on 31 October, and I am delighted to report that we received in the region of 500 responses to this extremely important consultation exercise. Nearly 200 responses came from individuals and organisations to the main document, and I am particularly pleased to say that more than 300 responses came from individuals and small groups to the children and young people's version. Officials have also arranged facilitated sessions with Neath Port Talbot, Newport and Gwynedd youth fora, to assist in discussion about the consultation document and to gather responses. Those sessions have been very well received and are seen as a positive means of proactively engaging with children and young people on an issue that directly impacts on them. All these responses will now be analysed, and they will help to inform the development of the action plan that will follow next summer.

[11] In line with the recommendations made in 'The Learning Country: Vision into Action', I am announcing, in my report, the launch of an independent review of the further education sector. The review will be a thoroughgoing policy review, not only of the mission and purpose of the further education sector, but also the wider role of the sector in relation to post-16 development, 14-19 Learning Pathways, higher education, workplace learning and skills for the economy. I am pleased to announce that Sir Adrian Webb has accepted the invitation to chair this review. He has considerable experience, understanding and knowledge of post-16 education and public-sector reform, having been involved in work with the Finance Minister on the Beecham review. I shall write to committee members in more detail about this

matter.

[12] You will wish to be aware that the First Minister has agreed to the drafting of a dissolution Order for the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama under section 128 of the Education Reform Act 1988 and the associated funding package under Reaching Higher. This is to facilitate the proposed strategic alliance between the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and the University of Glamorgan.

[13] You will also wish to be aware that, earlier this year, our joint project between the Welsh Assembly Government and Jobcentre Plus, Want2Work, was nominated for the joined-up Government award as part of the civil service awards scheme. Although it did not make the final shortlist of three, it received a special highly commended marking. In congratulating Jobcentre Plus Wales on its achievement, the head of the civil service, Gus O'Donnell, said that Want2Work represents the type of achievement that we want to be sharing and learning from in the civil service.

[14] Finally, I have agreed to appoint the two final members of the ministerial advisory group, by public appointment. They are Professor Iram Siraj-Blatchford, who will cover early years education and care, and Mr Cliff Warwick for additional learning needs. Iram's expertise in early years education and care, from birth to seven-year-olds, and her experience and knowledge of working to counter the effects of early disadvantage, have been widely recognised as part of the evidence-informed policy and practice initiative team and the group that has evaluated the foundation phase project for the future. Cliff Warwick, as Members will already know, is the headteacher of Trinity Fields Special School and has vast experience of mainstream and special schools, and in a wide range of aspects relating to additional learning needs. I think that you are seeing him later this morning.

[15] **Peter Black:** Before we go on to the written report, does anyone have any questions on the verbal announcements? I see that they do not. Therefore, we will move on to the first item in the Minister's report, which is on counselling. Does anyone want to raise any issues on that?

[16] **Janet Ryder:** Thank you, Minister, for bringing forward this report, but I think that we are running out of things to say on this issue. We are now two years post the 'Clywch' report, in which counselling services were highlighted. You can go right back to the Waterhouse report and find counselling services underlined as being key, yet we are still in the position of drafting a strategy that is yet to be put in place. While the Minister spent a great deal of time in this report telling us how the strategy is being put together, we were also told that there will be an evaluation of the work that is yet to start. We seem to be going around in circles on this issue, Minister, without seeing any progress on the ground.

[17] I appreciate that a lot of work has been done on drawing up strategies and bringing people together to talk about them. However, when are we going to be able to go to groups, such as Voices from Care, which we saw at last night's looked-after children working group, and the many other groups that have campaigned for counselling services for years, and say, 'We are now satisfied that we know what is happening throughout Wales and how counselling is being delivered in each school'? We need to be able to say that these services are working in schools and that, where they may not be working, we are working with them on that. When will we be able to tell them how we are working with schools to ensure that the counselling services are there and that we are making young people aware of the counselling services and how to access them? How far away from that are we, Minister?

[18] **Jane Davidson:** The reason why the counselling report is on the agenda this month is that you specifically asked for it to be on the agenda. I have said to you that I would have preferred to bring this back to committee after the counselling strategy group has met in

December and decided on the consultation document. I will bring forward a further report following the completion of the work of the consultation group, which includes a large number of voluntary organisations that work in Wales, representatives from the health side and from local government and the Welsh Assembly Government.

[19] The fundamental issue is that we started from an extremely low base. When the 'Clywch' report was published, only a small number of authorities in Wales and a small number of schools had any counselling provision whatsoever. When you talk about moving from a small number of ad hoc provisions to something that will be delivered in a strategic way across Wales, substantial work has to be done. As I have said to the committee before, there are also issues related to the number of people who are available and have appropriate counselling qualifications, how we expand the number of courses available to train more counsellors for the future, how we use the opportunities that arose from the John Furlong report to free up opportunities in the higher education sector to create more counselling spaces, and how we look at that in the further education sector as well. There are large areas that need to be addressed to ensure that we move from principles to a practice that will be delivered across Wales.

9.10 a.m.

[20] Each year, we have seen an expansion of counselling activity in Wales. I have previously reported to you on the audit of the current counselling activities; that information is there. We then developed the counselling strategy group, with the very wide range of members that I have described, to take it forward to the next stage. That group will hopefully agree the consultation at its meeting on 19 December. We will then be able to bring a consultation to the committee in the new year, which will be the consultation that will go out to Members. You can make your comments on the practices within the consultation.

[21] We are also currently tendering for a research contract, because we want to look in detail at how the current counselling provision in Wales is planned, managed and evaluated. We want to know what the advantages and disadvantages are of different models, because a number of different models are operated at the moment. We also want to compare those approaches in Wales with models in place across the rest of the United Kingdom, so that we can offer a range of suitable counselling models and offer the most appropriate links across health and education, because that is a fundamental aspect of this. It is not just education provision. Since we know that one of the aims of offering good-quality counselling is that it can lead into appropriate advocacy and tackling mental health issues, we must have those links appropriately in place. We then want to pilot at least four models across Wales before we look at how we take it forward.

[22] Like you, I am impatient to get on with this. However, unlike you, I want to do the job properly. So, I am not just impatient for the sake of harrying a Minister at committee about what is happening; I want to ensure that the joint work that is going on between the voluntary and the statutory sector on delivery, delivers a high-quality outcome so that we can all hold our heads up about the delivery of the appropriate counselling facilities across Wales.

[23] **Janet Ryder:** Will the Minister tell us why, two or three years ago, post Clywch, she did not commission that research work straight away?

[24] **Jane Davidson:** If you remember, we were required to deliver within very short timescales on a number of aspects with regard to Clywch, including on legislation that we have put through the Assembly; Members have participated in both the drafting of those mechanisms and in agreeing them. There are substantial numbers of recommendations in the 'Clywch' report and I have continually reported our actions on this to committee. I have continually reported that counselling is an important area. It is not that we have undertaken no

work; we have produced an audit on where we are at the moment, which demonstrated the range of provision—the paucity of provision—and also the ad hoc nature of the way in which that provision has grown. We have established a counselling strategy group to take that forward. We are looking to deliver soundly based consultation. I will be reporting to you in the new year about taking that forward. We have put funding in place from this year's budget and next year's budget to take this agenda forward.

[25] **Denise Idris Jones:** I am sure that you are aware, Minister, that there is always counselling going on in every school, whether by the tutor during personal and social education lesson or by the education social worker. However, when there is a special case and members of staff feel that they are not properly qualified to take that further, it is important that we have the proper strategies in place to make sure that that particular child or young person—whatever their age—is counselled in a way that ensures that they will benefit from it.

[26] **Jane Davidson:** I absolutely agree. One of the issues that we will have to explore in some detail is the proposition about school-based services as opposed to local-authority-wide services. Some counselling provision on the ground at the moment is local-authority-wide provision or is provided on an even wider scale. I have previously mentioned the Eye to Eye Youth Counselling Service in my own local authority area, which goes into schools. Schools have a partnership with the independent service in terms of delivery. So, we want to ensure that models are appropriate to areas. However, we also have to ensure that there are qualified people, because we would all want to see counselling services delivered by people who are properly qualified and that people are properly qualified to deliver it in both languages, because you must make sure that counselling is available through the media of English and Welsh.

[27] **Peter Black:** Janet, this will be your last chance for a question, and then I will bring in Sandy.

[28] **Janet Ryder:** You have talked a lot about training counsellors and using the opportunities that the Furlong review might highlight in perhaps changing what were teacher training places into counselling places. However, the Furlong review was not even commissioned when the Clywch inquiry reported, so you would not have known that those training places might become available. Why did you not act then to assess the need for trained counsellors, and the impact that that would have on training facilities, and work with the sector to bring forward courses at that time? It was one of the recommendations on which Peter Clarke put a time limit. He wanted to see this being acted on within—I think—six months. It was a very short timescale, because he could see the urgency of it and that things needed to change. What has happened? Why has the timetable slipped so badly?

[29] **Sandy Mewies:** I have a quick question related to Sue Essex's response on the Beecham report. I have to say that I am probably more aware than anyone in this room of what happened during the Waterhouse inquiry and what has happened since—but not the Clywch inquiry, although I have followed that with great interest. I therefore recognise the need for counselling. There is a shortage of counsellors in this area, but whether there will ever be enough counsellors is a moot point as far as I am concerned—and I mean properly qualified counsellors rather than people who have done a three or six-month course somewhere. So, could we be looking at this issue across boundaries, perhaps across local education authorities, to provide an immediate response service? Are ideas such as that being looked at?

[30] **Jane Davidson:** We are clear that we want to take a strategic approach to this. All the voluntary organisations currently involved in delivering counselling, for example, the NSPCC in the Wrexham area, which offers a very effective counselling service, also want us to take a strategic approach, and not the kind of quick jerk on the lead that Janet always seems to want.

We want to take a clear approach to looking at how we can deliver on our obligation to the children's commissioner, which I take very seriously, which is about delivering a service throughout Wales. We are also looking at personal support mechanisms, which Chris is developing under the 14-19 agenda, which can support counselling opportunities.

[31] My colleague, Brian Gibbons, is, as you know, looking at issues around child and adolescent mental health services. Sandy, an issue that we want to look at in particular is how we can use the whole Beecham agenda in taking propositions forward that could cross local authority boundaries. The Eye to Eye Youth Counselling Service started off locally and is now looking at working in other local authority areas. The same is true of the NSPCC service. It is also important to say that our work with local government, for example, on teachers' workload and the raising attainment and individual standards in education initiative has led to local government creating local authority consortia. There are now four such consortia in Wales and local government is keen to work with us, through those consortia, to develop services. So, we are actively engaged in this agenda and I hope that Members will respond not in terms of the process, but to the challenge of delivery when the consultation paper comes out. Following our normal practice, the consultation paper will be issued, having been advised by those who are responsible for delivering on the ground in terms of how we move forward.

[32] **Peter Black:** I am now going to move on to the second item in the Minister's report, which is on the Graham review. Are there any questions on this?

[33] **William Graham:** I would just like to re-emphasise what the Minister has already picked up on, which is the diversity of need and how the funds can be properly targeted. I ask for the usual assurance that there will be sufficient money to meet the need.

[34] **Janet Ryder:** Can you confirm that this will be in place for the student intake in 2007 as was initially outlined in the Graham review? The review wanted to see this new structure in place so that part-time students had parity with full-time students in the new funding system. Can you also clarify how you intend to use the £6.4 million or £6.6 million of extra money going in on top of what is already in the budget?

9.20 a.m.

[35] Will that be the sum from which you will take the core funding for higher education? We all know that, as HE funding comes under increasing pressure, it is the part-time courses, which are subsidised to quite some extent at present, which could very well be threatened. The great fear of Heather Graham, and of the others who drew that report together, is that some of those courses may be lost, unless the funding comes forward. We will have to see how it will be monitored. While that money has to go to the HE institutions to provide those courses, a mechanism has to be brought forward. No doubt you are working that out at present, and we would like to hear more about that today. How will you monitor that money, and ensure that it is used to develop part-time HE provision?

[36] **Jane Davidson:** William, I confirm that we are looking at the diversity of need. You will remember that when Heather Graham and Robert Pearce came to the committee, they pointed out at some length that the issues around diversity of need were complex. Although we have made this major commitment in terms of part-time provision, and have put funding in place to support that—and I will come to that in a moment—what was also pointed out in the report was that, because individual institutions can set their own fee levels for part-time courses, there is a huge range of practice operating there. Vaughan Johnson, who is here today, has the unenviable task of unpicking the practice in the individual institutions, and working with the higher education sector to ensure that, as I have said in my report, when I come back to you in the new year with our propositions in response to the Graham review, they take on board fully the experience of delivery in higher education. That work is ongoing,

which is why I have not been able to bring the detail to you today.

[37] On money, it is also interesting to note that Robert Pearce, in his evidence to committee, suggested that the amount of money needed in the first year was £6.6 million, whereas we have budgeted for £10.6 million in the first year. We made the commitment, and the funding is there from 2007-08. That £10.6 million, as I have said previously in budget discussions, includes £6.5 million in additional funding in the student support heading of the budget, and £4.1 million in additional funding for the higher education intuitions. We parked that money in the 'Reaching Higher' budget because we accepted the combined support model, which meant an additional income stream to the institutions, alongside the student support mechanisms. Higher Education Wales and the sector say that they want us to be flexible about the distribution of that funding, and we are prepared to be. There is a £10.6 million budget for the delivery of this, but we are not necessarily wedded to its being £6.5 million in student support, and £4.1 million in the higher education additional funding stream.

[38] Work is going on in the higher education institutions at the moment to look at how we can use the budget that has been identified most effectively. However, you will know from the evidence that was given to committee previously that the review group requested that this operate over three years. Therefore, if we were just looking at the figures from previous years, the £6.1 million identified by Robert Pearce would have been an appropriate input. We were happy to increase that, for three reasons, the first of which relates to demography.

[39] We will see a substantial increase in the number of older people going into higher education. We all want people to go into higher education in terms of upskilling and training in the workplace. That will almost always be part time, so we know that we will see increases there. The second reason is that we want to ensure that the range of higher education provision is clearly identified. A clear recommendation of the report was that it should be clear, consistent and simple.

[40] That is proving to be a bit of a challenge at the moment, but we are aiming for the greatest clarity, the greatest consistency and the greatest simplification of the current systems, so that they are easily available to learners. One issue that the report was not able to explore in great detail, because it was a short review, was that of the relationship with employers. That will be very important in terms of the Leach review, which is coming up, the role of sector skills councils and the role of higher education in ensuring that higher level inputs also meet economic needs. So, we already have imperatives for the way in which we will drive this area forward.

[41] **Janet Ryder:** Is that in place for 2007?

[42] **Jane Davidson:** I said that in my response not three minutes ago.

[43] **Peter Black:** We will move on to item 3 in the Minister's report, the launch of 'The Learning Country: Vision into Action'.

[44] **Owen John Thomas:** Mae rhai o'r pwyntiau yn ddi-ddorol iawn, ond mae diffyg gwybodaeth amdanynt. Yr wyf yn derbyn bod popeth wedi cael ei wneud yn y llyfrynnau—er nad wyf wedi cael cyfle i'w darllen i gyd—ond mae pwynt 5, er enghraifft, yn sôn am hyrwyddo cyfnodau sabothol Cymraeg i athrawon ysgolion cynradd ac uwchradd, ac hefyd i bobl sy'n gweithio mewn colegau addysg bellach. Yr **Owen John Thomas:** Some of the points are very interesting, but there is a lack of information about them. I accept that everything has been outlined in the booklets—although I have not had the opportunity to read them all—but point 5, for example, refers to the issue of promoting Welsh-language sabbaticals for primary and secondary school teachers, as well as further education practitioners. This was identified as

oedd hyn yn rhywbeth a nodwyd fel un o amcanion 'Iaith Pawb' dair neu bedair blynedd yn ôl. Eto i gyd, nid oes sicrwydd. Yr ydych yn sôn yn yr adroddiad—nid oes fersiwn Cymraeg, felly mae'n rhaid i mi gyfieithu'r geiriau—y byddwch yn ystyried sut y byddai hyn yn helpu pobl sy'n cynorthwyo mewn ysgolion, ac yn ystyried datblygu cynlluniau tebyg ar gyfer y cyfnod sylfaen. Felly, mae rhywfaint o ansicrwydd yma. Nid oes manylion am faint o bobl a fydd yn dilyn y cyrsiau na faint o arian sydd ar gael ar eu cyfer. Nid yw'n dweud lle bydd y bobl yn mynd i ddilyn y cyrsiau, ac a ydynt yn gyrsiau rhanbarthol fel bod pawb yn gallu mynd arnynt a dychwelyd gartref yn y nos, ac yn y blaen. Mae'n anghyflawn. Yr wyf yn derbyn bod yn rhaid ichi grynhoi pethau, ond beth yr ydych yn ei grynhoi yn y fan hon? Mae'n rhywbeth ansicr, ac mae'n rhywbeth yr ydym wedi aros pedair blynedd amdano. Mae hyn, o ganlyniad, yn effeithio ar y pwynt cyntaf, sy'n sôn am gyflwyno'r cyfnod sylfaen a 'Dechrau'n Deg'. Ble mae'r manylder a'r geiriau sy'n rhoi sicrwydd inni y bydd rhywbeth yn digwydd? Pryd y bydd yn digwydd, faint y bydd yn ei gostio a faint o amser y bydd y rhaglen yn ei gymryd?

an objective of 'Iaith Pawb' three or four years ago. Even so, there is uncertainty. You mention in your report—there is no Welsh version, so I will have to translate the words into Welsh—that you will consider how this will help school support staff, and that you will consider developing similar schemes for the foundation phase. So, there is some uncertainty here. There are no details about how many people will follow the courses or the level of funding available for them. It does not identify the location of the courses, and whether they will be regional so that people who will take them can return home in the evening, and so on. It is incomplete. I accept that you must summarise the details, but what are you summarising here? It is uncertain, and it is something for which we have waited for four years. This subsequently impacts on the first point, which talks about rolling out the foundation phase and 'Flying Start'. Where are the details and the words that will assure us that something will happen? When will it happen, how much will it cost and how much time will the programme take?

[45] **Denise Idris Jones:** In point 3 you mention introducing revised curriculum and assessment arrangements from 2008. Is this for GCSE, where you will be introducing less coursework? I think that you need to look at certain subjects, because with a subject such as English language or literature, it is important to have coursework. If pupils are going to write an essay, they can start the essay with guidance from the teacher but they can write the essay at home. I do not think that there is a problem there.

[46] Going back to Owen John's point on a sabbatical for teachers to go away to learn Welsh, how long would that sabbatical last?

[47] **Sandy Mewies:** On the point about where regional centres will be set up, am I right that it has already been announced where they will be set up?

[48] On the sabbatical scheme, to come at it from a slightly different angle, what funding has been considered for schools? Giving any teacher or practitioner the opportunity to go on a sabbatical is fine, and I support it all the way, but they will not be able to do it if the funding is not in place to allow cover.

[49] **Janet Ryder:** On pressing ahead with the RAISE programme, can you confirm how you intend to distribute that money? Will you use the same formula as has been used this year?

9.30 a.m.

[50] **Jane Davidson:** O ran pwynt Owen John, mae'r frawddeg gyntaf yn dangos y **Jane Davidson:** On Owen John's point, the first sentence is about the situation as it

sefyllfa ar hyn o bryd. Yr ydym yn annog pobl i ddefnyddio'r £1 filiwn y flwyddyn i gymryd rhan yn y cyrsiau sabothol. Ar hyn o bryd, maent yn agored i athrawon mewn ysgolion ac i ddarlithwyr mewn colegau addysgb, ac maent wedi bod yn llwyddiannus. Mae rhai pobl wedi mynd drwy'r cyrsiau ac wedi eu hoffi ac yr ydym yn annog mwy a mwy i fynd ar y cyrsiau. Yr wyf yn deall ein bod yn talu am gostau cyflenwi dros y cyfnod sabothol. Bydd yr ymrwymiad newydd yn creu'r un fath o gyfle i bobl nad ydynt yn athrawon ond sy'n gweithio yn y system. Bydd yr ymrwymiad hwnnw ar gyfer y bobl sy'n cefnogi athrawon, sy'n mynd i weithio fel ymarferwyr yn y cyfnod sylfaen ond nad ydynt yn athrawon. Ar hyn o bryd, mae hyn ar gael i athrawon ond bydd yr ymrwymiad nesaf yn ymestyn hynny.

currently stands. We are encouraging people to use the £1 million a year to participate in sabbatical courses. At the moment, they are open to teachers in schools and to lecturers in further education colleges, and they have been a great success. Some people have done the courses and have enjoyed them, and so we are encouraging more and more people to follow these courses. I understand that we cover the costs to schools of supply teachers during the sabbatical period. The new commitment is to create a similar opportunity for people who are not teachers but who work in the system. That commitment is for support staff and for those who will be working as practitioners in the foundation phase but who are not teachers. At present, it is available to teachers, but the next commitment will extend that.

[51] Mae'r ddogfen 'Y Wlad sy'n Dysgu—Gweledigaeth ar Waith' ar gyfer pum mlynedd. Mae'n glir iawn o ran ein hymrwymadau, ac, ar ôl iddi gael ei chyhoeddi, daw adroddiadau i'r pwyllgor a gwneir cyhoeddiadau am sut i gymryd rhan ym mhob un o'r ymrwymadau.

The document 'The Learning Country—Vision into Action' is a five-year document. It is very clear about our commitments, and, after the document is published, reports will come before the committee and announcements will be made about how to participate in each of the commitments.

[52] On Denise's question about curriculum and assessment arrangements from 2008, it will encompass all aspects of the curriculum, and the consultation on that will be issued from January 2007. That will include not just the subject issues, but all the other issues around personal and social education, the basic framework for work-related learning, and so on. The consultation on the assessment arrangements is already out, so we can feed the new assessment arrangements into the new curriculum arrangements, and, as part of that process, there will be a specific consultation on issues around coursework. Like you, as someone who used to teach English language and literature and drama, I believe that we need to keep coursework in the system in some subjects more than others. The issue is more about how we ensure that the coursework is undertaken by the young people themselves. All the awarding bodies are exploring how to ensure that with the qualifications authorities, and there will be a consultation on that next year. The proposals will be different for different subjects. Clearly, all the very practical subjects will keep the practical elements that exist now. The mathematics teachers voted almost to a person to remove coursework immediately, so that will go, but different kinds of arrangements will be put in place for other subjects.

[53] We have put £1 million funding a year into the Welsh language sabbatical scheme more broadly, which is a lot of money. We are growing those opportunities. We believe that the scheme is about the whole of the education sector, and we will be looking at the most important aspects of that provision in terms of the development of the Assembly Government's strategic vision. We already have £7 million contributing towards the training of practitioners through the medium of Welsh for the foundation phase, and we want to ensure that we can run the sabbatical funding alongside that, where it is most appropriate and most needed.

[54] **Owen John Thomas:** Mae **Owen John Thomas:** There is a big

gwahaniaeth mawr rhwng ystyried rhywbeth, gan ddweud, 'Byddwn yn ystyried hyn ar gyfer cynorthwywagedd mewn ysgolion', ac ymrwymo i wneud rhywbeth. Nid yw hyn yn ymrwymiad, gan fod ymrwymiad yn benderfyniad sicr. Ystyried y peth yr ydych yn ei wneud yma. Mae gwahaniaeth mawr rhwng yr hyn sydd wedi'i ysgrifennu yman a'r hyn a ddywedwyd gennych yn eich ateb.

difference between considering something, saying, 'We will consider this for school support staff', and making a commitment to something. This is not a commitment, as a commitment is a definite decision. It is considering that you are doing here. There is a big difference between what is actually written in your report and what you have stated in your response.

[55] Hoffwn wybod faint o bobl sydd wedi cymryd cyfnodau sabothol. Gwn fod hyfforddiant ar gyfer staff ysgolion meithrin ac ati wedi bod yn llwyddiannus iawn gan eich bod wedi cyhoeddi'r ffigurau, ond nid ydych wedi cyhoeddi ffigurau ar gyfer y cyfnodau sabothol. Nid wyf yn gwybod sut mae'r cyfnodau sabothol yn cael eu cynnal— a ydynt yn rhanbarthol neu'n lleol? Mae angen ateb cwestiynau fel hyn, ac mae angen i ni wybod sut mae'r cynllun hwn wedi gweithio. A yw'n gweithio neu beidio? Os yw'n gweithio, beth yw'r ffigurau?

I would also like to know how many people have undertaken a sabbatical. I know that the training for nursery school staff and so on has been very successful as you have published the figures for that, but you have not released any figures on the sabbaticals. I do not know how the sabbaticals are undertaken—are they undertaken regionally or locally? Such questions need to be answered, and we need to know how this scheme has been working. Has it been working or not? If it is working, what are the figures for it?

[56] **Peter Black:** Janet, did you want to come back in?

[57] **Janet Ryder:** I just wanted an answer on RAISE, and whether it will be distributed—

[58] **Jane Davidson:** Sorry for not responding to that, Janet. On RAISE, the raising attainment and individual standards in education in Wales grant, yes, it will be distributed, in the sense that we have committed ourselves to a two-year programme with the funding available. We will then move into the next comprehensive spending review and the evaluation of the delivery, and this Government remains committed to evidence-based delivery, so the evaluation will determine how funding is spent in the future. We have given the guarantee of two years, because we wanted to make it clear to people that they could develop quite substantial provisions to take that forward. So, in those two years, the grant will be delivered in the way that we have outlined previously. I know that this is supported from my dialogue with local government and the unions, and I am delighted that local authorities are looking at the consortia provision that I outlined a few moments ago. That it is a very important way forward, and it will ensure that the lessons learned from the additional funding for RAISE can be applied more widely.

[59] Owen John, pan gyhoeddais y rhaglen sabothol, yr oeddech yn ei chrosawu. Cyhoeddais yr arian a oedd ar gael a'r posibilrwydd i bobl i gymryd rhan yn y cynllun, ac mae swyddog yn Llywodraeth y Cynulliad yn gyfrifol am annog pobl i gymryd rhan. Mae hi'n gweithio gydag awdurdodau lleol, colegau addysg bellach a phrifysgolion i wneud hynny. Gallaf ddod ag adroddiad i'r pwyllgor nesaf, pe baech yn dymuno hynny, i sôn am y prosiect ac am nifer y bobl sy'n cymryd rhan ar hyn o bryd. Gobeithiaf y bydd aelodau'r pwyllgor hefyd

Owen John, when I announced the sabbatical programme, you welcomed it. I announced the funding and the possibility for people to participate in such a scheme, and an official within the Assembly Government is responsible for encouraging people to participate. She is working with local authorities, further education colleges and universities in order to do so. I could bring a report to the next committee, if you would like me to, outlining the project and the number of people participating at present. I hope that committee members will also

yn annog pobl i ddefnyddio'r cyfle.

encourage people to take this opportunity.

[60] **Denise Idris Jones:** Os yw athrawon yn cael y cyfle i fynd i ffwrdd i ddysgu Cymraeg, ac i'w dysgu yn ddigon da i fynd yn ôl i'w hysgolion i ddysgu Cymraeg i'r plant, credaf ei bod yn bwysig bod eu Cymraeg o safon uchel iawn.

Denise Idris Jones: If teachers are given the opportunity to learn Welsh, and to learn it well enough to be able to return to their schools to teach Welsh to children, I believe that it is important that their Welsh is of a very high standard.

[61] **Jane Davidson:** Cytunaf. Mae'r rhaglen sabothol, yn debyg i raglen y Fasgeg, yn dechrau gyda phobl sy'n defnyddio'r Gymraeg gartref ond ddim yn yr ysgol. Gydag amser, byddwn yn lledaenu'r rhaglen i bobl eraill.

Jane Davidson: I agree. The sabbatical programme, similar to the Basque programme, starts off with people who may use Welsh at home but not at school. Over time, we will roll out the programme to other people.

[62] **Peter Black:** Item 4 is on the independent review of the mission and purpose of further education in Wales. Minister, I think that you referred to this in your introduction, did you not?

[63] **William Graham:** This has very robust and wide-ranging terms of reference, and one agrees with those. I am just concerned about whether we can do it justice in the time that you suggest, if we are to bring a report back in January. Presumably, it will be very preliminary, but how you will edit it within the timescale of the Assembly, I do not know.

9.40 a.m.

[64] **Janet Ryder:** I agree with William that we want assurances that the timescale will be adequate to allow for consultation on such a major review.

[65] I appreciate the emphasis on courses for employment skills, and I hope that due consideration will be given to the many community courses that can bring people back into a learning situation by following courses that could lead to employment. If we lose that raft of community education, those people whom we need to come through into training and whom the Government is trying to target in communities will not come through. I know that community education is mentioned in the brief, but I hope that it will be given a strong emphasis.

[66] If we are going to extend further education down to 14-year-olds so that FE institutions deliver jointly with schools in their areas, I would want to see adequate assessments of the pastoral structures that are in place, because a 14-year-old is a vastly different person from a 16-year-old in terms of maturity and in coping with a very disjointed timetable and moving around, and so he or she would need far more support. I know that we are looking at learning coaches later on, but I want to ensure that colleges have pastoral structures in place.

[67] **Peter Black:** To follow up William's point, in the penultimate paragraph on page 6, you say that you will come to the January committee meeting with a detailed presentation of the work of the group. I take it that that will be an update report, and that you will timetable a slot for committee when the review group has a final report for us to look at.

[68] **Jane Davidson:** Perhaps I can clarify that. At this point, we have brought to you the terms of reference of the review. It is my intention that the review will carry on until July, but I thought it important for the Assembly to hear from Sir Adrian Webb the kind of parameters that he will be exploring. January is the right time to do that, because a fundamental aspect of

this will be the Leach review, which is looking at issues around the economic agenda and the relationship of all providers to the delivery of economic skills by 2020. The Leach review is due for publication before Christmas, we understand, and it will therefore be a critical point at which this committee can explore aspects of Sir Adrian Webb's thoughts on taking this review forward.

[69] As you acknowledged, Janet, we have put the role of community learning into one of the areas to be investigated, but there are many others as well. We do want to ensure that the review looks at the high-level skills issues as well as the first-steps issues of community learning. The intention is for the review to be conducted over a period of approximately six months or so, with a report produced for the Assembly Government in the early part of the autumn for discussion by the Assembly.

[70] **Peter Black:** We move on to item 5, which is the consultation on school transport. Although this is in the Minister's report, we are going to have a substantive item on this in February, and the Minister's suggestion that the Welsh Local Government Association should be at that meeting is sensible. If Members are agreeable to that, we will invite them to that.

[71] **Owen John Thomas:** May I ask a question?

[72] **Peter Black:** Yes, of course. I was not stopping the questions; I was just providing an introduction.

[73] **Owen John Thomas:** A allwch ddweud, Weinidog, a fydd yr ymgynghoriadau hyn yn ystyried y pellterau statudol y mae plant yn cael cerdded i'r ysgol neu deithio ar fws? Tair milltir ydyw ar gyfer plant dros wyth oed a dwy filltir i'r rhai o dan wyth oed. Mae rhai awdurdodau ers nifer o flynyddoedd wedi defnyddio 1.5 filltir ar gyfer plant dan wyth oed, a dwy filltir ar gyfer plant dros wyth oed. Ac ystyried y ffaith bod nifer y ceir sydd ar ein hewlydd wedi cynyddu ddengwaith ers i'r ffigurau o ddwy a thair milltir gael eu gosod, mae'n hen bryd inni ystyried hynny. Mae'n ffactor pwysig iawn o safbwynt diogelwch y plant.

Owen John Thomas: Can you tell us, Minister, whether these consultations will consider the statutory distances relating to children walking to school or taking the bus? It is three miles for children over eight years old and two miles for those under eight. Some authorities have for some years used 1.5 mile as the distance for children under eight, and two miles for those who are over eight. Given the fact that the number of cars on our roads has increased tenfold since the figures of two and three miles were set, it is high time for us to take this into consideration. It is a very important factor in terms of the safety of the children.

[74] **Peter Black:** It would also be useful, Minister—most probably, when you come back in February—if you could revisit the committee's recommendations in light of the new powers that are coming to the Assembly, and what could be done by us, which could not be done before, in terms of taking these recommendations forward.

[75] **Jane Davidson:** Thank you, Chair.

[76] Diolch yn fawr, Owen John.

Thank you very much, Owen John.

[77] It sounds as if you probably have not had a chance yet to look at the consultation guidance that we have published.

[78] **Owen John Thomas:** Os cofiwch, codais y peth sawl gwaith pan oeddem yn ystyried yr archwiliad.

Owen John Thomas: If you recall, I raised this on a number of occasions when we were considering the review.

[79] **Jane Davidson:** In the guidance, which was our commitment to this committee, we laid out the Welsh Assembly Government's view of the law on school transport and set it in the context of the law as it stands, and Welsh Assembly Government policy. Therefore, it will replace Welsh Office circular 19/95, 'Home to School Transport'. It is not statutory and it is not intended to provide a definitive guide to the law. As Members will know, it is quite hard to provide definitive guides to the law, particularly when there are many areas within it for which the Assembly Government has no responsibility. It does not address the possibility of a change in the law in terms of transport, using the new powers that the National Assembly for Wales will have under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, because that needs to be subject to further consultation. However, it lays out where, on the back of the committee report, we would expect best practice from those delivering within the current legislative framework. When we come to discuss it in more detail in February on the back of this guidance, we will be able to lay out the kind of issues that people would like to see addressed in any future use of the framework powers post-May.

[80] **Peter Black:** Does anyone else have a question?

[81] **Sandy Mewies:** I had a brief look at this and the questionnaire yesterday. As I am not a member of this committee, I have not discussed it in full. However, is the issue addressed there of when school transport is not school transport? I am referring to the occasions when a service bus that is used for commuters and so forth is also used for school transport. Is there an opportunity for people to comment on that?

[82] **Jane Davidson:** There is an opportunity for people to comment on any aspect of this. Many local authorities use service provision for school transport.

[83] **Peter Black:** Okay. Are there any questions on item 6 on learning coaches?

[84] **Janet Ryder:** Obviously, this report lays out what the training will be, how to increase the number of learning coaches, and how to develop standards for them. I wish to go back to the review of further education to look at how learning coaches will work. I think that, like many people, I have been in many different settings and heard that the role of the learning coach has been put forward as the answer to many problems—it seems as if it will answer practically every problem that we can think of in the 14-plus age range. Can we just have a little more clarity on what the actual role of the learning coach will be? In terms of where they stand in the school, will they be employed by the school, the college, or a body outside those two? To whom will they be accountable within a college and a school setting, and what will their line management be? Will it be different in each setting, or will a set pattern—a preferred model—be put forward? What will be the ratio of learning coaches to students? Will it vary according to urban or rural settings?

[85] **Peter Black:** I will allow Sandy to speak first.

[86] **Sandy Mewies:** When the learning coaches are in place, who will monitor the quality and efficiency of their work, and to whom will they report?

9.50 a.m.

[87] **Christine Chapman:** I am pleased to say that the initiative is up and running. There have been some very good case studies, which have been advertised on the Assembly website. From my travels around Wales, I know that there is a good understanding now of the impact that the learning coaches will have. You have mentioned that you think that this will help with many of our challenges; it will if it is done properly. The coaches exist to support, not supplant, teachers. Learning coaches can establish really good working relationships with individual learners and help young people to negotiate their learning styles with teachers.

[88] We all know that many young people have difficulties in school. Many do not fit into the model of what we regard as being a school, so people in this powerful role will help to motivate young people and help them with their aspirations and a whole range of issues. It will be about helping young people to understand their learning styles and to overcome any barriers to learning. We want people with a good understanding of young people in this new role. The pilot shows that the coaches come from a range of backgrounds—career advisers, teachers, youth workers and adults who have a general interest. So, I do not think that we could say that they will all be the same, although they will all do the same modules. The five modules specified in the learning coach contract include the mentoring process, coaching for learning, legislation, study strategies, and referral methods and systems. That last one is very important, because, although they are not going to be doing everything, they need to understand the system in which young people operate. So, it will be a team approach.

[89] They are going to be accountable; there is no doubt about that. We are looking for quality. As you know, a great deal of money is now being given to the 14-19 learning networks, and those will be a key part of this. There will be a high level of accountability. However, I see the learning coaches as being different in different settings. Do not forget that we are including employment here. We want to reach a situation where young people who are in placements with employers will be able to call on the services of a learning coach. They will not just be for schools, but for further education and training. So, it will be different in the various settings. The main thing to stress is that the services of people in this new role will be an entitlement for all young people. So, to answer Sandy's point, there will be accountability, and we want to take this forward.

[90] **Jane Davidson:** I wish to add one further point, because I did not respond to the comment that you rightly made about the need for pastoral support in the further education sector if 14-year-olds are getting a large part of their education in that sector. Alongside the learning coaches will be someone offering personal support. There will be an item in my ministerial report next month about the way in which personal support will operate, so that you can see how the two things will operate side by side.

[91] **Janet Ryder:** I agree with Christine that this role could be crucial, and that it could change the lives of many young people who need that one-to-one support and mentoring. I hope that it will work, in some ways, like the Youth Gateway project that Careers Wales has developed very successfully, particularly in north Wales. It involves one-to-one working, which has brought young people through some problems and helped them to achieve success. However, I do not feel that you have answered Sandy's point: to whom will they be accountable? Are they part of the school structure, are they part of the college structure, or will they be accountable to, say, the local authority, which may employ a group of learning coaches? How is the management of the project going to work?

[92] **Christine Chapman:** As I said in my answer earlier, it depends on the setting. Some schools will decide to employ a learning coach, or they might work with a training provider, so it will depend. The main thing that we have to remember is that this will be a recognised qualification. The University of Glamorgan and the First Campus project have undertaken this training, so it is a recognised qualification. As time moves on, we will get more learning coaches. One of the benefits of this programme is that it is constantly being evaluated; the initial phase was undertaken with European social fund money and match funding from the Welsh Assembly Government, but obviously we need to be moving forward all the time and evaluating the programme. It is also about ensuring that people recognise the benefit of this role and prioritise it, whether it is in terms of schools, further education, or training providers for employment, because I believe that it will be a powerful way of enabling young people and helping them through their learning. There are lots of things happening already, but there is a growing recognition of the benefits of this role, and I know that schools will take to it.

[93] **Denise Idris Jones:** You have more or less answered my question, Christine, but is it possible to train to become a learning coach?

[94] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, that is happening now.

[95] **Janet Ryder:** It is my understanding that when the learning pathways were introduced, it was intended that every child would have the support of a learning coach. If you are talking about every child, you are talking about a significant number of learning coaches. You are setting this coaching in a school context, so I assume therefore that the school will become the main employer of the learning coach—correct me if I am wrong on that. Will we therefore see a significant increase in school budgets? If learning coaches are to be a permanent feature, the money has to go into their core budget rather than relying on European funding. At what stage will we see that going through, and what instructions or guidance will go out to schools on the ratio of coaches to students—if every child is supposed to have access to a learning coach from the age of 14—just as we had guidance on ratios for the foundation phase?

[96] **Christine Chapman:** This is a pilot phase, so we are looking carefully at the evidence coming back, and obviously that is the purpose of the pilot. As you know, Janet, a substantial sum of money has been handed over for the 14-19 age group, so this is going to be a budget that can be used, partly, for the purpose of funding learning coaches. To give you some indication, certainly for the pilot phase, there has been over £800,000 to cover this 19-month period of training with the university, which is ESF and match funding. The Minister has made it clear that a substantial amount of money is going into the 14-19 age group, and learning coaches are an important aspect of the strategy for that age group. There are other important aspects as well, such as personal support.

[97] On the ratio, this is something that we need to look at carefully when the evaluation comes forward. As far as I am concerned, we have not come up with a fixed number at the moment because it will depend on circumstances and settings. We need to look at the evaluation, and this is the first stage, so we can come back and report on what is happening, possibly next year. It is a new role, and we have to see what is happening.

[98] **Jane Davidson:** One point to add is that, as Christine said, she is working closely with the deliverers and this is a pilot phase, but the 14-19 networks will have to satisfy themselves that there are enough learning coaches in the right places to do the job in the local area. That is essentially the answer to the questions that you have asked today. The detail of how many learning coaches there will be, and what their workload will be like, will be explored through the evaluation of the pilot.

[99] **Janet Ryder:** Is the money going through the 14-19 pathways?

[100] **Jane Davidson:** Yes, the money is going through the 14-19 networks.

[101] **Janet Ryder:** Do they control that money and lease it out to schools? Do schools have to apply to them for the number of learning coaches that they assess as being necessary?

10.00 a.m.

[102] **Christine Chapman:** The money is with the networks—not just for learning coaches, but for the whole 14-19 programme—and work is being done on the plans for next year. There is a lot of detail that is being worked on at the moment. In fact, two weeks ago, a conference was held with network co-ordinators; they were given support from Welsh Assembly Government officials on how to prepare a business case. Do not forget that it is all

based on collaboration: the money is not available unless there is collaboration. In fact, I have had some very positive reports from that conference on the support that network co-ordinators are getting.

[103] **Janet Ryder:** What kind of formula is being used to distribute the money to the different networks?

[104] **Christine Chapman:** I do not know whether Steve wants to come in on that, but we have written to the network co-ordinators about the money for next year, so we could come back with a report on that. In fact, I think that we reported on this at the last meeting.

[105] **Jane Davidson:** We did, and no-one asked a question.

[106] **Christine Chapman:** We can write to you on that, Janet, if you would like us to do so, because it is now clear exactly how the money is being distributed.

[107] **Peter Black:** Would Steve have any more detail on that?

[108] **Mr Marshall:** No, not on the numbers relating to the actual allocations.

[109] **Peter Black:** Perhaps we could have a further report on that, once you have all the details.

[110] **Christine Chapman:** We have written to the networks and they were all made aware of the allocations at the end of October.

[111] **Jane Davidson:** We can let you have a letter, noting the funding allocations to each of the local authority areas.

[112] **Peter Black:** That would be helpful, especially if you included how the allocations were reached, using the formula and so on. That would very helpful.

[113] **Christine Chapman:** As I said, there was also a two-day conference on the funding and how the allocations have been worked out.

[114] **Peter Black:** It may be that you could summarise those two days in one letter.

[115] **Christine Chapman:** Right.

[116] **Peter Black:** I am anxious to discuss the next item because this week is anti-bullying week. Does anyone wish to comment on item 7 in the Minister's report?

[117] **William Graham:** I will just comment, if I may, Chair, that it is good that the week is co-ordinated with England, so that there can be more press publicity. That is helpful. The emphasis on bystanders, in particular, is really excellent. I just wonder whether there is any action that the Minister can take to make sure that these recommendations and the whole ethos of the anti-bullying message can be taken forward even further.

[118] **Janet Ryder:** Respecting Others Week has obviously been co-ordinated with England. In England, they have announced a step-up of the peer support programmes. I just wondered whether the Minister intended to make a similar announcement in Wales. All the evidence shows that it is peer support that seems to work best in such cases, where young people do the counselling themselves. I know that we have touched on this a number of times and that many things have happened in that field, and that Cardiff University has done a study of the strategies in different schools. Has any assessment been made of what is happening on

the ground? Schools may have a paper policy in their rack of files of policies on all the issues that they must have policies on, but the difference is made by how the policy is implemented, how it works in the school, and how it is kept under constant review. Unfortunately, again, like the counselling service, we know that the anti-bullying provision and support for those who are bullied tends to be patchy. We want to know that every child has access to good quality support.

[119] **Jane Davidson:** We must go back to the premise that all schools are required, by law, to have an anti-bullying policy. In fact, the Assembly Government has been determined to ensure that schools exercise that function. That is why we commissioned Cardiff University to do the work. It evaluated policies, not just on the basis of whether or not there was a paper policy, but on how well the groups in the school were tied in to the delivery of the policy, whether they were whole-school policies and whether they had actively been supported by pupils. That was an important piece of work. It found that the majority of schools had either satisfactory or, in some cases, good or very good policies, but some did not. We continue to work with local authorities and schools on improving that base.

[120] The second point is that Wales has been advocating peer support for a long time. I note, once again, your interest in what is happening across the border. However, I would point out that what Wales has done is to put in place statutory provisions for school councils. School councils take an extremely active role, and quite rightly so, in terms of the anti-bullying agenda. In fact, it is one of the strongest premises for their establishment.

[121] We can be confident that we have the participatory mechanisms in Wales, the commitment of the Assembly and local authorities, to ensure that we do what we can on bullying. I encourage committee members to take the opportunity on Friday to wear blue and visit a school in their local area to demonstrate their support for anti-bullying week. Both Wales and England are promoting the notion of blue Friday and particularly focusing—as you said, quite rightly, William—on the issue of bystanders, because a bystander who does not intervene helps a bully and does not help the victim. Therefore, it is very important for bystanders to intervene.

[122] Last year, we had a poster competition in the primary and secondary sector. Everywhere you go, you will see the winning posters in schools. We have made sure that the number for Childline is on those posters, because it is important that young people feel confident about reporting incidents, both in the school setting and to an independent organisation like Childline. So, we continue to take this issue very seriously indeed, not just in anti-bullying week, but every week of the year.

[123] **Sandy Mewies:** I repeat your point, Minister, that this is important this week, but that it is also important that anti-bullying policies are implemented every day of every week that children are in school. It is part of the inspection regime that they should have an anti-bullying policy and that policy should be implemented. Has any work been done on how the school estate can affect bullying? Bullying often takes place in certain areas in schools and those areas can be improved, in the same way that a housing estate can be improved, to prevent it from happening. Is any work being done to see where good practice has occurred or where funding might be needed to help schools to improve the school estate to take out these areas where young people can be bullied?

[124] **Jane Davidson:** Yes, a number of individual schools have addressed this in a couple of ways. Where they are unable to design out dark spots in the same way, as you said, as crime spots are designed out in housing estates, and where they have been unable to design out bullying in schools, schools have looked at installing, for example, closed circuit television. In that way, a spot that was in the dark comes into the light, and that issue can be addressed. However, there is also the fundamental aspect, which is that pupils need to feel

confident that their school will address bullying. I still get letters from parents and pupils—not many, but some—indicating that they do not feel that their school has addressed the issue properly. I think that we have moved on from the point where schools felt confident a few years ago to be able to say that their school had no bullying problem to a point where schools acknowledge that bullying will happen in all schools, but the response of the school is the important issue and young people have to be fully involved in those responses. So, the issues around designing safe places and safe havens—safe benches often in primary schools, where buddies can meet a pupil who will go and sit on his or her own if he is unhappy—are also very important.

[125] **Peter Black:** Okay. Thank you, Minister, for the report.

10.10 a.m.

Rhagolwg ar Is-ddeddfwriaeth Secondary Legislation Forward Look

[126] **Peter Black:** Before we move on to take evidence on the SEN review, we have the subordinate legislation programme in front of us. There are three new items relating to teacher training: the Education (School Teachers' Qualifications) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2007, Criteria for Initial Teacher Training Accreditation by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (Amendment) 2006, and the National Assembly for Wales Employment Based Teacher Training Scheme (Amendment) 2006. If anyone wants to raise anything about these in committee, please notify the clerk after the meeting and we will bring those forward.

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

[127] **Peter Black:** We have with us Rachel Pass, who is the development officer for Skill Wales and Lisa Adams representing Transition in Action. We welcome you both to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee. I remind you that there will be a verbatim record of what you say in the committee, which you will have the opportunity to look at and comment on. We will now ask you to make a brief presentation and then we will ask questions, if that is okay with you. Who wants to start?

[128] **Ms Pass:** I will start. I will base what I say today on the schools information service. Part of what we do in the Skill Wales office in Cardiff and in our London office is to provide a free phone line for disabled learners and their families to ask us any questions on entry to post-16 education, training and employment. Skill Wales has been in existence for two years and during that time we have had approaching 200 queries from Wales. The majority of those queries come directly from disabled learners themselves, but in the case of young people who are 16 and 17 years-old, the vast majority come from parents. The majority of queries are on access to higher education, which reflects what we said in our written evidence that there is no statutory requirement for a transitions plan into HE. The majority come from, or are about, disabled people who are 18 to 24-years-old, also reflecting the age when many young people with SEN leave school as opposed to at 16.

[129] Most of our queries come in September and October and after that, the most popular time is February, which reflects the start of the academic year and the start of term. That timing and the content of queries suggest that calls to our information service are often a last-ditch attempt, following a failed process. The question often is, 'What planning should have happened and what can we do now that we are at the last stage?'

[130] The queries to me in the Wales office are usually about one of two issues: funding or

equipment and resources. Often, parents or advocates of young people make the call on the move, particularly to further education, and, usually, funding difficulties arise when the child is going on to a specialist college. They nearly always find that there was no agreement on who will fund that college place and they want clarification on the legislation that applies, so that they can advocate for themselves, and on who has responsibility for what, in terms of social services and DELLS, and who funds what. They are unclear on that. They also ask us for other sources: 'We have tried DELLS and social services, so where do we go next? Where can we get funding from?'

[131] When they call about provision, they usually ask about two issues: who is expected to pay for equipment for their son, daughter or themselves to go into further education, or what to do in those cases where they have been promised equipment, told what they need and it just has not happened. Those are the two issues that they ask about most often.

[132] So, looking through all the queries that I have had over the past two years, I have reached the conclusion that, first, the system is failing at the last hurdle. For example, funding and equipment is promised, but is not delivered as expected and plans are put in place that are never realised. Both students and parents are totally unaware of the transition process—what to expect by whom and when. Parents, particularly those of 16 and 17-year-olds, are absolutely the driving force for change, because we rarely hear from the young people themselves, even sometimes when the young person has reached 18 years of age. Parents take on responsibility for getting their child the resources that they need without being trained advocates or even necessarily knowing exactly what to expect. That means that, too often, acquiring adequate support for a young, disabled person going into FE is dependent on having a very engaged, informed and tenacious parent; the young person is often disempowered through that process.

[133] I have brought Lisa Adams here today on behalf of Transition in Action, a group of voluntary and other organisations, of which Skill Wales is a member, because Lisa is, or was during her transition process, engaged, informed and tenacious; but unfortunately she is one of a minority. It is quite important that you hear her story.

[134] **Ms Adams:** As Rachel said, I am here to share my experience. I was quite lucky because my education was quite positive, but it was the employment part of my transition that was very negative. When I got my job for the NHS, I went to my local social security office to say that I would start working in a fortnight and the lady I spoke to told me to stay on my benefit and not work. She told me that I would be better off financially and that I would then have my prescriptions and dental treatment paid for, for the rest of my life. When I said that that was not what I wanted—that I wanted to work and be independent—she was shocked. She said that I was making a big mistake, and that I would lose out on a great amount of help and support. She was even more shocked when I told her that I was working for the NHS, because she had offered to write to the company that had offered me a job to tell it that I could not manage the work that it was suggesting that I would do.

[135] In my work—my voluntary work and the NHS work—I have come across many young disabled people who are going through the same system, who also do not know what transition is, and how it will affect their lives. The hard thing for these people is that they do not know how to get across what they are trying to say; that is why their parents then stand in for them, because their parents are treated as equals, rather than the disabled person. All the young people whom I have spoken to have told me that they would prefer information about higher education and employment to come from disabled people who have already been through the system, so that they can give their own, personal experiences.

[136] From the research that I have done, I have developed a website that explains what transition is, and how services can help these young people. However, the website has not had

funding yet, so it is not on the internet. That is my next goal; I will succeed in gathering the funding, and, hopefully, helping all these young people so that they do not have to go through the negative experience that I went through.

[137] Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you this morning.

[138] **Janet Ryder:** The issue of advice being given that it is perhaps better for some people to stay on benefits rather than to move on to education or into work has been raised on several occasions. Do you believe that it reveals an underlying attitude that perhaps there are some people who are best left like that, and not in work? If so, what can this committee do to change that attitude—which groups would we need to target with information? What would we need to do, perhaps with colleagues in Westminster, to change the system, so that it enables people to move on to further training, or into employment, if they want to? Apart from funding your website, how else can we enable young people to have the knowledge that they need to be empowered to take this forward?

[139] **Ms Adams:** You need to target the social security offices, because their attitude is very negative. As soon as I walked in through the door, I could tell that they just saw me as a disabled person without the skills to succeed in life. However, you also need to target the schools that these young people go to, so that they know that they are worth more than just benefits, and that they can be independent, and not live on benefits. Their families live on benefits as well, so it is a big change for the family, as well as for the young person. As for Westminster, they could do a lot by promoting a positive image of disability; there are never any positive disabled role models for these young people to look up to. If you do not see anything positive, you constantly think of yourself in negative terms. I was quite lucky, because my family always told me to go for what I wanted.

10.20 a.m.

[140] **Ms Pass:** In terms of who to target, in my written evidence I gave a few examples of disincentives given in school and college by teaching staff, who, out of compassion or just ignorance, often say ‘Don’t bother, I don’t want you to be let down’. We call for disability equality training, and much greater awareness in schools and colleges among teaching staff. Lisa had a very good Careers Wales adviser who was clued-up, which is good, but if it does not translate into what your teachers tell you, it will not work.

[141] In terms of Westminster, I think that we should keep a close eye and work closely with the Department for Work and Pensions on its welfare-to-work-type programmes, and ensure that disabled people’s needs and requirements are taken into account during that process.

[142] As for getting information to young people, Lisa’s website is a perfect example of getting young people engaged in talking to other young people, because they are the people whom they trust—those who have been through the process and, in their eyes, know what they are talking about. You get a lot of people asking you what it was like and where to find things out. If you can empower and fund our young people to give those answers, that is the ideal way of doing it.

[143] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I apologise for my late arrival; I was attending the launch of the cooking bus at a primary school in my constituency. I was very interested in the presentations, and I think that Lisa is a powerful advocate for young people who are looking for higher education or employment. I was very impressed with what you had to say. I note that the issue of compassion is referred to in the written information, as you just mentioned, Rachel. People may feel that they will have lower expectations, and that that is a compassionate or realistic stance. I can understand that, but it is not acceptable, not just because young people with

disabilities have the right to be productive and lead interesting and fulfilling lives like anyone else, but also because the economy needs that. I am pleased to say that we are moving towards full employment, and that demands that everyone who is able and willing to work is given a fair chance to prove themselves. In turn, that demands that those responsible, such as Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus, should recognise that fact, encourage people to come forward, and provide the best opportunities possible.

[144] You mentioned Careers Wales. In terms of Jobcentre Plus, with the schemes that are out there, if the managers of Jobcentre Plus were here they would say that they are training their staff to provide any extra support that people with disabilities need to ensure that they can get jobs that are suitable for them and which meet their expectations, and that they can educate employers away from some of the unfortunate prejudices that still exist in order to recognise real skills and abilities when they see it. I would be grateful if you would comment on Jobcentre Plus in that regard, because although it is not a devolved matter, it is an issue, as Janet mentioned, that we would want to take up with our colleagues in Westminster, should that be necessary.

[145] My second point is about the skills and qualifications system. It is perfectly reasonable for employers to look for young and older people to have some form of qualification that is relevant to their occupation, and we are rightly moving towards a competency-based qualification system, in which there should be no barriers whatsoever. Regardless of their disabilities, people must achieve the standards that are laid down in those qualifications, but it is accepted, in theory at least, that if special assessment needs are apparent, they are allowed for, but the standards would have to be obtained. Do you have any evidence to show that there are barriers, deliberate or otherwise, in the way of people with disabilities obtaining modern apprenticeships, national vocational qualifications and that sort of thing?

[146] **Ms Pass:** I would prefer to start with the question on qualifications, because I know more about that side. Lisa has the experience of jobcentres, so she will take that one.

[147] The difficulty in terms of gaining qualifications, as I mentioned in my oral presentation, is often around funding. Either the system is slow or the organisations running the courses are not aware of what funding is available, and that information does not get filtered down to the young person. So, the barriers are not only attitudinal, as we have been talking about, but sometimes also physical, in the sense of a lack of equipment and resources to aid someone in getting a qualification.

[148] This is particularly true of further education rather than higher education, because higher education has the disabled students' allowance, which, in theory, should pay for any adjustments over and above those that the institution provides, but colleges often complain of underfunding for their disabled students. Education and Learning Wales, as was, was looking at changing the funding system, in recognition of the difficulties faced by colleges. As I said, one query that we get asked most often is about that provision. Recently, I had a query from someone who was promised equipment that never came, and when that person asked the college why, the college said it was because, as a sector, it is underfunded. That was its excuse for why it had not put anything in place. So, the barriers are not only attitudinal, as we have been saying, there is also some kind of problem in filtering down the equipment and the resources needed to enable disabled people to undertake qualifications and courses.

[149] **Ms Adams:** As for the jobcentre, I did not get my job through it—I was doing voluntary work at the place where the job came up, so I did not know about Access to Work. It was only through speaking to an occupational therapist who works at the children's centre where I work that I found out about it. She said, 'You are sitting awkwardly in that chair. Shouldn't Access to Work come out to assess you?'. I said, 'Oh, what is Access to Work?'.

She then filled me in and, luckily enough, this was within four weeks of my being employed, otherwise you have to pay 80 per cent of the cost of the equipment that you need. An assessor came out and was very helpful. I was given gel pens with a grip, which ran out, recently, as they do. We got back in touch with Access to Work to ask it to supply me with more pens, and these pens were £12 each. However, I went to my local supermarket and got four for £4, so I do not know how it can justify those prices. Once Access to Work has given you the first lot of equipment, it expects you to pay for items such as pens with extra grips and so on, but I do not know anyone who would pay £12 for a pen.

[150] **Ms Pass:** I have to agree that the problem with Access to Work, particularly, is that people do not know that it exists. Whether Jobcentre Plus should have a role in promoting it, and be aware of that itself and ensure that disabled people are aware that this facility exists is extremely important.

[151] **Ms Adams:** I have been telling disabled persons about Access to Work when they leave school or college so that they know that it is out there.

[152] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Rachel, you said—if I wrote it down correctly—that training or education providers often do not know what funding is available. Is that right? Is that what you said?

[153] **Ms Pass:** What comes across—and I am going on the evidence of the questions that disabled people ask me—is that they are unaware of where people can go if the funding is not available through the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills or through financial contingency funds or something like that. So, what I get, as I said, is a kind of last-ditch attempt. People come to me, saying, ‘We cannot fund this, and the college says that the funding has not come through, so what do I do next?’. So, I deal with the last-ditch moment.

10.30 a.m.

[154] **Jeff Cuthbert:** That is fine. This is good evidence to show how important the Beecham review is in getting those organisations responsible for providing public services to work together far better. If that is the case, it is just not acceptable in this day and age.

[155] **Christine Chapman:** Lisa, you mentioned Careers Wales advising you in the jobcentre, but was there any mention of self-employment? The reason I ask is because I think that it is an issue and we need to talk about entrepreneurship, and I just wonder whether any advice was given to you regarding that.

[156] **Ms Adams:** No, there was no advice about self-employment, but I think that that was due to me, because I was very set in my ways when it came to talking to my careers officer. I wanted to be a social worker from the first meeting that we had, and that was all that I would ever tell her. ‘I am going to be a social worker, and I am going to work with and help young disabled people.’ So, she did not really have a chance to tell me about self-employment. I have been looking into it for the website, but I have not found that much information on self-employment for disabled people.

[157] **Christine Chapman:** I have heard that comment before, and I am glad that you mentioned it. I would be keen for the committee report to reflect on that. There are barriers, and we need to look at them.

[158] **Janet Ryder:** On some of your recommendations about the transfer of information, as we have heard from other groups, information from schools is not passed on to further or higher education institutions. What do you see as being the best form of recommendation that we can put forward to make that happen? What would help there?

[159] **Ms Pass:** There has to be some form of clarity around it. However, I do not know whether training is required or whether partnerships need to be established in local areas, because where the system works, that is informally what has happened. The local college has formed close partnerships and working relationships with local schools, the local education authority and the special educational needs co-ordinators. It works because they all know each other, they all understand exactly what is required, and they are all doing it for the young people. What they want is for that young person to have a smooth transition. So, building cross-sector bridges is the most important thing for successful transition, as well as ensuring that people understand where the Data Protection Act 1998 ends, and where it is beyond a legal requirement for that information to get to the FE college. So, I would say that the most important thing is probably cross-sector relationships, to build up sustainable and understanding relationships between the FE provider, the schools, the special educational needs co-ordinator and the local authority. The message that has come back to me from FE providers is that the problem is a disconnection between the FE college and the school.

[160] **Denise Idris Jones:** Lisa, do you think that you would have found it more useful and easier had you had a mentor when you were going through this transition period, so that, when you went to Jobcentre Plus, you could have had someone there with you to guide you?

[161] **Ms Adams:** My mum worked as what we would say a 'key worker', but I think that it would be better if a professional visitor took the responsibility away from the family, because the family has to fight for so much. If the young person has someone whom they can speak to about something that they would not necessarily speak to their parents about, it would help them with their confidence in gaining new relationships with people, and would give them the confidence to have their words heard. I think that that would be good, and I would have liked to have someone other than my mum to fight my corner as well.

[162] **Owen John Thomas:** You mentioned that you had to pay for 80 per cent of any extras that you needed in work. Is there no allowance to cover that?

[163] **Ms Adams:** I was quite lucky, as I had most of it paid for. I got my assessment done within six weeks, so they paid more than they should have, because the understanding was that I did not have the information. The rest was spent on the budget then.

[164] **Owen John Thomas:** Did you have any help or encouragement in work to develop your professional skills?

[165] **Ms Adams:** Yes. I work in a children's centre that provides services for disabled people, which I went to as a child. So, a lot of the people know what I want to do and are really supportive. In fact, I have to ring them as soon as I have finished here today. *[Laughter.]*

[166] **Owen John Thomas:** That is good. How long have you been there?

[167] **Ms Adams:** I have done voluntary work there for seven years, but I have been employed by the NHS for just over 18 months.

[168] **Peter Black:** Thank you very much for coming along. You have given clear and high-quality evidence, which will be very helpful to us in our review. We will move on to take some more evidence now, and you are welcome to stay to listen, if you so wish. It is up to you whether you wish to stay here, go out to the gallery or whatever.

10.37 a.m.

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

[169] **Peter Black:** I now ask Cliff and Alison to come to the table for the next item.

[170] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I was not here at the beginning, so I would like to make a declaration of interest in that I am a governor of Trinity Fields Special School. Both presenters are known to me, particularly Cliff Warwick. In fact, we were undergraduates together around 10 years ago at Cardiff University.

[171] **Peter Black:** Okay. I welcome Cliff Warwick and Alison Shephard from Trinity Fields Special School. I remind you that we will be taking a verbatim record of what is said here, which you will have an opportunity to review in due course. I understand that you have a PowerPoint presentation, so I suggest that you present that first and we can ask questions afterwards.

[172] **Mr Warwick:** Do I have to do anything with the microphone?

[173] **Peter Black:** It should come on automatically when you start to speak.

[174] **Mr Warwick:** Good morning, everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to tell you a little bit about what we have been doing at Trinity Fields in relation to what we think is a very special pilot initiative in improving transition for young people with learning disabilities. We decided on the title, 'Why Isn't Transition Working?' because that is what drove us to create the initiative. I believe that you have the papers in front of you, but that quote is poignant. There has been a huge emphasis from the UK Government on trying to move the social inclusion agenda further forwards, but, in our view, it has not had any significant impact on the integration and inclusion of young people and adults in their communities, if they have a learning disability. That is what we are particularly focusing on.

10.40 a.m.

[175] Here are some statistics from the Helsinki conference, which focused on issues of employment of learning-disabled people, and it speaks for itself. The world leaders, originally, were one or two Scandinavian countries and the USA. As you can see from the graph, well over 30 per cent of adults with learning disabilities have a real job across the States. Interestingly, Australia took the models that had been developed mainly in the States and to some extent in Scandinavia and combined all agencies, and, by working together, it has achieved a remarkable 70 per cent. We think that that is entirely achievable in Wales. At the moment, we are lagging behind, around the figure of 5 per cent—although the statistics are not reliable. The Welsh and the UK figures are similar.

[176] The Promoting Independence project started off as a European social fund initiative. We have some pictures for you to look at, so if you find the presentation a bit dry, there is something that illustrates it.

[177] **Ms Shephard:** The pictures are of young people taking part in real activities.

[178] **Mr Warwick:** Perhaps you can pass these pictures around, one at a time, so that you can see them in sequence. It will give you some illustration of the activities. In brief, the Promoting Independence project was driven by Trinity Fields Special School, which is the sole special school in the Caerphilly county borough. It caters for a very wide range of young people with severe and complex needs. We are talking about the most learning-disabled people in our communities. We rarely, if ever, say 'no' to a referral. This is a partnership initiative with Caerphilly education authority, Mencap Pathways, which I believe has given

evidence to this committee, and, originally, with the Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities—which did some research—and Gwent health authority. Unfortunately, the lack of funding for those two elements has meant that they have dropped out. However, it is genuinely a partnership initiative, and we will now take you through its various parts.

[179] I will not dwell on the aims, as you have a list in front of you, but those are: to increase work, leisure and social opportunities for young people with learning disabilities; to foster the greatest possibly degree of independence and participation of young people with severe and complex needs; to work towards the provision of a sustainable infrastructure of inclusive services; to create dynamic working partnerships between all relevant agencies; and to actively promote a positive culture that facilitates the inclusion of all disabled people within their communities. The backcloth to that is that none of that has been happening. You can track back youngsters who have left Trinity Fields Special School, and its predecessors in terms of other provision, and you will see that they have ended up in a career of watching day-time television and day care. We believe that that is wholly unsatisfactory. It is a complete waste of the expensive resource of special education if, at the age of 19, nothing else happens.

[180] The model is based upon the Danish curator system, and on the models in operation in the States. So, we have shaped the model around successful practice in America, Australia and Scandinavia. It is based on the normal pathways that young people follow. Right in the middle is the person. Usually, people do not need very much help with their planning when looking for their leisure opportunities or relationships, and they are anxious to move towards independent living, even if a spell as a student comes in between. Very often, they have help and guidance in deciding what sort of employment or continuing education they want. All of those things happen naturally through the options programme in the secondary schools and onwards. People take responsibility for their own social lives; they do not need adult intervention for that.

[181] For youngsters with learning disabilities, none of that happens. On the whole, they are told what they need to do, not consulted. There are no effective means of allowing them to make choices. They tend not to have leisure opportunities. Research that we did before we started this showed that, out of 55 youngsters at Trinity Fields, only two were involved in any sort of leisure activity outside their family. For teenagers, that is just not right. Virtually none move forward to independent living, when clearly they have many of the skills needed to achieve that, with the right sort of support. I could go on about the need. The team is shaped around trying to do something about that, so the job coaches are specifically working on job opportunities, and we feel that creating the post of psychology support worker was a real innovation—it has been very successful, with some of the outcomes written up in *The Times* and elsewhere. That is about working on relationships and social skills—the enabling part of our work that allows people to be given access to social inclusion opportunities.

[182] You can see that there is a person-centred plan and a peer mentoring co-ordinator, and so on. I believe that you have already received evidence about person-centred planning, which we feel is crucial. The real breakthroughs have come from America and Canada, through techniques for facilitating active and meaningful choice-making for youngsters with disabilities. You can ask a youngster, ‘What do you want to do?’, and they will say, ‘I want to be an airline pilot’. However, if they have severe learning difficulties and physical difficulties, that is something that they are never going to do. By using a process of involving other people around them, and with these new technologies and tools, we can shape something that allows them to make meaningful choices, and we feel that we have pioneered something in that regard.

[183] On the pathway to employment, the job coaches work with young people, undertake pre-vocational skill and aptitude assessments, use the person-centred information, and

identify work placements where youngsters can learn. That helps to form their choice when they have developed the skills. The job coaches support young people into jobs. Similarly, we are generating community-based youth activities whereby youngsters can gain experience of working with others, playing with others, and taking part in leisure activities. That builds their self-esteem and gives them that social inclusion. That is linked to the work that I have already mentioned on trying to develop anger management and social skills.

[184] We also link continuing education with the 14-19 learning pathways network in the Caerphilly consortium. I think that we are one of the few consortia to have actively developed courses, or to be in the process of piloting courses, that are appropriate for this range of learning disabilities, and that is clearly important. We have Leonardo funding to set up a peer-mentoring scheme and it is marvellous to see youngsters from mainstream schools and youth clubs working alongside our youngsters, independently. The mentors are trained, they get a qualification, and then they take those youngsters out to take part in independent social inclusion activities, and support them in the workplace and in schools and colleges, which really is effective.

[185] So, what have we learned? First of all, transition is not just about the time leading up to leaving school; it is about those aged between 14 and 25 at least, and probably beyond. Secondly, we feel that nothing will change unless there is genuine cross-agency involvement. We can do all that we like within education, but unless there is active co-ordination and joint working between social services, health, the voluntary sector and education, it is difficult to see things improving. We need far more work-experience opportunities. We would love to see person-centred planning formally established within Wales, and I know that there are some recommendations within the section 7 guidance, but to have something that formally establishes that for this group of youngsters would make a huge difference. We need to ensure that the 14-19 learning pathways fund this client group, and that the consortia ensure that there are courses for them, because the early indications are that they are not doing so.

10.50 a.m.

[186] We should also not forget our more profoundly disabled youngsters, and we are beginning to get success, not in employment in this instance, but in getting some meaningful activity so that they are not just put into hospital-type care, but are given a meaningful part in their community. We are also piloting schemes that are effective.

[187] If the funding stops for this project, and it looks likely that it will next summer, it is almost certain that this will not be replicated by any other form of service delivery, because we have piloted something that is not normally provided by anyone else. The project has piloted new forms of working that we think are proving very effective, particularly the support for relationships, and, when we had an occupational therapist, the work on independent mobility programmes. We were getting the youngsters to the stage where they did not need transport to go to college or to their workplace. They train, sometimes over a period of months, to take the bus, and that was successful in many cases when we had been told that it would be impossible. We are working more actively on independent living skills. We are getting the youngsters to a stage where they have a very high degree of independence. If they were then able to move into some supported living situations, there is no doubt that they would continue to learn through their twenties and have a much greater degree of independence than they currently have.

[188] Job coaching is essential. It is distinctly different to what is provided by the careers service and is not a part of normal local authority provision, although it needs to be.

[189] On specialised youth work, it is very unusual to find a youth service that provides for youngsters with this degree of learning difficulty, yet we have shown that it works. Some of

them have received Duke of Edinburgh awards, and others are actively involved in snooker clubs or whatever their interest is, such as being girl guides. So, the newest forms of service delivery need to be built into an inter-agency package.

[190] **Ms Shephard:** I think that there are two more slides, and then we are done.

[191] **Mr Warwick:** I hope that that has given you a quick insight. It is a quick insight, but we think that it is an important thing for you to consider because, overall, we are getting outcomes that were not there before, and there are youngsters in jobs and out there in the community who were not there before.

[192] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you for that presentation, which was really interesting. You mentioned the lack of work-experience placements and employers. I know that this has always been an ongoing issue, but what are the barriers, and who should be instrumental in ensuring that we get more employers on board? Is there a role for employers themselves? What types of initiatives should we undertake to ensure that this happens?

[193] **Mr Warwick:** Do you want to start with that, Alison?

[194] **Ms Shephard:** As the people who gave evidence previously mentioned, the benefits system is a big barrier, and it needs to be addressed in terms of the fact that incapacity benefit in itself is a disincentive to work, and it needs to be more about an assessment of capacity to work. There is definitely a role for employers. Promoting Independence is setting up an employers' forum. One of the new peer-mentoring projects that is currently running is all about addressing with employers what barriers they have to employment. In those initial stages of taking the leap to employ someone with a learning difficulty, which still feels like a huge leap for most people, it is about providing employers with incentives. Once they are in there, we have shown that the employers will turn around and say, 'Yes, they are fantastic; I do not know what the problem was'. One young person has been in paid employment, and the employer is now saying that he wants to go out and tell his suppliers and everyone else that this is a great thing to do, and that it has huge benefits. Once they are in there, employers are really positive about their disabled employees, but we need the incentives and the support to get them in there.

[195] **Mr Warwick:** In terms of incentives, that is something that you can learn from international models, where there are clear incentives for taking work placements and people on supported employment, so that youngsters learn. It may take some youngsters five years to master a job that other youngsters can learn very quickly, but the long-term benefit of having them in employment rather than on benefits justifies that 100 times over within the lifespan of the young people concerned.

[196] **Ms Shephard:** The next quote in your handout was that some studies have found that, after two months, the support required did not cost any more than it would if they had been in a day centre, so why not have them being economically active and getting all those social and other benefits that come from employment?

[197] **Mr Warwick:** It needs a lead, and it is difficult when you are on the ground trying to negotiate work placements, unless the expectation is out there and you have some sort of financial incentive.

[198] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I know Promoting Independence very well. Chris has already dealt with the main point that I had about the attitude of employers, so I will not go back to that. In terms of the issue of qualifications, you referred to pre-vocational training, the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network and the National Open College Network qualifications. I am not sure whether you heard all the discussion around the previous

presentation, but in terms of the system of competency-based qualifications that we now have in the UK—and we are moving more and more towards it, so it will become the norm—do you believe that there are unreasonable barriers in the way of learners getting NVQs or getting on to the qualification ladder, say at Trinity Fields, in your direct experience? Are there conscious or unconscious barriers? You have not mentioned in the bullet points whether you make use of key skills, perhaps in problem solving and communications levels 1 and 2, which are recognised—they are a part of modern apprenticeships and NVQs—and would have a degree of clout with switched-on employers. Do you find that they are of any use to you, and, if not, why not?

[199] **Ms Shephard:** There are barriers. There are now huge numbers of young people going on from special schools into further education, and there has been a huge improvement in that regard over the last few years, but that is not translating into an improvement in the numbers of people entering employment. It is not making a difference; it just delays what they would have done before, namely go into day care. So, something is not working, and I suspect that it is that those qualifications are not happening in a practical enough way or in a work placement, for example, because you need to learn those skills in a more practical way on the job. That is being missed in terms of people with learning difficulties.

[200] **Mr Warwick:** There are an increasing number of options. The NVQ framework provides the opportunity at pre-entry and entry levels. Alison is absolutely right. The trouble is that the courses that are normally provided are fairly general ones, and although they are enjoyed by the youngsters, they do not lead to specific outcomes in terms of employment. They are not linked into a person-centred plan, so that the education leads somewhere. There are courses within the learning pathways under Welsh Assembly Government policy, but they do not lead anywhere. That is no good; if a youngster does very well at pre-entry level 3, well before NVQ level 1, he or she needs to go on to something that is related to a job, such as independent living skills or key skills that will take them up the ladder towards the NVQ 1, 2 and 3 courses, which are routinely provided. Those opportunities do not exist.

[201] I should have said—this was a major omission—that this service is not just for Trinity Fields; it is for the whole of Caerphilly county borough, where about half of the youngsters with learning difficulties are in mainstream schools. For those comprehensive schools, there is a disincentive to provide those courses, because they do not count towards the point scores that schools need to have cognisance of in terms of their performance. What sense is there in having courses for pupils with learning difficulties that do not count towards the point score? That is something that I think could be changed very easily.

11.00 a.m.

[202] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I agree absolutely with the points that Cliff has just made and it is a job of work for us to ensure that courses and qualifications are recognised. We need to do something about that. In terms of the employers, and looking at it from the employers' point of view, we have a network of sector skills councils that are meant to consider the needs of their employment areas. Has this type of information been passed on to them, so that they can review their NVQ framework and their vocational skills framework? If the answer is that it has not, then it is a job of work for us to do, certainly under the terms of the Beecham review about joined-up thinking.

[203] **Mr Warwick:** I am working within the Caerphilly consortium on 14-19 pathways, but, beyond that, there has not been any link. It is difficult to have an impact on that, sitting where we sit; it needs a central lead, and it would be very helpful if that could happen.

[204] **Janet Ryder:** You stressed the need for joint working as being crucial, and the group that gave evidence before you stressed that, where success was achieved, it was achieved

through joint working locally. Joint working locally is very easy to say, but very difficult to achieve. Therefore, what has enabled you to have success and what lessons do we need to draw from that to ensure that that can be spread out across Wales?

[205] **Mr Warwick:** What has enabled us to have success is that we have received a grant from the European social fund and, subsequently, from commonwealth funding to supplement the reduction of funding that we had, in order to make this happen. It would not have happened, even with everyone saying that it was a good idea within the local authority, so we have taken the initiative and made it happen and we have secured the funding for it. We have offered money to the youth service to come on board, and not surprisingly it said 'yes'. It could have said 'no', as did social services. So, we have created our own posts—Alison's post, the person-centred planning post, and the ones that we would have liked social services to have owned. We have filled the gap, so that is why it has happened.

[206] I do not think that we are that much closer to having that embedded within the Caerphilly authority, because once the grant funding runs out, this service is likely to fold—as soon as next summer—and there are only so many times that you can get grant funding for the same project. We are in that position. The authority is relying on our service, in place of statutory services, and is referring youngsters to it. However, the question is whether it will continue to fund it, and, if it does, will it continue to fund it in a joint fashion.

[207] The health service lost the occupational therapy post because we lost the funding for that, and it has created a transition post, but it does not work within the inter-agency team—it works separately. So, there is no evidence that the silo mentality is changing as a result of this; I suspect that we need longer, and that it eventually will. That is why I said that, unless there is a requirement for services around transition to join up and become a single service, it is very difficult to see this moving on.

[208] **Janet Ryder:** May I just confirm then—[*Inaudible.*—]the posts that you need to make that work and you have used your funding to fund those posts.

[209] **Mr Warwick:** Yes.

[210] **Janet Ryder:** So, we could see a model showing the kind of posts needed in an area and the kind of funding that would need to go in. We could see that model and take it as an example.

[211] **Mr Warwick:** Yes.

[212] **William Graham:** In the first Assembly, I was the Chair of the Pre 16 Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee, and, like our present Chair, I went around a number of schools. I remember going to a school in west Wales where they had a special unit, and where the parents and the friends of the school had created a white room, which was made from polystyrene and cooking foil. My next visit was to Trinity Fields Special School, which was state of the art. As acknowledged, it is a remarkably good facility, and one cannot detract from the facility and the staff; it is really first rate, and I am very proud of everything in Wales, generally.

[213] You have given us ideas today of how—'success' is not the right word to use—those who have been directly encouraged have been able to gain worthwhile employment. Drawing on your experience, is there one thing in our recommendations that we could do that would make a difference in the relatively short term? I am rather putting you on the spot, I know, but that is why you have come to give evidence, so that we can use that in trying to make a recommendation.

[214] **Mr Warwick:** That would be funded inter-agency units. We need some legislation, regulations or guidance that will lead to transition being a genuinely inter-agency process, involving, I hope the jobcentre and everyone else, so that everyone works together on it. It would also obviously have to be a higher funding priority than it is at the moment.

[215] We have some of the best special education in the world, and what happens in Wales and elsewhere in the United Kingdom is good practice. People come from all over to see the good practice in these areas; I know that there are variations. On the funding side, how on earth can it be justified to spend what we currently do on that when what happens at the age of 19 seems to say that we do not value that investment? We are not taking that investment forward; you could argue that it is a misuse of resources. Gains are achieved with youngsters with learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorder and so on, but if you do not carry on that work on education, they will regress, and they do. We are not leading them towards the end goal that we declare in special education, which is independence. From society's point of view, it is nonsense. The concept of a lifelong learning process in which transition on an inter-agency basis is embedded, with a higher priority on the funding list, seems to be just common sense from where we are sitting.

[216] **Owen John Thomas:** Like William, I came to see Trinity Fields Special School in the first Assembly. I was very impressed with your facilities and practice. I wish to understand the situation of a disabled person a little better. Obviously, people can be disabled mentally and physically, or mentally but not physically, and vice versa. You have to match a job to a person's disability. I can imagine that there are employers who have jobs that would fit someone, but that, with the minimum wage, they could not afford to employ someone full time. I would have thought that, if they could not be employed full time, it would still be good for someone's independence to be employed part time. Do you encourage that?

[217] There is a thin line when it comes to benefits. If someone is receiving a disability allowance, they can earn a little something above that, but, if they earn much above that, they will lose their allowance. So, it is important to keep an eye on that. Will you expand on that issue please?

[218] **Ms Shephard:** Part-time work often suits people with disabilities. They want to work, but often they could not manage full time; it might be too tiring. Therefore, part-time work is very important. Although there is some leeway in the benefits system for allowed work, it always feels like a huge risk, and often parents worry about whether it is something that their children can do, because taking paid work can have a knock-on effect on so many other benefits. The benefits system still works as a disincentive to take on part-time work. People need to know that they can build up work slowly and that they can go back if it becomes too much. There is not enough flexibility, because the system is based on the idea that you are either fit for work or not fit for work. It does not allow for the fact that there is a large middle ground, where people need to be supported and work needs to be adjusted.

[219] **Owen John Thomas:** So, perhaps there is a recommendation coming from that question?

[220] **Ms Shephard:** Absolutely. It would be fantastic if you could overhaul the benefits system around employment.

[221] **Mr Warwick:** There is another aspect to this. We can see that we have achieved tremendous success on occasion, and that youngsters have jobs where expectations were that they would be totally dependent. That may work very well for two or three years; it may work very well for 10 years, but almost certainly at some point in that person's life, they will need further support, either because of a change of job, a life crisis or whatever. There is a need to recognise that the investment, even if it is expensive and intensive at the time, in terms of job

coaching for example, is nothing compared with the cost of dependency. It is changing that understanding of how best to use resources that would help.

11.10 a.m.

[222] In other words, it is not just in transition; there is a need further on. However, there is no comparison between the cost of doing that and the current costs that are being incurred, because of the levels of dependence and the levels of benefit. It is only cost-effective if this is done properly.

[223] **Peter Black:** Thank you for your evidence; it has been very helpful. As per the previous evidence, it was very clear and of high-quality. Hopefully, we will be able to put recommendations from it in our report when we come to do that early next year.

[224] We can have a break of 10 minutes; we need to re-start at 11.20 a.m. because we are around 15 minutes behind time at present and struggling to keep up. Thank you.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 11.11 a.m. a 11.22 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 11.11 a.m. and 11.22 a.m.*

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

[225] **Peter Black:** I welcome everyone back to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee. This is the next phase of our evidence taking on special educational needs transition. We have Fforwm here, represented by John Graystone, its chief executive, and Sally Elliott, who is the chair of the Fforwm network. We also have Coleg Sir Gâr, represented by the principal, Brian Robinson, as well as Steve Kelshaw and Gaynor Morgan. I welcome you all to the committee.

[226] I remind you that we are taking a verbatim record of the meeting, which you will have a chance to review in due course. We will start by asking each of you to make a presentation—as close to five minutes as possible, please—and we will then go to questions. We will start with Fforwm.

[227] **Mr Graystone:** Good morning—bore da. On behalf of Fforwm, we are delighted that the committee is looking at special educational needs, which needs a clear lead from the Welsh Assembly Government and the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. We also welcome the opportunity to give evidence to you this morning. I am delighted to introduce Sally Elliott, who is a learning support manager at Pembrokeshire College, but also, significantly, chairs our network on students with learning difficulties and disabilities; you will hear from Sally in a few minutes.

[228] We have provided a background paper from Fforwm. Fforwm represents the 25 further education colleges and institutions in Wales. We are a representative body, but more significant for the committee today is the fact that we provide a range of services to our members, including the sharing of good practice. We will be keen to look at the committee's final report, and to take forward the recommendations and proposals in that report.

[229] On language and definition, I was privileged to attend a lecture recently by Lady Warnock, who spoke in Wales a few months ago. She emphasised this language issue. It is interesting that her seminal report, which came out almost 20 years ago—if not more—talked about 'handicapped' children; we do not use that term these days. However, there is a distinction between students with disabilities who can be integrated into the main programme

areas taught by a college—that could be those with difficulties with regard to hearing, sight, mobility, and so on, who just need specialist support such as signers, note-takers, and so on—and the other group, which is those who have learning difficulties, which range from moderate to severe difficulties, who need specialist support. Many of those people will go on to what we call independent living skills courses—we call it programme area 16 in further education. Therefore, there is a distinction between those broad categories.

[230] In terms of the numbers—and, again, we feel that these figures are not precise, because there seems to be under-reporting—we estimate that there are roughly 19,000 learners in FE colleges at the moment, which is 7.7 per cent of the total number of learners, who either have disabilities or learning difficulties. It is a substantial and significant cohort. In our paper, we describe the SEN code of practice. We have also looked at Estyn reports and we know that you have had a discussion with the chief inspector. In terms of grade profile, around 80 per cent of colleges have achieved grades 1 or 2 for independent living skills. We would want 100 per cent of colleges to get to that level. We recognise that more needs to be done. We are setting up a network for practitioners who cover what we call SLDD—students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Sally could perhaps say a few words about how that network might operate.

[231] **Ms Elliott:** The network has been in existence for some time, but we are looking again at the focus of the network and I think that this is a timely opportunity to talk about transition. I would like briefly to go through the key points that we have listed in the paper, because, having spoken to colleagues across the sector, it is evident that there is good practice in relation to transition in further education colleges, but that is not co-ordinated across the sector in the way that it could be. We all need to share that good practice. For example, the first point that we have highlighted is the importance of a link programme. Transition from school into FE is a daunting process for a young person with a disability. Such young people may have been in school for six, seven or eight years in some instances, if they have been at a special school. So, a number of colleges have done a lot of work in this area, and have formalised link programmes that can run for the year before the young person starts a college programme in September. So, that is one issue that the network will be discussing. We will be looking at the colleges that are already doing this. The programmes are often accredited, so it links into the curriculum at the school and the young people can gain evidence for other aspects of their school education.

[232] I know that the importance of multi-agency working has already been mentioned. In a number of colleges, dedicated people within the SLDD departments are now being given responsibility for being part of these multi-agency networks. For example, in certain areas, there are transition fora on which FE colleges, schools, and social services are all represented. We are seeing an increase in the number of these fora across Wales, which needs to be encouraged, and we have been talking about that within the sector.

[233] On accessible information, when Rachel spoke this morning, the point was made that parents and young people do not always have information. I know that work is being done in colleges on this. Most colleges have accessible websites. As a result of the multi-agency working that is going on, for example, with transition review meetings in schools, information is often being given face to face, but we acknowledge that more needs to be done to ensure that young people get information early enough so that they can make informed decisions about transferring and about their transition to FE.

[234] In the paper, we make some points about the code of practice and the SEN code of practice in Wales. There needs to be more awareness about how colleges can use the SEN code of practice to ensure that the transition process is taken forward in a positive way. For example, there is a role for Careers Wales. I have recently spoken to colleagues in at least 10 colleges who have said that, sometimes, information does not come forward from schools.

However, we can work closely with Careers Wales.

11.30 a.m.

[235] Under the Learning and Skills Act 2000, it now has to produce learning and skills plans, as they are known in west Wales. They are more generally known as assessment of needs plans. These provide colleges with useful information in the transition process. We often have to apply for funding very early on to ensure that the person is supported in college.

[236] Our last point in relation to the Fforwm network is about ensuring that colleges have sufficient resources to put appropriate support in place. With regard to certain aspects of transition, particularly when we are looking at transition out of college, perhaps into other training or supported employment, certain aspects of the good practice going on in the FE sector are funded by Europe. For example, with regard to people who have responsibility for finding work placements for students with disabilities, those posts are often funded by Europe, so, again, that area needs to be looked at to ensure consistency of approach. The network has done a lot to raise awareness in relation to transition, but we acknowledge that the report that will come out as a result of this consultation will help in the future.

[237] **Mr Robinson:** What we would like to do is just drill down a little bit to the detail by giving you some information about one element of the FE sector, which is Coleg Sir Gâr. You have the paper that we prepared for you; we do not intend to go through that word for word, but we will pick out some key issues from it. To give you a little bit of background, we operate our curriculum within nine faculties in the college. There is a further division, training services, which deals with work-based learning. The particular area under consideration today, independent living skills, sits in the faculty of foundation and community education. Steve Kelshaw is the faculty manager, and Gaynor Morgan is a section leader within that faculty; she has particular responsibility for independent living skills.

[238] We are dealing with an element of the college that has a full-time section leader, Gaynor, four full-time staff, four fractional tutors, and a considerable number of educational support assistants to assist the learners through the learning process. That gives you a sense of the scale. We are talking about 60 full-time students, and a considerable number of part-time students come within the framework of this element of the college.

[239] Through Gaynor, we will give you some examples of case studies and good practice to show what happens when we get it right, because there is no doubt that, when we get all the key elements in place, we offer the learners an outstanding service. However, there are issues, constraints and barriers that we believe need to be addressed and overcome if all learners are to benefit from that facility. Steve will highlight some of those barriers.

[240] We will start by looking at the school-to-college aspect in a fairly superficial way, but will focus particularly on transition from our entry-level provision to a range of other levels of activity. Gaynor will start.

[241] **Ms Morgan:** I welcome this opportunity to be here today to raise some of the issues already outlined in our paper. You have that information before you, with the good practice that we have identified in bullet points. I am probably repeating what may have already been said this morning in saying that, for most young people, the move from school to college is an accepted step at the age of 16. However, for young people with specific educational needs, particularly those with severe learning difficulties and disabilities, that is not always the case. Going to college is a massive step for them, for their parents or advocates, and often for the school, where they may have been for a long time.

[242] Like all big steps, we try to break it down into a series of much smaller steps,

providing many opportunities for these individuals to come into college—perhaps as a group from the school, with their teacher, sometimes with their key worker, as a referral through social services or a careers adviser, or, best of all, with their parents or advocates—because visiting the college as early as possible is time well invested. They can come in during the day when everything is happening in the college, and we can offer the reassurance that the courses and the curriculum on offer will be accessible for these youngsters. It means that we can reassure them that further education college is their entitlement. I have lost count of the number of parents who have told me that they did not know that the courses to help these youngsters into work existed. That is the cornerstone and focus of our work: we are the step between school and the world of work for the length of time that they are with us.

[243] **Mr Kelshaw:** Good morning. I will make two quick points, because I want Gaynor to go on to show examples of good practice. It is important to flag up the funding and resource system, which can be an issue for us. First, the transition and involvement of the college, as Gaynor said, with year 9, 10 and 11 students means that it is very time and resource intensive for us, which is not recognised in how we are funded. Similarly, the funding model itself does not always help the learner to make that transition, so if we cannot be properly involved in the transition plans that may be done in year 9, there can be issues around learner access and the right kind of support coming to the college when they apply to college. Exceptional funding, for instance, may or may not be available depending on what was in the transition plan, so we need to be, and are, involved to quite an extent in that transition process, but we must put on record the fact that it is time and resource intensive. I will come back to some of those points later, because I think that we need to hear some stories from Gaynor.

[244] **Ms Morgan:** The paper clearly shows that these youngsters' time on entry level is discrete provision within the college—or I prefer to think of it as semi-discrete. They may be there for one year, possibly two or even three. It is important to emphasise that every student has an individual timetable geared to meet their needs and, hopefully, to develop their independent living skills and their aspirations. All the programmes of study aim to develop the individual's confidence, build self-esteem and enable them to gain more independence. As well as the structured accredited programmes that we offer, we can also provide many complementary opportunities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, residential visits—we organise three residential visits a year—and sporting activities. All those help the young person to take steps towards independence.

[245] At the end of this time, whether they are with us for one, two or three years, they follow various routes, and a large number of individuals go on to further education within the college. To illustrate some of the outcomes, 23 out of the student cohort last year went on to level 1 programmes in the college. On our first case study, there is one such youngster who came to the entry level department from a special school, so he progressed through the three steps that we offer in the entry level framework and has now moved out into the college mainstream. He is on a foundation course in information technology, and is now part of the group piloting the Welsh baccalaureate. He is doing extremely well. I have to say that it is quite unusual for a youngster to come in from a special school and go right through the steps and out into mainstream education, because these youngsters have severe learning difficulties. However, student A has overcome many of the problems that he had when he first came to college, and he has done extremely well.

11.40 a.m.

[246] The second example is of a lad who was only with us for a very short time. He came to us from a mainstream school where he had received a high level of support because of his specific learning difficulties. He was not sure about college, but he stayed with us for a year and we then routed him on to a training programme in the summer holidays. Like many 16-year-old lads, he was anxious to get into the workplace and to start earning money, so we, or

rather Coleg Sir Gâr training services, set up a skill-build programme through the summer for him. A successful placement at Jewson was extended, and there will now be a recommendation through the disability employment adviser that he goes on to a Workstep scheme, which encourages employers to employ youngsters, or at least to give them a chance to be part of the workforce.

[247] Of course, to be realistic, not every individual, particularly those with severe learning difficulties, will be able to access open or paid employment, although that is the aim. So, the third example is a nice example of a youngster who has Down's syndrome. He also came to us in 2003 from a special school, and benefited from being on the course for three years. Having left full-time provision, he still comes back to college as a part-time student for a couple of days a week, and he also attends a supported training and employment programme, STEP. In Carmarthenshire, we have three of those STEP projects, which are doing sterling work. However, I think that the highlight of his week is going to the RSPCA every Friday, where he is a volunteer. That work placement was set up while he was with us in college, and it has led to his becoming a valued member of that team on a voluntary basis.

[248] The last example is of how a multi-agency approach can really work for these youngsters. A young lady who had a learning disability as well as a physical disability was anxious to work in the care sector. We placed her in a variety of care settings while she was with us in college, and she was fortunate to go on of these Workstep programmes on leaving college. A couple of years down the line, she is now in paid employment at this care setting. She benefited from the Access to Work scheme. She had driving lessons and she now has a specially adapted car to get her to and from the workplace. I see her regularly, because she comes into college as part of her national vocational qualification programme.

[249] **Mr Kelshaw:** I will finish off by saying that we have noted some constraints in the paper, so I will not go through them in detail. However, I reiterate that, where we have had successes, the two ingredients for us were the multi-agency approach and the resource issues that we were able to overcome, albeit on a temporary basis. We have been relying on the European social fund and Objective 1 support, for instance, so we have had a very good partnership with organisations such as the Shaw Trust and Mencap, which enabled many of these young people to go on work experience with job coaches and enhanced support. So, that has been very important. We are currently in the middle of another European social fund project, where we have some work-placement support, but it is short term and there are gaps. Our message is that we know that we can do—and have done—a good job for many young people, but we could do more if the resource was better. There is a very intensive resource requirement on the college and that is not adequately recognised in the funding model.

[250] **Peter Black:** Thank you very much. As we are rather short of time, we will group the questions. I encourage everyone to be succinct.

[251] **Christine Chapman:** You have probably touched on my question throughout your presentation, and I thank you for that. I have heard of examples of young people going from school into college and, because of delays in the funding arrangements in the transition and their having to access equipment and so on, that young person can be lost. They have been in an almost protective environment at school and then they suddenly find themselves in a new institution. It is difficult enough for any young person to go somewhere new, but, on top of that, there is that complete change of culture. If there is a delay in funding, it means that necessary equipment is not readily available. All these sorts of things can demotivate young people at a critical time. What more can be done? I know that you touched on funding, and Steve mentioned the short-term nature of structural fund grants and so on, but do you have any other thoughts on how things could be improved, particularly at that critical time when young people go into a new institution?

[252] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you for the two presentations. What you have talked about, in terms of funding and resources, gives more strength to the elbow of the Beecham review, which was launched yesterday. It talks about those involved in the delivery of public services co-operating and collaborating, so that that becomes the norm—regardless of where the funding and resources come from—and services being used by the people who need them. That must be particularly true in this case.

[253] Employers are crucial in terms of transition into employment and, unless we change their attitudes and win hearts and minds, it is all a bit of a waste. I am particularly interested in your case study of student D, who now has a job in the caring sector and is taking an NVQ, which I assume relates somehow to a caring profession, in partnership with the college. I do not think that you were present when I asked a similar question of the other presenters. As we move down the road of NVQs becoming the norm, with competence-based qualifications and so on, do you feel that there are barriers, whether deliberate or not, preventing disabled youngsters, or disabled people in general, from achieving competence-based qualifications, and, if so, could we tackle those barriers in a meaningful way? Are you, particularly Fforwm, in discussion with the sector skills councils to ensure that they are aware of where these problems exist, so that they can address them with their companies—and, bearing in mind the number of small and medium-sized enterprises in Wales, that is probably the only way in which to tackle the problem—so that the qualification framework system is as fair as it can be, without seeking to reduce the standards that must be achieved?

[254] **Peter Black:** I will start with Brian and Coleg Sir Gâr and then we will move on to Fforwm.

[255] **Mr Kelshaw:** The issue with funding for us, in terms of learning-disabled young people, is that it is less about equipment and more about personnel. Quite often, what happens is that a young person will apply to come to college, maybe at this time of year in readiness for next September, and, even though that seems like a long lead time, Gaynor has to make an application to DELLS for the exceptional funding that may be needed for one-to-one support—particularly as we get more and more demand from people with profound and multiple disabilities—but we do not always get an answer, even by September, as to whether that person will receive funding. Even if we get the funding, we have to employ someone very quickly and it does not cover the entire cost of that person's employment. It is those specific issues that are important in this case. I could take a whole hour of the committee's time to talk about the funding problem, but I will not. That is the answer to the question on funding.

[256] **Mr Robinson:** Could Gaynor deal with the questions on curriculum issues? We did hear that question earlier; we were watching when it was asked, and so we have given it a bit of thought.

[257] **Ms Morgan:** From the college perspective, the curriculum is already in place to enable these youngsters to access the NVQ framework. We offer opportunities across nine vocational areas within the college. We look on the entry level as an opportunity for them to try out different areas, and the curriculum allows that flexibility. Our youngsters are unique in the college in that they access all of the campuses to get to the workshops and the vocational areas. The nature of the learning that goes on is very experiential as it is within a realistic working environment, such as a hair salon, a training kitchen or a construction workshop, and that stands them in good stead for when they are ready to step out into the wider world. The NVQ structure is particularly relevant to these youngsters. They can be assessed while they are doing the job, rather than their having to go through an examination-type procedure, which they would probably struggle with. So, we already have that in place, we recognise it, and we offer these progression routes from the college through to the world of work.

[258] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I understand the NVQ structure. My particular question was on the barriers that may exist for disabled young people, particularly in terms of assessment.

11.50 a.m.

[259] **Ms Morgan:** I suppose that the barriers are related to accessibility depending on the nature of the disability. For youngsters with a learning disability, there is frequently a problem with written script and understanding the language that is being used. If you have youngsters with a sensory or physical impairment, there will be certain barriers. However, we must remember the issues that were recognised in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, and we have to make every reasonable adjustment to ensure that these individuals are able to access the areas of work that they wish to access.

[260] **Ms Elliot:** Following on from Gaynor's comments, in terms of modern apprenticeships, and particularly foundation modern apprenticeships, I think that key skills can be a barrier to young people with learning difficulties. I have an example of someone who was on a discrete programme, who progressed to the construction element and was more than capable of achieving the NVQ aspect, but could not complete the full framework because his learning difficulties affected his ability to achieve the application of number and communication skills elements. I think that it is a real barrier to expect young people to complete the whole framework.

[261] **Mr Kelshaw:** To reiterate what Gaynor said, in many ways, the competency basis of national vocational qualifications are an advantage to people with learning disabilities, because they are not disabled or disadvantaged in terms of their ability to do the job. Where we have been able to put them in a placement and give them the right support, they are demonstrating competence. So, in some ways, the NVQ system is an advantage to us.

[262] We did hear some of the previous speaker's comments on the school perspective. I would say that the situation is different in further education. We feel that our Edexcel-accredited Skills for Life programme is a vocational initiative, so we can give people relevant qualifications that are leading them down the pathway to work.

[263] **Mr Graystone:** In response to Jeff's comment about sector skills councils, we are in the process of setting up a liaison group for further education, the sector skills councils and Skills for Business that will enable us to work much more closely with them, and with our severe learning difficulties network, on this issue. We would want to invite relevant sector skills councils to join that network so that we can look at ways of overcoming the issues that you have raised.

[264] **Peter Black:** Did you want to add anything, Sally?

[265] **Ms Elliot:** No, that is fine.

[266] **Janet Ryder:** You have obviously been listening to the previous session, so you may have an inkling about some of the questions that we will ask. A number of groups, and not just the previous speakers, have raised the importance of the transitional period and the transfer of knowledge. You say that you work with the schools, but is there anything from your experience that we could take as a general guideline on what works well, does not work well, or needs to change to ensure that information about individual people is transmitted from schools to colleges?

[267] Many people have stressed the need for multi-agency working. The previous set of evidence suggested that it was a case of spotting the key workers within that group and funding those posts to make sure that the multi-agency work happened. What is your

experience of making multi-agency work successful, not only in terms of the transition from school to college, but the transition from college to work—that is, both ends of the sandwich, if you like? How can we make that work? Is there anything that this committee needs to consider carefully in terms of its recommendations regarding the overall funding of colleges to provide for young people who need extra support in their learning? How does this impact on your other budgets? Do we need to make any special recommendations about that? What kind of recommendations can we make that would help ease the situation regarding time lag or difficulty in accessing special grants?

[268] **Peter Black:** Let us start with Fforwm.

[269] **Mr Graystone:** I know that funding is a topic that you will be addressing later. Maybe this is due to our shortcomings, but we have had considerable difficulty in finding out how much funding is allocated, because the area is so broad and there are definitional problems. We know that programme area 16 has a weighting of three, but when it comes to specialist support for those who integrated into other programme areas, such as signers and note-takers, the feedback that we get from colleges is that the funding that they get is often less than what they pay out for that support. So, quite a lot of cross-subsidy goes on in colleges to enable them to provide for those learners. What we do not have at Fforwm are figures to come back to; all we have is feedback from colleges on that. So, if the committee wished, we could do some work on that and feed it back to you. I would not want to come up with vague figures, but we would be interested in researching that.

[270] **Mr Robinson:** To illustrate that, Gaynor is a unique member of staff in many ways, one of which is in funding terms. We have a very sophisticated funding model that generates money from our funding to go down into the faculties. If we used that sophisticated model, we would not have Gaynor in post. We have to take a view that we have to raid money from other elements of the college to push towards Gaynor and the extra time that she needs to fulfil her role. So, we have to take funding from other sources to pay for the work that Gaynor does. That illustrates, partly, the value that we put on this type of work, but also the inadequacy of the funding model. It is extremely expensive if you are going to do this properly. Gaynor would perhaps add some examples of where inadequate funding, not just for the college, but generally, has led to problems.

[271] **Ms Morgan:** Yes. It all boils down to time. The college recognises that I have a role outside the college and I try to involve myself as much as possible with the schools and the multi-agencies. In Carmarthenshire, we do that quite well. I am invited to transitional reviews, certainly in the special schools and in an increasing number of mainstream schools. We have very good links with the careers service in west Wales and I rely heavily on its input. I think that you make a point somewhere in the Fforwm report about the way in which the careers service takes the lead role in that it is around these youngsters through school, college, post-college and when they are out in employment. So, that seems to be the common denominator in terms of getting information from one stage of these individuals' lives to the next. It also organises network meetings once a year in the area for special education needs co-ordinators and for people who have a similar role in colleges to that which I have. That is an opportunity for us to get together and share good practice. I also work closely with transition services in Carmarthenshire, which is a branch of social services, under social care and housing, and they give their time in terms of working in schools with the youngsters and helping with the transition into college and out into work. However, again, funding constraints impact on all these other areas as well as on us.

[272] **Ms Elliott:** I will just make one point, if I may. I support what has just been said. Having spoken to people across the sector, I think that, where good practice is going on in colleges, as Brian said, colleges have had to identify members of staff who are funded from elsewhere, because transition is time-intensive if you are going to do it properly. If you have,

say, 40 young people coming into college in a particular September, you could be going to 40 annual reviews, involving perhaps eight or more secondary schools plus special schools. So, you have to appreciate that there is a cost there. Then, in terms of the other side, namely the transition out of college, when you are liaising with social services, careers and disability employment advisers, that work is also resource-intensive because you are then attending those meetings to ensure that smooth transition out of college. I just wanted to make that point.

[273] On funding, there was a recognition some time ago that we needed upfront funding for students with disabilities who were going onto mainstream courses, and we now get that in August, but we do not get that upfront funding for students going onto discrete courses, where we need what is called exceptional funding, which helps because you have to employ people in advance and you have to purchase equipment, as was said earlier. That is something that could be looked at.

12.00 p.m.

[274] **Janet Ryder:** I thank everyone for their answers, and I apologise because I have to leave now.

[275] **Owen John Thomas:** Darllenais yn adroddiad Fforwm fod rhai colegau yn cynnig rhaglenni sy'n galluogi myfyrwyr i ddysgu drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, ond yn anaml mae hyn yn digwydd, yn enwedig wrth hyfforddi ar gyfer swydd. Mae bron chwarter y plant yn sir Gâr—y sir, nid y coleg—yn dod o gartrefi lle mae'r Gymraeg yn iaith yr aelwyd. Os oes ganddynt anabledd, a'u bod yn methu astudio'r cwrs y maent yn dymuno ei ddilyn drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, cânt eu cosbi. Mae ganddynt anabledd ychwanegol, fel petai, oherwydd nad yw'r cwrs ar gael drwy gyfrwng iaith eu cartref. Felly, beth ydych yn ei wneud i ymdrin â hyn yng Ngholeg Sir Gâr, a beth mae Fforwm yn ei wneud i geisio gwella'r sefyllfa drwy Gymru gyfan? Faint o gyrсияu a gynigir drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg yng Ngholeg Sir Gâr, a faint o ddisgyblion sy'n dilyn cyrsiau drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, yn llawn neu'n rhannol?

Owen John Thomas: I read in Fforwm's report that some colleges offer programmes that enable students to learn through the medium of Welsh, but this happens infrequently, particularly in work-based training. Almost a quarter of the children of Carmarthenshire—the county, not the college—come from Welsh-speaking homes. If they happen to have a disability, and they cannot follow a particular course through the medium of Welsh, they are penalised. They have an additional disability, as it were, because the course is not available in their mother tongue. Therefore, what are you doing to address this issue at Coleg Sir Gâr, and what is Fforwm doing to improve the situation across Wales? How many courses are offered through the medium of Welsh at Coleg Sir Gâr, and how many students follow those Welsh-medium courses, fully or partly?

[276] **Peter Black:** This is not scrutiny of courses available through the medium of Welsh; we are trying to take evidence on special educational needs.

[277] **Owen John Thomas:** Yes, but you will appreciate, Chair, that if you come from a Welsh-speaking home and you cannot study a course through the medium of Welsh, that has to be overcome.

[278] **Peter Black:** I understand that. I ask the presenters to take this question in terms of how you facilitate children with special educational needs through the medium of Welsh.

[279] **Mr Robinson:** We will take the question as it applies to independent living skills.

[280] **Peter Black:** Yes.

[281] **Ms Morgan:** We are making every effort to acknowledge this, and you make an important point. I am not a fluent Welsh speaker, and neither are some members of my team, but our courses have bilingual elements to them. We have first-language Welsh speakers coming onto courses, and we acknowledge that they may be at a disadvantage if they are unable to access the course through their first language. Therefore, we actively promote the use of the Welsh language, and almost all of our course materials are bilingual. Last year, a student with a hearing impairment came to us from school, so he had an entitlement to have someone working alongside him. We had to appoint a Welsh-speaking support assistant for this lad, so that everything could be translated, almost simultaneously, to enable him to access the curriculum that he was following. He did extremely well, and he is now on an apprenticeship and still comes into college one day a week, while again being supported by a Welsh speaker.

[282] **Peter Black:** Do you want to add anything, Sally?

[283] **Ms Elliott:** I support what Gaynor said. I am aware that, in other colleges, the approach is that you would employ a Welsh-speaking teaching support assistant, and endeavour to ensure that materials are bilingual.

[284] **Peter Black:** I do not want to pursue this, Owen, because I think that you have had the answer that you are going to get. I do not want to get into—

[285] **Owen John Thomas:** I might also leave the committee, Chair, if you do not allow me to ask my questions. It might not be of interest to you, but it is to me and to my constituents, who contact me regarding issues such as this.

[286] **Peter Black:** I am more concerned about the review and how we—

[287] **Owen John Thomas:** It is important that I know how special needs are being dealt with in Welsh-speaking areas, where a quarter of the children come from Welsh-speaking homes—

[288] **Peter Black:** You have had an answer to that.

[289] **Owen John Thomas:** I have not had an answer to that; I was just given an example of the way that one individual was dealt with. That might satisfy you, because perhaps you are not as interested in this as I am.

[290] **Peter Black:** What I am trying to say to you is that this is a review of special educational needs. Obviously, we will make recommendations regarding the Welsh language.

[291] **Owen John Thomas:** Those must be based on evidence; I am trying to get some evidence on how it is dealt with in the college.

[292] **Peter Black:** If you can ask a succinct question—

[293] **Owen John Thomas:** I did. I asked how many courses were available through the medium of Welsh in Coleg Sir Gâr, and how many students in the college were studying subjects partially or fully through the medium of Welsh. I have not had an answer to that question, and I would be grateful for one.

[294] **Peter Black:** I am sorry, but I am not going to allow them to answer that question because it is not relevant to the review.

[295] **Owen John Thomas:** Of course it is.

[296] **Peter Black:** It is not—not in that context.

[297] **Owen John Thomas:** Of course it is, if there is a deficiency of teaching through the medium of Welsh in areas where a quarter of children come from Welsh-speaking homes. That is something that we need to address. Unless we can answer that question, we do not know whether that is the case.

[298] **Peter Black:** You are framing it in terms of a specific scrutiny of Coleg Sir Gâr, which is not appropriate in this context.

[299] **Owen John Thomas:** Coleg Sir Gâr is here; I cannot ask any other college.

[300] **Peter Black:** You have made the point. It is a valid point, which we will take on board as part of the review. We have to move on now to the next bit of evidence, so I am going to finish this item at this point.

[301] I thank you all for coming to give evidence; it has been very helpful. You are of course welcome to stay and listen to the next item if you wish, although we obviously understand if you need to leave.

12.06 p.m.

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

[302] **Peter Black:** Karen Robson is with us. She is the disabled services manager for the University of Wales Institute Cardiff. You are very welcome. I am glad that you were able to sit through the last item to see how we operate. I apologise that the room is a bit cold.

[303] **Ms Robson:** It is freezing; if I shiver it is not because I am nervous, but because I am absolutely freezing. Good morning everyone. My name is Karen Robson. I am the disability services manager at UWIC. As such, I have responsibility for policy and provision for disabled students in UWIC. To give you an idea of the framework, UWIC is a medium-sized university delivering primarily higher education. It delivers a little bit of FE, so I could relate to much of the evidence given in the last item. One of the issues that we, as a university, face is that we are dealing with transition from school to university, from FE college to university and, critically—given that we are a widening-access university, of which there are many in Wales—we are also dealing with mature students and people who have no connection with statutory organisations for information and support.

[304] I know that you heard evidence earlier from Skill Wales. I have a vested interest in that organisation. I am the chair of Skill Wales, and I am involved in the London branch, so I would like to endorse all the evidence that it presented; we can take that as read. When I was asked to give a presentation, I was asked to keep my comments to five minutes. I am going to endeavour to do that, and to keep them simple and brief, because I know all too well how difficult it is to unpick all the information. I am going to consider barriers to transition and barriers to employment—from the student and employer perspectives—because, as a higher education institution, we must also seek to ensure that our graduates are employable. We are trying to send them out in an employable capacity.

[305] One thing that I would like to raise with the committee, which I believe was touched on before, including by Skill Wales, is the availability of suitable information. There seems to be a poverty of information within the system. Students, pupils, parents, advocates and so on

do not know what is available in the HE world. Despite the fact that we have many opportunities through widening access to go out to schools and talk about what opportunities in higher education might be like, there seems to be a complete lack of knowledge.

[306] Linked to this, there is also a lack of awareness of the breadth of the definition of disability under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. This was touched on slightly by John, when he spoke about the terminology of special educational needs. That is outdated terminology, and I would like to see a change in the terminology. All of the groups that I work with and represent would perceive the terminology to be: 'disabled students', 'disabled people', 'disabled whatever'. The term 'special educational needs' means that people put on blinkers when considering this area.

12.10 p.m.

[307] To give you some idea of the way that schools fail to understand the breadth of the definition of disability that we are working with, we undertook some research in my department a few years ago, and we asked schools whether it would be possible for a member of my team to go into schools to talk to disabled pupils about opportunities in higher education—basically, to raise aspirations and awareness. We were told by a number of schools that they did not have any disabled pupils. I knew that it was not true in one particular case, because my administrator's twins were dyslexic and were attending that school. So, there is a limit as to the awareness of people in terms of the definition of disability. That is a barrier to transition, because, unless you identify in the schooling system, as that is where we are at this point in time, that there are some issues that can be addressed further along the way, we will never tackle this area.

[308] There is also a lack of awareness among teaching staff, not only of the opportunities and the support available, but also in what we would call inclusive education. Inclusive education is a piece of terminology that basically tries to address the fact that we all learn differently. There are mainly four different learning styles, and when teachers teach they should be trying to hit each of those four different learning styles within their session. I work in an institution that also runs teacher training courses, so I am quite aware of the teacher training system and the way in which we must respond to a national agenda. However, I am cognisant of the fact that very limited information is put into teacher training about what we would call special educational needs. I do not feel that teachers are equipped to go into the classroom to identify individuals with support needs and learning differences, which is basically what we are talking about. They are also not equipped to adapt their teaching methods to encompass that group of students. Unless we ensure that education is successful in the compulsory sector, they will not come through the system, and we are never going to see them.

[309] I also wish to mention low expectations. I will take it as read that the committee is aware of the statistics produced by the Disability Rights Commission on employment discrimination and education discrimination. Those statistics demonstrate the low expectations that are out there. Many of the students that we deal with somehow find themselves at university, and sometimes I am not quite sure how they have found their way here—it is often through sheer guts and determination. When we say that we could put a note-taker in place for them, or that they could have a study skills tutor to help them with their written work, they are completely perplexed as to why they are getting this support now, when they did not have anything similar in school. This is one of the things that we need to get across. Higher education is not perfect—far from it—and I could sit here all morning and talk to you about the imperfections of that system, but we are doing many good things. We would like to see some of the positive aspects of higher education, and the way in which we deal with disability, taken further back into the system. We need to make a greater connection with special educational needs co-ordinators; we are trying to do so, but I am conscious that if

I offer to go into a school to explain what my university or any of the organisations that I represent can do, the SENCO must take time out of their diary and out of teaching time. That is a fundamental difficulty and barrier.

[310] On the benefits system, I know that this committee does not have the opportunity to influence the benefits system, but there are significant difficulties when you are looking at mature learners moving from a lifetime on benefit into higher education, because they are trying to weigh up whether it is in their interest to do something or not. What will the implications be on their benefits? What about the student loan that eventually becomes a debt? These are high concerns for people who are not sure whether they are going to get employment at the end of it.

[311] In terms of barriers to employment, if you speak to any careers adviser or careers team, one of the things that they will say is that not only do you need to show that you are a graduate on your curriculum vitae, but that you also need to demonstrate your experience. You need to show to future employers that you have the skills and the abilities to undertake the tasks that they require. One of the ways that we would all probably do that is by gaining some experience—maybe short-term work placements or volunteering, which is something that I did in the past to demonstrate my capabilities. The difficulty is that the current funding models—the disabled student allowance, which is the key funding model in higher education, and the Access to Work programme, which is the benefit system—do not fund short-term work placements or volunteering opportunities. So, there is a barrier there for disabled pupils, students and young people coming through, because they will not have access to information and experience to put on their curriculum vitae to sell to employers. That is crucial.

[312] I also wish to mention qualification restrictions. I do quite a lot of work with the Disability Rights Commission, and one of the pieces of evidence that came before us recently was about two young men who wanted to become plumbers. They were both dyslexic; they had not received much support—or, indeed, any support—at school. The difficulty was that to get onto that particular plumbing course they needed five GCSEs, which just was not going to happen. Therefore, those individuals were prevented from pursuing their employment choice. This is something that the Disability Rights Commission would like to raise. I take this opportunity to raise that point with you.

[313] Moving on to employers, briefly, I am very aware of a total lack of awareness and knowledge of the support systems that are available. Very often, employers do not have a clue that Access to Work exists. If you do discuss with them the opportunities presented by the disabled students allowance and how we can support students in that environment, employers will say, 'It's all very well if they have a study skills tutor in college, but that will be of no good to them when they come into the workplace'. Actually, it is, because we can get quite equivalent support for disabled people in the workplace, but people need to know about it.

[314] Also, employers need to know about the reasonable adjustments that they need to put in place to accommodate some people with disabilities. It is also worth recognising that one in five people in Wales are estimated to have a disability. When we are talking about access it is very easy to look at door widths, hearing loops and tangible, physical things, but it is also about very fundamental things, such as how we put our information together, the language and the font of the text that we use, and the size of the print, which are very basic things. Those are not things that require funding. It is, basically, just good practice.

[315] To briefly mention good practice in the system, we have found inclusive education to be highly successful in higher education. We need to increase the confidence of people in the schooling system and also in further education, perhaps, in inclusive education. We also need to support the voluntary sector and the not-for-profit sector in providing employment and educational-related support to individuals. One project to which I would like to draw your

attention, which I believe was funded by the European social fund, was a project run by the Royal National Institute for the Blind, where it was supported in taking disabled individuals and trying to find them appropriate work placements.

[316] I think that I have gone just over my five minutes but I have tried to keep it relatively tight. I hope that that gives the committee something to work with.

[317] **Peter Black:** Thank you. That has given us a lot to think about. Are there any questions? William?

[318] **William Graham:** Thank you for your presentation, which was very valuable to the committee. You are a practitioner, and that is what evidence is all about.

[319] You will know that we will have asked other people the same question, but in terms of poverty of expectation, we are all probably aware of the difficulties for people with learning difficulties, as we have heard today, but how do we get it across to employers? Years ago, it was quite simple: if someone had a learning disability it meant that they had a menial job on low pay and that was an end to it. We have got better but we are not good enough. Do you have any ideas?

[320] **Ms Robson:** I think that we have to provide positive publicity, and we need to look at role models. We must ensure that employers know that it is not just about money. If you are operating a small business with limited profit margins, any additional cost that you could get out of is something that you probably prefer not to have to address. Sometimes, it is just about good practice and very basic things. If you took on a deaf person, for example, and consider how, with office gossip, we absorb information by osmosis, a deaf person will not have the opportunity of doing so. Therefore, it is a case of ensuring that e-mail, perhaps, is the primary method of communication, and using post-it notes to ensure that, if someone has popped out of the office, a deaf colleague can pick up on key things. These are basic things.

[321] An organisation like Skill Wales can bridge the gap between the disabled person, organisations like mine, and employers, but they need to be supported in doing so. They are totally charitably funded through the Big Lottery Fund; no statutory funding goes into an organisation like that, which is quite a crucial point to make. If it was not for organisations such as Skill Wales or the RNIB doing the work that they do, many disabled people would not get the information that they require. Again, it is not only about making sure that employers know what their responsibilities are; it is about telling individuals that they have rights. It is all very well having legislation but if no-one knows that that legislation relates to them, they will not pursue it. Does that answer your question, William?

[322] **William Graham:** Yes. It was very good.

[323] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Following on from William's question, because the attitude of employers is crucial in transition, what is your relationship like with Careers Wales and with Jobcentre Plus? If you feel that they are falling short in terms of their duties, I would be grateful if you could say that and then perhaps comment on what improvements they can make. In terms of dealing with employers' organisations, such as the Confederation of British Industry, the Federation of Small Businesses, and so on—and I appreciate that you are speaking on behalf of UWIC, not Higher Education Wales, but, nevertheless, you are a big player in this—how do you feel that those organisations are supporting this type of issue?

12.20 p.m.

[324] **Ms Robson:** That is a good point, but I would like to try to confine my contribution to areas that I know about; I would not get particularly involved with Careers Wales and

Jobcentre Plus. We have an effective careers team at UWIC. I should say that I am not here just representing UWIC, because, were any of my colleagues from across the universities in Wales here in my stead, they would make similar points. We have a Skill Wales meeting tomorrow, and I am sure that we will be discussing what happened today. There are many connections throughout Wales, as well as throughout the UK, so I do not know a huge amount about this. Therefore, if you do not mind, I will pass on that. However, it is important for careers teams in universities to be furnished with the information.

[325] On the CBI, the Federation of Small Businesses, and so on, the public sector has a fantastic opportunity at present to lead by example. I am sure that you are all aware that, on 4 December, we will see an amendment to the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 come into force. That imposes a disability equality duty on public sector bodies to ensure that, in summary, equality of opportunity for disabled people is promoted; that is it in a nutshell. Therefore, we have a duty placed on us to ensure that, whatever we do—educational services, or anything else that we cross paths with—promotes equality of opportunity for disabled people. Therefore, over the next three years or so, while people are grappling with their action plans, you will see a lot of good practice coming out, and not all of it will be about, ‘We need more money’. Some of it will just be fundamental good practice. By sharing that experience, and saying, ‘Look, it worked for us in UWIC’, or, ‘It worked for us at the University of Wales, Bangor’, or in a hospital trust, or whatever, businesses might be able to see that they can pick up this agenda and run with it.

[326] Another issue is that, often—and of late I have got involved in the business community—people tell me, ‘We can’t get people with the right skills’; recruiting the right sorts of people is a real problem. Disabled people are half as likely to get employment that is appropriate to their abilities as non-disabled people. There is a huge pool of talent and expertise there, which could be plugged into. However, we need to ensure that employers know that, just because someone looks a little different, or behaves a little differently, it does not mean that they cannot do the job. Therefore, I would like to see the Assembly rolling out a publicity campaign—if that is not beyond the limits of your influence—to ask employers, ‘Are you aware that these are the sorts of things that you can do?’.

[327] It is also crucial that you hear this from disabled people themselves. On reflection, it might have been better if I had brought one of my students with me this morning; I regret not doing that now. However, I filmed one of my students recently for an event that I am doing on Friday. That student, in that bit of filming, said, ‘I came from a specialist, segregated school; my teachers had no ambition for me, and I left school with no qualifications’. He then went on to do an access course at an FE college. By sheer grit, he then came to read for an undergraduate degree with us, and he is now at Cardiff University, studying for a master’s degree. He is an individual who, come hell or high water, was going to succeed; no-one was going to hold him back.

[328] We do not all have that confidence and determination, so we need to try to facilitate people coming through, so that, when people do not have that confidence, we can say, ‘We believe in you—you can do this’. If I had brought someone like him with me, you would have probably seen far better than I can tell you in a presentation today that these are the sorts of individuals whom we need to support. That individual should never have been put into specialist schooling. His was a disability that a mainstream school could have dealt with, and that would have met his academic requirements more appropriately. Instead, he has had to catch up over the last few years.

[329] **Christine Chapman:** You have talked about higher education, Karen, and have said that many good things are happening now with regard to disability. However, you are more critical, perhaps, of further down the education—

[330] **Ms Robson:** We are mopping up the school system, Christine.

[331] **Christine Chapman:** We have talked about inclusive education, which I believe we would all sign up to. However, what are the issues there? What are the barriers and the difficulties within the education system?

[332] **Ms Robson:** In higher education?

[333] **Christine Chapman:** No, at the point of transition; we have talked about careers advisers and low aspirations, and so on. However, are there any other aspects there that we need to consider?

[334] **Mr Robson:** It is about information; it is as basic as getting information out. I attended a Cardiff County Council meeting last week on SEN inclusion policy for the foreseeable future. It was attended by parents and teachers. When we started to unpick what we meant by SEN provision, it was clear that the teachers were not aware of the breadth that we would be dealing with at a university level and that we are legally required to deal with. The parents had limited expectations with regard to their children's abilities, because that is the message that they are hearing all the time. We need to make connections, because there is a real disconnect at the moment between the school system and where we are. We all have widening-access teams, which go out into the community and promote the university and the ways in which we can tackle certain issues. Even so, people are not engaging with it. This is where the new public sector duty, through the amendment to the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, is useful. Institutions such as mine have to produce disability equality schemes. Therefore, there would be a requirement on the Minister and her department to say, 'You have produced this scheme. How does that connect with people further down the food chain, as it were? What work are you doing to ensure that information gets out?'. However, you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink. This is one of the difficulties that I face. To give them the benefit of the doubt, there is probably a lot of good practice in schools, but teachers are under a huge amount of pressure. If they do not have to deal with something here and now, right in front of them, then it may not be a major priority for them.

[335] The final example that I have relates to a former student of mine, who read for a degree in product engineering and went on to do a postgraduate certificate of education. The student was dyslexic. His dyslexia was diagnosed by us in his second year at university; he had managed to bumble his way through up to that point. He is now working in a school in Newport and is acting as a role model for deprived and disadvantaged children who find it difficult to access education in the traditional sense. His skills are in craft, design and technology, and woodwork. He has seen children who have ability, but who do not have a statement, school action plus or anything like that in place even though they are struggling. Where do they go next? They may be the next generation of plumbers or carpenters, but they are not being picked up in the school system and their abilities are not being recognised. I would like to leave the committee with this point: achievement is not just academic attainment; I am sure that we would all recognise that we are all good at different things. That student is good at practical things, but he would find a piece of written work far more difficult than one of his peers.

[336] **Peter Black:** We heard earlier about funding issues in further education. Are there any particular issues around funding for students with special educational needs in higher education that we might want to take up, for example, with HEFCW?

[337] **Ms Robson:** There are two basic funding models. The first is the funding that comes into the institution through HEFCW. It is not ring-fenced, but institutions are certainly encouraged to use it on disability support. To give you an example, we have the highest number of disabled students in Wales and we are currently getting around £80,000 in such

funding. That does not go anywhere near covering the expenses of my department; it does not even touch it. The main source of funding is through the disabled student allowance, which is made available by local education authorities. We must apply individually on each student's behalf to local education authorities, which all administer this wretched allowance differently, to ensure that students can get the support that they need in university.

[338] Broadly speaking, the disabled student allowance is a fantastic allowance. If you are going to get theoretical about it, it imposes the medical model on the system. I will not prolong that point, but that is not where we want to be. However, it is quite effective, because the money belongs to the student, not to the institution, so I cannot go in and say, 'I will have a bit of that, because my department is underfunded at the moment'. It is for the student. One of the big difficulties that we have with the DSA at the moment is the limitations on funding. Postgraduate DSAs are less than undergraduate DSAs. I am not sure why this is, because undertaking a postgraduate course requires a lot of work, but a postgraduate receives half of the amount compared with the undergraduate allowance. The Scottish Executive has addressed this. I do not have the data and I cannot remember the details, but it addressed this a few years ago and now its postgraduate DSA is equivalent to the undergraduate DSA. That facilitates access to go on to postgraduate education and the world beyond.

[339] One of the other difficulties with the DSA is that, for people with some impairments, the top level of funding is unrealistic in terms of meeting their needs. It is about £11,000 a year at the moment, but if you are profoundly deaf, that would not go anywhere near to meeting your needs. Consequently, the institution has to pick up the shortfall, which could be as much as £20,000. That is a lot of money. In terms of a multi-million pound budget, it is not a lot, but in terms of what I have to run my department, it is a substantial amount of money.

[340] **Peter Black:** I think that that is it. Thank you very much for your presentation; it was helpful.

[341] **Ms Robson:** Thank you for your time.

[342] **Peter Black:** That brings this meeting to a close.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 12.30 p.m.
The meeting ended at 12.30 p.m.*