



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

**Y Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu
The Enterprise and Learning Committee**

**Dydd Mercher, 30 Medi 2009
Wednesday, 30 September 2009**

Cynnwys
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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg. Mae hon yn fersiwn ddrafft o'r cofnod. Cyhoeddir fersiwn derfynol ymhen pum diwrnod gwaith.

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. This is a draft version of the record. The final version will be published within five working days.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Mick Bates	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Christine Chapman	Llafur Labour
Jeff Cuthbert	Llafur Labour
Paul Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Nerys Evans	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Gareth Jones	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Committee Chair)
Huw Lewis	Llafur Labour
David Melding	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Sandy Mewies	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Dr John Graystone	Prif Weithredwr, Fforwm Chief Executive, Fforwm
John Griffiths	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (y Dirprwy Weinidog dros Sgiliau) Assembly Member, Labour (the Deputy Minister for Skills)
Mike Hopkins	Pennaeth yr Adran Dysgu Gydol Oes a Darparwyr, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Head of Lifelong Learning and Providers Division, Welsh Assembly Government
Mark Jones	Pennaeth, Coleg Pen-y-bont Principal, Bridgend College
Dr Chris Llewelyn	Cyfarwyddwr Dysgu Gydol Oes a Hamdden, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru Director of Lifelong Learning and Leisure, Welsh Local Government Association
Vernon Morgan	Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaethau Plant, Cyngor Sir Caerfyrddin Director of Children's Services, Carmarthenshire County Council
Brian Robinson	Pennaeth, Coleg Sir Gâr Principal, Coleg Sir Gâr
Daisy Seabourne	Swyddog Polisi, Dysgu Gydol Oes, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru Policy Officer, Lifelong Learning, Welsh Local Government Association
Jane Woodley	Pennaeth y Polisi Trawsnewid, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Head of Transformation Policy, Welsh Assembly Government

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

Dan Collier	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Siân Phipps	Clerc Clerk
Anne Thomas	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members' Research Service

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.32 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.32 a.m.*

Cyflwyniad ac Ymddiheuriadau Introduction and Apologies

[1] **Gareth Jones:** Bore da a chroeso cynnes i gyfarfod y Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu. Yn ôl ein harfer, hoffwn atgoffa pawb i ddiffodd ffonau symudol ac unrhyw ddyfais electronig arall. Ni fydd angen cyffwrdd â'r microffonau yn ystod y trafodaethau. Nid ydym yn disgwyl ymarfer tân, felly os bydd argyfwng, rhaid inni adael yr ystafell o dan gyfarwyddyd y tywysyddion. Bydd y cyfarfod yn ddwyieithog. Mae clustffonau ar gael i glywed y gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd o'r Gymraeg i'r Saesneg ar sianel 1, ac i chwyddleisio'r sain ar sianel 0. Bydd cofnod o'r cyfan a ddywedir yn gyhoeddus.

Gareth Jones: Good morning and a warm welcome to this Enterprise and Learning Committee meeting. As usual, I remind everyone to switch off mobile phones and any other electronic devices. There will be no need to touch the microphones during our deliberations. We are not expecting a fire drill, so if there is an emergency, we will need to leave the room under the ushers' directions. The meeting will be bilingual. Headsets are available to hear the interpretation from Welsh to English on channel 1, and to amplify the sound on channel 0. There will be a record of all that is said publicly.

[2] Mae ymddiheuriad oddi wrth Jenny Randerson a chrosawn Mick Bates fel dirprwy i Jenny y bore yma. Deallaf fod rhaid i chi adael yn weddol fuan, ond croeso am y tro, ac edrychaf ymlaen at eich cyfraniad. Hoffwn hefyd eich llongyfarch am fod yn daid unwaith eto.

We have received an apology from Jenny Randerson and we welcome Mick Bates, who will be substituting for Jenny this morning. I understand that you have to leave soon, but we welcome you for the time being, and I look forward to your contribution. I would also like to congratulate you on becoming a grandfather once more.

9.33 a.m.

Yr Agenda Weddnewid ar gyfer Addysg Ôl 16 The Transformation Agenda for Post-16 Education

[3] **Gareth Jones:** Mae gennyf air byr o gefndir am yr eitem hon. Fel rhan o'r agenda weddnewid, mae Llywodraeth Cymru wedi addo,

Gareth Jones: I have some brief background information on this item. As part of the transformation agenda, the Government of Wales has promised to,

[4] 'trawsnewid y modd y darperir ac y cyflwynir dysgu.'

'transform the ways in which education and training provision is delivered.'

[5] ac yn enwedig ar gyfer dysgwyr ôl-16.

and particularly for post-16 learners.

[6] Mae wedi gofyn yn benodol i ddarparwyr addysg a hyfforddiant ôl-orfodol yng Nghymru i osod trefniadau sefydliadol, traddodiadol o'r neilltu a chynllunio darpariaeth ar y cyd.

It has asked specifically for post-compulsory education and training providers in Wales to move away from traditional, institutional arrangements and to plan joint provision.

[7] Yr ydym wedi penderfynu cynnal y sesiwn dystiolaeth hon gan fod gan y pwyllgor hwn ddiddordeb mewn gwybod pa gynnydd a gafwyd mewn gwahanol rannau o Gymru o ran integreiddio gwaith ysgolion, sefydliadau addysg bellach a darparwyr eraill, a'r effaith a gafodd hyn ar addysg yn y chweched dosbarth.

We have decided to hold this evidence session because the committee was interested in knowing what progress had taken place in various parts of Wales in the integration of the work of schools, further education institutions and other providers and the effect that that had on education in the sixth form.

[8] Mae hefyd faterion ariannu y dylem ac yr hoffem eu hystyried yn gysylltiedig â'r ailstrwythuro hwn. Wrth gwrs, mae'n bwysig ystyried yr effaith a gaiff yr agenda weddnewid ar ddisgyblion unigol, ar y dysgwyr a'r cyfleoedd a gânt i ddatblygu sgiliau lefel uwch yn y dyfodol. Yr ydym yn cydnabod hynny a dyna'r prif reswm y byddwn yn craffu ar berfformiad ein dysgwyr. Fodd bynnag, ar yr adeg hon, gan ei fod yn gynnar yn yr agenda weddnewid, hoffwn wybod sut mae pethau'n mynd a pha gynnydd sy'n cael ei wneud. Dyna pam yr ydym yn craffu ar y darparwyr a'r rhai sy'n gosod pethau at ei gilydd o ran y polisi. Mae llawer o ddiddordeb yn y maes, ond rhaid inni ddechrau yn rhywle. Ein prif nod yw craffu ar sut y mae pethau'n gweithio ar hyn o bryd a sut y mae pethau'n disgyn i'w lle. Gobeithiaf y bydd hynny yn ein hatgoffa o'r rheswm pam yr ydym yn cynnal y sesiwn hon ac yn craffu ar yr agenda weddnewid.

Funding issues are also linked to this restructuring, which we would like to, and should, consider. Of course, it is important to consider the effect that the transformation agenda will have on individual pupils and learners and the opportunities that they will have to develop high-level skills in the future. We recognise this, and it is the main reason for scrutinising the performance of our learners. However, at this point, since it is early days for the transformation agenda, I would like to know how things are going and what progress is being made. That is why we are scrutinising the providers and those who are putting the policy together. There is a lot of interest in this field, but we have to start somewhere. Our main aim is to scrutinise how things are working at the moment and how things are falling into place. I hope that that will remind us of the reason why we are holding this session and scrutinising the transformation agenda.

[9] Gyda'r cyflwyniad hwnnw, estynnaf groeso cynnes iawn i'r Dirprwy Weinidog dros Sgiliau, John Griffiths. Gyda chi y mae Mike Hopkins, pennaeth yr Adran Dysgu Gydol Oes a Darparwyr, a hefyd Jane Woodley, pennaeth y polisi gweddnewid. Croeso cynnes i chi. Yr wyf yn falch eich bod wedi gallu ymuno â ni. Gofynnaf am gyflwyniad byr o ryw bum munud, Ddirprwy Weinidog, ac wedyn cawn gyfle i ofyn cwestiynau.

With that introduction, I extend a warm welcome to the Deputy Minister for Skills, John Griffiths. You are accompanied by Mike Hopkins, the head of the Lifelong Learning and Providers Division, and Jane Woodley, the head of transformation policy. A warm welcome to you. I am pleased that you were able to join us. I ask for a brief introduction of about five minutes, Deputy Minister, and then we will ask questions.

[10] **The Deputy Minister for Skills (John Griffiths):** I am very pleased to have this opportunity to set out some comments on the progress made with the transformation policy during the last year. Back in 2008, 'Skills That Work for Wales' proposed the need for the transformation of post-16 education in Wales. Since then, we have made significant progress.

This agenda is being pursued through a combination of the national transformation framework and the development of local proposals. We have said all along that we want to work with the grain of local circumstances to make sure that local views inform progress on transformation and shape the configuration that emerges. In addition, we have said all along that the transformation policy is very closely aligned with the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009. They sit together and are about achieving the same things. It is through that approach that we will implement the transformation policy and the framework and, through the Measure, we will achieve the goals of offering an improved learner choice, tackling duplication, and providing more effective collaborative working in the sectors.

[11] With that background, I am pleased to say that all the stakeholders have responded positively to the agenda and have developed a range of proposals. All those proposals are currently being progressed and taken forward, with our officials working in close partnership with the learning partnerships. We have to work up more detail for implementation and that is currently taking place. We are pleased that all the proposals will lead to the progress that we want to see and that they all understand our agenda. The proposals coming forward are different in one part of Wales as compared with another, and that is necessarily the case, given the approach that we have adopted under the framework to allow local circumstances to inform provision. We will have to work with some learning partnerships more intensely, as it were, to make sure that the necessary progress is made and that that level of work is taking place.

[12] This policy will evolve in the light of the outcomes of the reviews of higher education, the review of further education governance and the review of the careers service. All that has to be knitted together and linked. So, right across the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills and all Welsh Assembly Government departments, we are making sure that key officials understand the transformation agenda and do what is necessary to make sure that it is a success.

9.40 a.m.

[13] The proposals that we have received recommend far-reaching and ambitious change, and they cover every local authority area and further education college in Wales. We believe that we have learning providers who are committed to partnership working and change, and to developing local solutions to local needs. By saying that it is the interests of the learners that must drive this, rather than the needs of any institution, I believe that the message has been firmly conveyed so that everybody understands that that must be uppermost in our minds as we take these important agendas forward.

[14] It is also important, as we have stressed all along, that the system meets the needs of the economy. Post-16 learners must have access to high-quality, cost-effective education and training, and a comprehensive choice of pathways into further learning and employment. These outcomes can be achieved only through a three-way transformation partnership between the Welsh Assembly Government, local authorities, and providers. That partnership really will bring together the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009, 'Skills That Work for Wales', the agenda for changing higher education, and transformation.

[15] In summary, Cadeirydd, I can say that significant progress has been made in post-16 education over the past year and before that, but we also know that much remains to be done to improve skills levels. We all know how crucial they are. We believe that that emerging pattern of provision under transformation builds on existing good practice, and it will support local authorities, schools, and the further and higher education sectors to make the necessary progress. We are therefore determined to keep the partnership in place and to work together for the benefit of Wales.

[16] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch yn fawr iawn, Ddirprwy Weinidog, am y cyflwyniad hwnnw. Ochr yn ochr â hwnnw, mae gennym eich papur. Yr ydych wedi mynd i fanylder ynddo, ac mae'n ddefnyddiol iawn, os caf ddweud, gan ei fod yn rhoi crynodeb effeithiol o'r hyn sy'n digwydd. Yr ydym ni, fel Aelodau yn ein hetholaethau, yn cael gwybod am yr hyn sy'n digwydd ar ein stepen drws. Diolch i chi am y wybodaeth, am y dystiolaeth ysgrifenedig, ac am y dystiolaeth lafar yr ydym newydd ei chlywed.

Gareth Jones: Thank you very much, Deputy Minister, for that presentation. To complement that, we have your paper, in which you have gone into detail. It is a very useful paper, if I may say so, because it presents an effective summary of what is happening. As Members in our constituencies, we get to know what is happening in our patch. Thank you for that information, for the written evidence, and for the oral evidence that we have just heard.

[17] Trown at yr Aelodau, sydd â chwestiynau i'w gofyn neu sylwadau i'w gwneud.

We turn now to the Members, who have questions to ask and comments to make.

[18] **Christine Chapman:** I want to say first, John, that this paper is very welcome. It talks about better choice and excellence, and they are important ideas. It is also about young people reaching their potential. I know that you do not specifically mention young people who have additional needs, but I just want to know how satisfied you are that their needs will be catered for. I know that this is a universal system, but I think that there is sometimes a danger with a universal system that the needs of those most in need might not be catered for. How satisfied are you that those young people will be included, whether in FE, school, or through training providers? Unfortunately—as you know, as I have written to you on this matter, Deputy Minister—there are some young people who still struggle, and parents still struggle with securing provision for their sons and daughters who have additional learning needs.

[19] **John Griffiths:** Our general approach to additional learning needs, Chris, is one of mainstreaming, and a lot of work has gone on over a considerable number of years to ensure that, wherever possible, the needs of those children, pupils, and young people are catered for in the generality of our provision through that mainstreaming approach. So, as such, they will benefit from the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009, from transformation policy, and from everything that we do to take forward our education and training systems.

[20] Particular policies are in place in schools and FE colleges to ensure that pupils' additional learning needs are properly catered for and that the necessary support is in place, and there are additional funding streams to address that. So, when you expand choice and open up pathways, the support and the funding is there to allow those who have additional learning needs to take proper advantage of that general policy development, just as any other pupil can.

[21] We are sensitive to those in special schools, who are not in mainstream education, and when we took the Measure forward we made sure that the particular circumstances of those schools and those pupils who need to be in a single school for all of their education are respected, so that they would not come under the general provisions of the Measure. We are trying, all the time, to get the appropriate balance between that mainstreaming approach and recognising that, for some pupils, you need to have them at one remove, as it were, from general developments. I think that we have got that balance right, but obviously, we need to ensure that we are always alive to the issues around additional learning needs as we take it forward and develop it. Again, we do that with all our partners and, with that partnership approach, we hope that we can overcome any problems and difficulties.

[22] **Sandy Mewies:** Thank you, Deputy Minister, for the paper and for what are, in many

ways, very exciting proposals. I have questions on two directions. The first is that the Welsh Local Government Association, in its paper to us, has raised some concerns about funding the work that needs to be done. One thing it is talking about is capital investment in the school estate. Most of us here know that there have been problems in the school estate, which the Welsh Assembly Government had aspirations to correct, over a timescale, which had not been achieved. Can you be sure that there will be sufficient capital funding available to put in place those things that will be needed, because the learning environment is important, wherever it is? It was also concerned about revenue costs, but you feel that many of these proposals will be cost-negative—not all, you do recognise that—and that the strategic capital investment fund will be able to cope with most.

[23] The other point is that, as I was reading this, I came across this programme, this strategy, this framework, when what I would like to see is a document that looks at them in the round, rather than looking at them individually. You are cross-referencing, and unless that is all that you do, it is quite difficult; I will lay that to one side. The reason for that is that this is quite a complicated transformation. There are several models open to local authorities to use and, looking at the models that they have put in, they have used them. Are you sure that there will be consistency of opportunity for every student in Wales, whatever their needs? There is a geographical model, so are you hoping that that will deal with situations in which you could cross the border into another local authority if you could not get something in your own area? Will that be the main tool used and, if it is, are you sure that it will succeed?

9.50 a.m.

[24] **John Griffiths:** Thanks, Sandy. There were a number of issues there. On funding, if we deal with revenue first, as you say, many of the proposals will be largely revenue-neutral and what we say is that, if we can get to better systems, better ways of doing things, by joining up, by collaboration, we can increase choice and drive up quality without any significant additional funding. In fact, we can get to much more effective and better use of public money, delivering more with the same, or even less, because there will be more efficient systems, better ways of organising and operating. In a recession, that is going to be ever more important. We know that public spending is going to tighten up considerably over several years, so getting to those better systems and better ways of doing things, is absolutely crucial. It is very positive in that respect, but obviously, you have to get to the better ways of doing things. In the interim period there is sometimes a need for pump-priming moneys on the revenue front. We have a budget of £3.75 million annually to provide some of that pump-priming, to help with feasibility studies, to help with consultancy work, to work up the business plans and get some detail into them. That money is there and it is being used for just that purpose.

[25] When it comes to capital, we have been clear all along that there are DCELLS capital moneys that can be used, and there is the twenty-first century schools programme. We have to make sure that all of this is knitted together and considered together when any proposals for capital spend are brought forward. Twenty-first century schools are vital in moving education forward and they need to factor in transformation and the Measure, because that is very much part of what they will be tasked with delivering. The strategic capital investment fund is also very important here and the rationale for that fund is that, where proposals come forward that involve a step change forward in delivery of public services and meet many of the cross-cutting Welsh Assembly Government priorities, those are suitable projects that, hopefully, will get funding. Quite a number of, particularly, the more radical proposals very much fit that bill and we expect to access that strategic capital investment funding for those proposals.

[26] It is very important, as you say, Sandy, to have equality of opportunity and a good degree of consistency right across Wales, and there is a balance to be achieved in allowing local partnerships and local circumstances to drive configuration and provision within the

framework, while at the same time achieving that consistency and equality right across Wales. The Measure is very important in that, because it will have that minimum number of choices that have to be delivered, duties to provide those and rights to have that provision. That will apply right across Wales and achieve that consistency.

[27] Cross-border arrangements, as you suggest, Sandy, are very much part of the picture and, again, they provide the necessary flexibility. Finally, the points that you rightly make, Sandy, about lots of things going on, lots of important strategies and policies being taken forward and the need to cross-reference one to another and to make them all link together effectively, are very well made. In November, we will publish a report on the journey, which is about transformation and about alignment and making those links, so that we look at all the cross-referencing that is necessary. It is also about spreading best practice, which is very useful for consistency. That will be important and we will have a conference and workshops, which will also help to achieve alignment and consistency.

[28] **Gareth Jones:** To pursue that, I think that Sandy has made an important point about reading the paper and the varied approach, which we all commend—there is no dissent there. You said you have faith in the Measure being strong enough to cater for that varied approach, but I also think, Deputy Minister, that that varied approach will represent a great challenge in monitoring consistency and delivery across Wales. This is not a question, it is an aspiration—I hope that, in the planning, due recognition will be given to effective monitoring and an ability to change if things do not meet the challenges, your own objectives and everyone else’s objectives in improving learner performance. I agree with that point raised by Sandy.

[29] **David Melding:** I just want to look at some of the economic aspects of what is being proposed, or the background against which they are being proposed. Since you brought forward these policies, the economic recession has hit with a vengeance. I hope that we are now coming out of that, but our biggest challenge is the situation in which unemployment has increased considerably and may increase further before it stabilises. Something like 40 per cent of the increase in unemployment is in the under-25 age group, it is a particular problem for people seeking their first job and we know that, if they do not get into the labour market or have a positive experience, initially, in the labour market, it can have a devastating impact on people’s working lives.

[30] I do not quite get a sense from this paper, which is mostly about structures, of whether you feel that the Government has responded by really looking at this issue and setting goals. For instance, since we know that we will have a lot of young people who will not go into the workplace as quickly as they would have liked, could we not be following the Leitch agenda a bit more radically, increasing the average skills level from two to three more quickly than we would have otherwise, or setting goals for retaining people in some form of education and training? For many of these people, there will not be that many alternatives and they may need to be in the sector a year or so longer than we might have anticipated otherwise. My first question, then, is how have you adapted your policy, given that we have more knowledge of the depth of the recession and its impact on unemployment in particular?

[31] I also have some concerns that one of the shortest sections in here is on work-based learning; it is paragraph 32, which is two crushingly boring sentences that do not tell us very much about work-based learning, which seems to be a key priority now, given that the Government’s biggest scheme in response to the recession is ProAct, which is all about work-based learning. That is an example of how it is difficult to see, from your written evidence, how responsive you have been and what is now being done differently, or in greater volume than anticipated, in response to the economic situation. That is my principal question.

[32] My second question follows on from what Christine said. I do not see much clear evidence of how we are engaging groups such as the people with additional learning needs

and—I would add another category—the care leavers. We have a record number of people in care now, over 4,000, and we know that they need very special strategies to get them into the labour market and if we do not get them there, they are vulnerable to all sorts of abuse and difficulties. I would have liked to have seen a bit more on some of these groups that we are in a position to help, because we can come up with specialist schemes and they people who, without support, will have much worse outcomes than the general population, many of whom muddle through somehow. That second question perhaps amplifies what Christine has already raised.

[33] **John Griffiths:** Thanks, David. First of all, on the recession, as I said, it makes it ever more important that we get to the better ways of doing things and the better systems. That is the starting point. When we look at the effects of the recession and the tightening-up of public spending, it is ever more important that we take the transformation policy forward effectively and in a timely manner. Of course, there is much else going on around the Welsh Assembly Government's response to the recession and part of that is working with the UK Government. We have done some things under our own steam; we have, for example, expanded SkillBuild, which is very important for young people in getting the skills levels that, as you said, David, they will need if they are to get into work and play a part in building the economy here in Wales.

10.00 a.m.

[34] So, that has been expanded and additional funding has been devoted to that. We are very keen to make sure that apprenticeship places are not reduced because of the recession, or that the opportunities to take them up are not falling away. We have two schemes specifically for this time of recession to make sure that our young people get into useful activity. One is pathways to apprenticeships, which is for one year, is college-based, and involves quite intensive learning, but it has buy-in from employers so, after the first year, learners will have a place with an employer. We also have our young recruits' scheme. That involves giving employers a wage subsidy so that they take on apprentices during the recession; otherwise, they would not be able to do so.

[35] There is a huge amount of work going on around the UK Government's youth guarantee. For example, £1 billion has been given for the Future Jobs fund, which applies across the UK. There are three options: training, a work-based learning pathway, and a community taskforce. We work with the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus on all those, particularly with the training, as well as general support and advice.

[36] We have also increased support and mentoring through our learning coach system, which is important to make sure that all our young people have all the advice that they need about the recession, its impact, what it means for them, and what their best options are. Hopefully, it will convince some of them of the case for staying on in learning and of the advantages of doing that.

[37] There is a huge amount going on as part of the Welsh Assembly Government's response to the recession. As we discussed earlier, we have to make the links with the transformation policy, through the Measure, and taking all that forward. It is about a short-term response to the recession but also about staying on track for the medium and long term.

[38] I take your point about the work-based learning paragraph. It is always difficult to strike a balance between keeping a paper quite brief for the committee, as we are always urged to, and getting in a meaningful amount of detail. With the work-based learning position, the timescale of the contractual position is a little different. When we go out for the next tendering exercise for work-based learning provision, we have to be confident that we have fully integrated work-based learning into our transformation strategy. There is a lot of work

going on from officials and with key partner organisations to make sure that that is the case.

[39] There are Wales-wide proposals for the transformation of work-based learning. We are working on the detail with stakeholders to understand that better, and understand how we can move things forward and meet the needs of the framework. There is a lot of work going on around the detail and, hopefully, we will be in a better position some way down the track to inform the committee of what will emerge from that.

[40] I know that David and other committee members have long taken a keen interest in the situation of care leavers in Wales. They are a vulnerable group who have a great many needs and they suffer from all sorts of barriers that we have to make sure they can overcome. You mentioned additional learning needs, David, and the same considerations apply; they will benefit from the generality of development and direction, as well as the learning coaches in the school who offer greater mentoring and support. They will also benefit from the opening up of choice, greater vocational pathways, the rights that they will have under the Measure and the duties that will apply to them and to all other learners. All that will be extremely important. What you say flags up the need to make the links, to understand what else the Welsh Assembly Government is doing to help care leavers and to see how we can factor that in properly to transformation policy. Following your remarks, David, we will give extra thought to that and to how we take forward the particular situation of care leavers.

[41] **David Melding:** Given that it is a short session, I will not follow that up.

[42] **Gareth Jones:** I think that Christine wants to follow up on a specific point.

[43] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, just briefly, Chair. Deputy Minister, on work-based learning and the apprenticeships, I have had cases and I have written to you about young people who still have to find their own placements. That might be fine for some young people if they have support, contacts and parents who are working, but it is vulnerable young people who may not have the support and the wherewithal, and that is where the devil is in the detail. It is about inequalities. I wondered whether you had any comments on that.

[44] **John Griffiths:** Absolutely. The review of the careers service is important in helping to ensure that all that advice and support is put in place, particularly as you say, Chris, for youngsters who do not have much parental support and who need additional help. The careers service gets into schools, and we also have the learning coaches. Those developments will be important for the young people who require that additional support, advice, guidance and mentoring.

[45] We are doing a lot on apprenticeships. There is to be a matching service, a website, on which employers will detail the apprenticeship opportunities and places that they have available, and young people looking for apprenticeships will register. So, hopefully, we can match supply with demand. An apprenticeship unit within the Welsh Assembly Government is to be tasked with making sure that all that works properly, and that whatever needs to happen to open up apprenticeship opportunities happens, so that young people all understand their value and that they can lead to worthwhile careers. However, I take your point, Chris, that no matter what we are doing around transformation policy or the Measure, we have to ensure that young people in the most difficult circumstances know about and take those opportunities. Whatever emerges from the Careers Wales review will be important in that regard, as are the other things that I have mentioned.

[46] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you, Deputy Minister, for the paper and the comments that you have made so far. It goes without saying that I put my complete weight behind the transformation agenda and I understand its relevance.

[47] My question follows on from David's on the economy. As you mentioned, it is crucial. The future of our people and the economy are intertwined. The only point on which I differ with David was when he talked about work-based learning and the use of ProAct. While ProAct is about learning in the workplace, it is more about keeping existing employees in employment by developing new skills. This, of course, deals with medium to longer-term policies and is about giving younger people the very best chance in life.

[48] There are many issues, for me, but among the most important is the attitude of employers. They are crucial to this. Most young people will be looking at education and training as a means to decent employment. That is a perfectly laudable and logical goal. We have to ensure that the system is up to that. I am a great believer in that commanding the full collaboration and participation of employers through whichever mechanism they choose to use. As you know—and I have mentioned this before—we have invested a lot of time, effort and money in the development of the sector skills councils to act as a vehicle for their occupational areas. My questions are on that.

10.10 a.m.

[49] How well do you feel that the sector skills councils are up to the job now, after years of development and investment? Undoubtedly some are ahead of others—that is understandable. Do you feel that the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils is now adequately resourced to play the co-ordinating role that it should be playing and to make sure that employers generally are on board and are as effective as they can be in seeking to influence this policy?

[50] As a final point, I was very interested to read in the report, although I knew about it anyway, about ConstructionSkills Wales—the establishment of the national construction centre, which I applaud. I am interested to know whether you think that that type of model would be a good approach for adoption by other occupational areas.

[51] **John Griffiths:** I think that you are absolutely right about the importance of employers and the attitude of employers. It is an obvious thing to say but it bears repeating many times. No matter what we try to do to create good quality employment and opportunities, to get out of economic inactivity into work, for example, we have to have that buy-in from employers. Whatever aspect of policy relating to skills for work and tackling that terrible problem of economic inactivity, which is very bad in Wales—whether it is work-focused interviews, extended work experience or job opportunities or apprenticeships—employer buy-in, engagement and participation are crucial as they have the jobs and the opportunities. There is an awful lot of work going on around achieving that employer buy-in—local employment partnerships, for example. The DWP is doing a great deal of work, particularly around training elements as well as general support and assistance, and we work with them, as I mentioned earlier.

[52] I hope, therefore, that over the years a great deal of progress has been made in Wales on getting that necessary employer involvement. There is much already in place to build on but it is always possible to improve the situation and we have to listen to employers and understand their needs. When they tell us that they want young people who are employment-ready, with employability skills, as they term it, we have to ensure that our systems provide those sorts of skills to a greater extent than has happened in the past. The Welsh baccalaureate is important in that regard. It is increasingly valued by employers and in general because it gives that wider learning experience. It is about team working and problem solving, good communication, good basic skills, extended work experience and good community involvement. It produces young people who are perhaps more rounded in their learning experience and employers tell us that that is very much what they want.

[53] It is a two-way equation, therefore. If we can listen to employers and provide the sort of skills and abilities that will help them take their businesses and the economy forward then we are more likely to get those employers listening to us when we ask them to take part in various schemes and fit in with our strategies and ways of doing things.

[54] Many useful things have happened on that front that we need to drive forward. The sector skills councils are crucial to that because they are tasked with understanding the demands of employers and helping to ensure that the necessary skills are provided. They are going through a re-licensing process at the moment, which is very important because that aims to make those sector skills councils more fit for purpose right across the UK so that they provide more intelligent and more accurate labour market information—what skills are needed now; what skills will be needed in the future.

[55] The UK Commission for Employment and Skills is taking forward that re-licensing work but we have a huge part to play as Ministers in that because the component parts of the UK—ourselves, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the UK Government—are taking the process forward. We also have our Wales Employment and Skills Board, which is part of that work. Members of the Wales Employment and Skills Board are on the working groups under the UK commission dealing with the re-licensing process. We expect that what will emerge from that are sector skills councils that can do what you rightly say needs to be done, Jeff, to ensure that we work more closely with employers, understand the demands of employers and provide the skills that they need. We want to ensure that that happens here in Wales.

[56] The alliance is important. The networking of the sector skills councils will be very much part of the work of the UK commission around re-licensing and, again, the working of our Wales Employment and Skills Board.

[57] On the ConstructionSkills centre, it is open to other sectors to tell us what they think should happen as far as the provision of skills and the provider configuration is concerned, and we are open to ideas. We listen to the sectors, we listen to the sector skills councils and when proposals come forward we will consider them in the light of transformation and general policy direction.

[58] **Paul Davies:** In your paper you mentioned that the time frames for full implementation of transformational change across Wales will vary in line with the scale of resource demands of the plans and will also depend on the outcome for any statutory procedures. Nevertheless you go on to say that it is expected that 60 per cent of all learning partnerships should be implementing approved models for change by September 2010 and the remainder by September 2011. Are you confident that these timescales will be met because further on in your paper you say that complex arrangements will have to be implemented in certain areas which will take a bit more time? Are you confident that you will meet these timescales?

[59] Secondly, I want to touch upon funding and pursue what Sandy raised earlier. I think you said that most of the implementation of the transformation agenda will be cost-neutral but in your paper you acknowledge that the transformation policy is not expected to be cost neutral and that it is anticipated that revenue costs will be affordable within the DCELLS strategic budget. Are you able to give us an indication of any costings at this stage?

[60] Another of your aims in the paper is to ensure that new network configurations do not unnecessarily decrease travel to learn time. How do you intend to guarantee that, especially in a rural constituency like mine?

[61] **John Griffiths:** We have been considerably encouraged by the rate of progress to date, as set out in the paper provided to the committee. It has been very encouraging that

learning partnerships right across Wales have understood the agenda and have worked closely with the Welsh Assembly Government and our officials in taking things forward. It is that rate of progress and the drivers that we have put in place, such as the Measure, for working with transformation policy that leads us to believe that 60 per cent of the proposals will be implemented by September next year and the remainder by the autumn of the following year. We think that they are achievable and realistic timescales.

[62] You mentioned some of the things that need to be put in place for those timescales to be achieved. We have to continue to work to ensure that those aspects are in place in a timely fashion to allow those time estimates to be met. I am not saying that we do not have to continue to work at it because we do. There is this week-in-week-out process of going through detail, working out proposals, discussion and debate between our officials and the learning partnerships right across Wales. We have been clear that it will be a phased process. Capital is limited even if we can access the strategic capital investment fund as we would wish. Some proposals will be ready to go; others will have to go through statutory processes and we will be in a position to need that capital funding a little further down the track.

10.20 a.m.

[63] It is about managing the process and understanding when moneys need to be in place, given all of the processes that must be gone through. We feel that the timescales that we have set out are realistic, and we have seen impressive progress to date, which is very encouraging. Many of the proposals will be cost-neutral, but nonetheless we have £3.75 million available annually to help with the necessary work, as I mentioned earlier. Experience to date has been that that pot of money is adequate to achieve the task set out for it. We have no reason to believe that that will not continue to be the case, but, as ever, we continually review budgets on an annual basis and more regularly. We have the bigger learner provision budget available to us to take forward education and training in Wales. We keep a weather eye on all of that, but at the moment the £3.75 million has been adequate for the pump-priming and getting the new systems in place in revenue terms.

[64] On travel, we take our climate change and sustainability responsibilities very seriously. We also do not wish for learners to spend great amounts of time travelling when they could be in a learning environment getting the education and training that they need. We have said all along that it is not a matter of just expecting learners to travel, and that we would also expect lecturers and teachers to travel to some extent. We also expect the new technologies to be widely used. It is blended learning, and it works well—it is a combination of traditional face-to-face learning and the distance learning that the new technologies make possible. There are some interesting developments in Torfaen at the moment around a digital learning plaza, which we think is important and worth while. As ever, we would seek to spread good practice and best practice across Wales. The new technologies have changed the picture when it comes to learning, and we must ensure that they are properly and fully used.

[65] **Nerys Evans:** Yr wyf yn amlwg yn croesawu'r egwyddor y tu ôl i'r agenda weddnewid, sef ehangu'r ddarpariaeth o gyrsiau sydd ar gael. Fodd bynnag, ni fydd yn eich synnu fy mod yn mynd i'ch holi am bobl sy'n dysgu drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg. Mae'r sefyllfa yn warthus mewn colegau addysg bellach o ran darpariaeth addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg. Yr ydych yn sôn yn eich tystiolaeth eich bod yn gofyn am achosion busnes a fydd yn amlinellu sut y bydd addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg yn cael ei ddatblygu. Yn sgîl hynny

Nerys Evans: I obviously welcome the principle behind the transformation agenda of expanding the provision of the courses that are available. However, it will not surprise you that I am going to ask you about the people who learn through the medium of Welsh. The situation is dire in further education colleges with regard to Welsh-medium education provision. You mention in your evidence that you ask for business cases that outline how Welsh-medium education will be developed. In the light of that and in

ac yn sgîl amserlen y Mesur 14 i 19 yn cael ei dderbyn ym mis Mawrth, bydd egwyddorion sylfaenol dilyniant ieithyddol a hyrwyddo addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg wedi cael eu derbyn. Mae'r ymgynghoriad ar y strategaeth ddrafft ar addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg hefyd wedi dod i ben ychydig o wythnosau yn ôl. Wrth edrych ar yr amserlen ar gyfer cynlluniau trawsnewid, yr oedd cynlluniau rhai awdurdodau lleol i fod i gael eu cyflwyno erbyn mis Ionawr y flwyddyn hon. A ydych yn fodlon bod yr amserlenni hynny yn gweithio'n iawn gyda'i gilydd? Beth fydd y broses o fwydo'r newidiadau sylfaenol hynny yn y polisi cenedlaethol i'r cynlluniau lleol? Yr wyf wedi sôn sawl tro yn y Siambr am enghreifftiau lleol lle nad yw awdurdodau lleol yn ystyried newidiadau yn y polisiâu cenedlaethol wrth ddatblygu cynlluniau lleol. Yn sgîl y Mesur, a yw'n wir i ddweud na fyddwch yn cymeradwyo unrhyw gynlluniau lleol a fydd yn israddio neu'n camu'n ôl o ymrwymadau ar gyfer addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg?

the light of the timetable for the 14 to 19 Measure being accepted in March, the basic principles of linguistic continuity and the promotion of Welsh-medium education will have been accepted. The consultation on the draft strategy on Welsh-medium education also came to an end a few weeks ago. In looking at the timetable for local authorities to come out with their proposals, the proposals of some authorities had to be in by January of this year. Are you content that those timetables will work together? What is the process of feeding those fundamental changes in the national policy into the local plans? I have mentioned local examples many times in the Chamber where local authorities do not consider changes in the national policy when developing local plans. In light of the Measure, will you be approving any local plans which will downgrade or take a step back with regard to the commitments for Welsh-medium education?

[66] Yn olaf, sut y byddwch yn asesu realiti'r sefyllfa ar lawr gwlad? Mewn nifer o ysgolion a cholegau addysg bellach, yr wyf yn ymwybodol eu bod yn sôn am bynciau sy'n cael eu cynnig drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, ond y realiti yn y dosbarth yw, pan fo llwyth o blant a dim ond canran fach yn siarad Cymraeg, bod iaith y dosbarth yn troi i'r Saesneg, ond maent yn cael eu cyfrif fel pynciau sy'n cael eu cynnig drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg. Felly, a ydych yn barod i edrych ar y ffordd yr ydych yn casglu data i sicrhau eu bod yn adlewyrchu'r realiti o ran faint o gyrsiau a ddysgir yn bur drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, yn hytrach na'r rhai sy'n cael eu cynnig drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg?

Finally, how will you assess the reality at grassroots level? In many schools and further education colleges, I am aware that they talk about subjects that are offered through the medium of Welsh, but the reality in the classroom is that when there are a classes of children with only a small number of Welsh speakers, the language of the classroom will turn to English, but those subjects are classed as subjects that are being offered through the medium of Welsh. Therefore, are you willing to look at how you gather data to ensure that they reflect the reality of the number of courses that are taught purely through the medium of Welsh, rather than number offered through the medium of Welsh?

[67] **John Griffiths:** I spoke earlier about alignment, and ensuring that transformation and the Measure sit well with other policy developments. I mentioned a November report following on from a conference and workshop, and it will be very much about the alignment of transformation with other major policy developments. The Welsh-medium education strategy is obviously crucial to all of the questions that you raise, Nerys. We will have to wait to see what the final strategy is, but it is clear that there will be strong elements of proper data collection and regional planning, to ensure that demand is properly assessed and met. That Welsh-medium education strategy will be important in taking all of this forward.

[68] Although, as you say, the timing of different developments can never be entirely on the same footing, because that is not the way that strategies or Governments work, we have the Welsh language unit within the Welsh Assembly Government to make the links across departments and ensure that the strategy is being developed. It is informed by other strategies

and developments, and there is a joining-up of the Welsh Assembly Government's responsibilities, departments and portfolios. None of this has developed in isolation, so far as Welsh-medium provision is concerned, and the Measure is important as well, because it contains statutory drivers, and involves rights and duties. It is positive on the Welsh-medium front, and it has also been beefed up, if you like, during its progress through the Assembly.

[69] There are duties to promote access and availability, and we have seen an increase in provision through the medium of Welsh under the 14 to 19 learning pathways, and in particular, the dedication of parts of the budget available to that building-up of Welsh-medium provision. There are some interesting things happening around new technologies, which is important, and sabbaticals to ensure that we have more staff available to deliver our education and training through the medium of Welsh. A lot has gone on, and the Welsh-medium education strategy will be important in giving focus, and working with transformation and the Measure, and I am confident, Nerys, that what emerges from that will be sufficiently robust on the Welsh-medium front to meet the concerns that you have expressed.

[70] **Gareth Jones:** I will make a couple of observations. On Nerys's point about Welsh-medium education, I know that it is early days, but we are committed to a coleg ffederal, and I would have liked to see some reference to it in your paragraphs on the higher education review. You mentioned some exciting developments like the complex transformational plans, the Merthyr learning quarter and the Blaenau Gwent learning zone, and I would like to think that the coleg ffederal would have a role to play in developing that transformation agenda. I accept that it is early days, and the coleg ffederal itself is still being developed.

[71] My only other observation follows on from what David Melding and Jeff Cuthbert said. My concern is that a lot will depend on the learning partnerships, and on how receptive, developmental and responsive to change they are, as far as the Welsh economy is concerned, for example. I would like to think that they will be alert, and will have mechanisms in place. For example, if you have a green jobs strategy, which is a real initiative from the Government, I would hope that these partnerships will be aware of such strategies and will respond to them. I am not quite au fait with how they relate to Careers Wales, but this is about the linkage between the employers and the prospects, as it were, for jobs in Wales.

10.30 a.m.

[72] Again, coming back to Sandy's point about the five or seven various organisations that you have, I very much hope that they will all be equally responsive and alert to the changing needs in Wales. Those are just a couple of observations from the chair.

[73] Diolch am ganiatáu hynny. Ar y nodyn hwnnw, ar ran y pwyllgor, hoffwn ddiolch yn fawr iawn i chi am ddod atom y bore yma, ac am y dystiolaeth a gyflwynwyd gennych. Yn sicr, mae lle inni ystyried ymhellach a gwerthfawrogwn y ffaith eich bod wedi rhoi'r darlun inni o'r cynnydd, a'r hyn sy'n digwydd o safbwynt yr agenda weddnewid. Dymunwn bob llwyddiant ichi yn y gwaith pwysig sydd o'ch blaenau.

Thank you for allowing me to do that. On that note, I would like to thank you, on behalf of the committee, for attending the meeting this morning and for your evidence. Certainly, there is room for us to consider these issues further and we are grateful for your update on progress and for telling us what is happening with the transformation agenda. We wish you every success in this important work.

[74] **John Griffiths:** Diolch yn fawr, **John Griffiths:** Thank you, Chair.
Gadeirydd.

[75] **Gareth Jones:** Trown yn awr at ail **Gareth Jones:** We now turn to the second

ran y sesiwn graffu. Estynnaf groeso cynnes i gynrychiolwyr Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru a Chymdeithas Cyfarwyddwyr Addysg Cymru. Yma, ar ran CLILC, y mae Dr Chris Llewelyn, sef cyfarwyddwr dysgu gydol oes y gymdeithas, a Daisy Seabourne, sef swyddog polisi dysgu gydol oes y gymdeithas. Hefyd, croesawn Vernon Morgan, cyfarwyddwr gwasanaethau plant Cyngor Sir Caerfyrddin, sydd yma fel cynrychiolydd Cymdeithas Cyfarwyddwyr Addysg Cymru. Diolch am eich papur ac am y dystiolaeth ysgrifenedig. Gan ein bod wedi cael cyfle i ddarllen y papur, a chan fod amser yn ein herbyn y bore yma, hoffwn droi at gwestiynau Aelodau yn syth, a chewch ymhelaethu fel y dymunwch ar unrhyw agwedd sydd yn y papur. Trof at Nerys Evans i ofyn y cwestiwn cyntaf.

[76] **Nerys Evans:** Diolch am eich tystiolaeth. Hoffwn ofyn dwy set o gwestiynau; y naill yn ymwneud â'r amserlenni, a'r llall ynglŷn ag addysg Gymraeg. Yr ydych yn eithaf beirniadol yn eich tystiolaeth o'r amserlen a osodwyd gan Lywodraeth y Cynulliad i awdurdodau lleol i osod eu cynlluniau. A ydych yn hapus bod pob cyngor wedi cael digon o amser i baratoi cynlluniau? A ydyw'r cynlluniau, a baratowyd ar frys, yn ddigon cadarn? A fyddai'r cynlluniau yn wahanol pe baech wedi cael mwy o amser i'w paratoi?

[77] O ran addysg Gymraeg, mae'n amlwg, ers i awdurdodau lleol ddechrau ar y gwaith o baratoi cynlluniau trawsnewid, cafwyd datganiadau eithaf cadarn sy'n newid polisi cenedlaethol gan Lywodraeth y Cynulliad, gyda gwelliannau i'r Mesur 14 to 19, er enghraifft, ynglŷn â hyrwyddo addysg Gymraeg, a'r strategaeth ddrafft ar addysg Gymraeg. Sut mae'r newidiadau hyn yn y polisi cenedlaethol wedi bwydo i mewn i'r newidiadau i'r cynlluniau trawsnewid ar lefel awdurdod lleol?

[78] **Dr Llewelyn:** Fe wnaf i sôn yn gyntaf am y lefel genedlaethol, ac efallai y gall Vernon a Daisy gynnig mewnbwn o ran gwybodaeth leol. O ran yr amserlen, yr ydym cydnabod, pan gyflwynir y cyfryw newidiadau, fod rhaid gosod rhyw fath o amserlen yn ei lle.

part of the scrutiny session. I extend a warm welcome to representatives of the Welsh Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Education in Wales. Here, on behalf of the WLGA we have Dr Chris Llewelyn, who is the director of lifelong learning, and Daisy Seabourne, who is policy officer for lifelong learning within the WLGA. We also welcome Vernon Morgan, who is the director of children services for Carmarthenshire County Council and who is here to represent ADEW. Thank you for your paper and for your written evidence. As we have had an opportunity to read the paper, and as time is against us this morning, I would like go straight to Members' questions, and you can expand, as you wish, on any aspects of the paper. I invite Nerys Evans to ask the first question.

Nerys Evans: Thank you for your evidence. I would like to ask two sets of questions; on timetabling and Welsh-medium education respectively. You are quite critical in your evidence of the timetable set by the Assembly Government for local authorities to set out their plans. Are you content that every council has been given adequate time to prepare their plans? Are the schemes, which were drawn up quickly, robust enough? Would the schemes look different had you had more time to prepare them?

With regard to the Welsh-medium element, obviously, since local authorities started the work of drawing up their transformation plans, there have been some quite robust statements that change national policy at the Assembly Government level, with amendments to the 14 to 19 Measure, for example, for the promotion of Welsh-medium education and the draft strategy on Welsh-medium education. How have these changes to national policy fed into the changes to the transformation plans at a local authority level?

Dr Llewelyn: I will start by referring to the national issues, and then perhaps Vernon and Daisy will have input with regard to more local aspects. On the timetable, we recognise that when such changes are introduced, some sort of timetable must be put in place.

[79] Mae'n hawdd bwrw amheuaeth yn erbyn unrhyw amserlen pan fo newidiadau mawr fel hyn yn cael eu cyflwyno. Mae'n hawdd dweud, 'Nid yw hyn yn rhesymol ac mae angen mwy o amser'. Yr ydym yn cydnabod hynny, ond, yn y cyswllt hwn, teimlwn pe bai mwy o drafodaeth o flaen llaw wedi digwydd, neu pe bai'r cyfnod i'rartneriaid ddod ynghyd i lunio'u cynlluniau wedi bod ychydig yn hirach, efallai y byddai'r sefyllfa yn gyffredinol wedi bod yn hwylusach.

It is easy to cast doubt upon any timetable when major changes are introduced. It is easy to say, 'This isn't reasonable and we need more time'. We recognise that, but, in this regard, we feel that if there had been more discussion beforehand, or if the period for the various partners to come together to draw up their plans had been slightly longer, perhaps the situation would have been easier to deal with in general.

[80] O ran ail elfen eich cwestiwn, nid wyf yn siŵr pa fath o amserlen a fyddai wedi bod yn ddelfrydol. Nid wyf yn siŵr beth yw'r ateb cywir i hynny. Y gwir yw bod y gwahanol awdurdodau yn wynebu gwahanol amgylchiadau ar eu taith. Yr oedd rhai awdurdodau wedi cychwyn ar y daith cyn i'r agenda weddnewid gael ei gyflwyno, ac nid oedd rhai awdurdodau, am wahanol resymau, wedi delio â'r materion hyn cyn cyhoeddi'r ddogfen ymgynghori a'r amserlen. Felly, byddai'r ymateb yn amrywio tipyn o awdurdod i awdurdod.

With regard to the second part of your question, I am not sure what kind of timetable would have been ideal. I am not exactly sure what the correct answer to that is. The truth is that the various authorities face differing circumstances on their journey. Some authorities had started the journey before the transformation agenda had been introduced, and some authorities, for different reasons, had not dealt with these issues before the publication of the consultation document and the timetable. Therefore, the response would vary from one authority to another.

[81] O ran trydedd elfen eich cwestiwn, sef a fyddai gwell cynlluniau wedi'u datblygu pe bai mwy o amser wedi bod ar gael, yr wyf tybio y byddai hynny wedi bod yn wir. Fodd bynnag, efallai beth sydd ei angen ar y broses gyfan yw'r math o hyblygrwydd sy'n caniatáu i'r gwahanol bartneriaid ddatblygu eu cynlluniau wrth i'r broses fynd yn ei blaen. Felly, rhaid inni fod yn amyneddgar ac yn hyblyg gyda'r awdurdodau hynny sydd yn cychwyn y daith ac yn dechrau'r broses yn hwyrach.

With regard to the third element of your question, on whether better plans would have been developed if there had been more time available, I would have thought that that would be the case. However, perhaps what the process as a whole requires is the kind of flexibility that allows the various partners to develop their own plans as the process progresses. So, we must be patient and flexible with those authorities that have started their journey and the process later than others.

[82] **Mr Morgan:** I can give you only a local impression, although I have a reasonable overview of what is happening across the country, through the Association of Directors of Education in Wales. I wish to draw your attention to what needs to be in place initially in one county council, and, if I may, I will draw your attention to what is happening in Carmarthenshire?

[83] Carmarthenshire is a large authority, which can be divided into three districts: the Llanelli area; Carmarthen itself; and the Dinefwr area. The question of whether we are making good progress depends on exactly which area and which stage of development you are talking about. We are fortunate because we had a lifelong learning opportunities group that was established in 1996, a community consortia for education that took over from that at a later stage, and then a learning pathways strategy. I mention that because you have to build partnership over a period of time. Partnership is not something that you can force-feed; you

must win hearts and minds and confidence. We are very fortunate because all of that is very much in place.

[84] On plans for Llanelli, we have placed a bid to the Assembly to support us in developing a vocational village concept, and the reason why we have done that is because there is tertiary education in Llanelli. Our young people leave our schools and move on to Coleg Sir Gâr, or to colleges elsewhere. So, the context in Llanelli is very different from that of Carmarthen.

[85] There is a particular set of challenges in Carmarthenshire. We work closely with our neighbours, particularly Ceredigion, and if you just look at the border area, which you would be interested in, we have Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn, which is in Carmarthenshire, Cardigan Secondary School, and Ysgol Dyffryn Teifi. In fact, the director of education and I made a presentation to colleagues in Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn two weeks ago. It will take time before it progresses, because relationships are comparatively new and because these relationships must be developed from scratch. However, the strength is that the three schools have been co-operating and working through a system called Camu 6, to ensure that our young people have the wide range of opportunities that they deserve. We are tracked on what is called a category B, which means that we must ensure that all our young people have the opportunities to receive 26 subject choices this year; it will be 28 next year and 30 by the following year. We are reasonably confident that we can secure that in that area, but only by the deep integration of those three schools working together, so we are working towards that.

10.40 a.m.

[86] It seems inevitable that we will have to spend some capital funding to enhance what is available in the Towy valley. The fact that it will be working across two significant authorities should not matter; it is the needs of the young people that matter. In Dinefwr, which is particularly interesting, we have been working with the Assembly Government on tri-level reform for the past 18 months to two years. A report has been commissioned by the Assembly Government to be delivered in a fortnight's time, tracking the process of tri-level reform. That has been instrumental in getting the five schools in that area to agree through consensus, working with the voluntary sector, Coleg Sir Gâr, the Assembly Government and us, to come back to three settings. We describe them as three settings because we believe that schooling itself needs to change significantly in the future, so the range of services offered from a setting as opposed to, say, a school will have to increase quite substantially in the future. The schools that I am referring to are Pantycelyn, Tregib, Gwendraeth, Maes yr Yrfa and Amman Valley.

[87] The reason the Assembly Government wanted to be involved in progressing tri-level working, which is the proper way to create partnerships, was because it is, in many ways, a microcosm of Wales. You have a post-industrial area in Ammanford and further up the valley, a strong agricultural base in Llandovery, small market towns such as Llandeilo, and areas where the Welsh language is the first language, which we have to respect fully, others that are anglicised, and others that could be described as bilingual. So, that area faces many of the challenges that we are facing in Wales as a whole.

[88] To ensure that the three settings reflect the needs of our community, we have sent out questionnaires and held discussions with all the parents of children in primary schools, who are the people who will be affected in the future. Based on their consensus, it is clear to us that, in the three learning settings, there will be enhanced provision for the Welsh language. This may come back to revenue funding. We are all chasing capital funding, too, but revenue funding will have to be provided not just for the 30 subjects that I referred to earlier, but for 60 subjects, because they will have to be developed in both languages to represent the needs of our young people and the policies of the Assembly Government. So, there are issues with

that, and I would be happy to answer any further questions that you may have.

[89] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch yn fawr. **Gareth Jones:** Thank you very much. I see Gwelaf fod hynny yn ateb eich cwestiwn, that that answers your question, Nerys, so we Nerys, felly trown yn lle at Paul Davies. now turn to Paul Davies.

[90] **Paul Davies:** In your paper, you state that the transformation agenda has:

[91] ‘to be more sensitive to local circumstances and accept the possibility of a variety of complex solutions’.

[92] From that statement, it is obvious that you think that it has not been sensitive enough, so I would appreciate it if you could expand on that. Secondly, like me, you are concerned about the impact that this policy may have on sixth forms in rural areas, and you go on to say in your paper that,

[93] ‘the Transforming Education and Training in Wales document states that “there are too many small sixth forms”...It also highlights inconsistency of approach between Estyn, as the regulator, and WAG, as the policy maker.’

[94] Can you expand on that?

[95] Finally, you also state that, in the case of smaller sixth forms,

[96] ‘solutions could be found using developing ICT provision, however, insufficient emphasis has been placed on these types of approaches in the Transformation document.’

[97] What would you have liked to see in the transformation document relating to this?

[98] **Dr Llewelyn:** I will try to remember all the issues that you raised. The comments that you referred to in our written evidence give the impression of criticism of the transformation agenda. It would be harsh to say that we are critical; what we are saying is that there could have been improvements or, as you highlighted, more sensitivity about a range of issues.

[99] On the question of sensitivity, Vernon has already touched on many of those issues. The reality is that authorities across Wales face very different circumstances, given their populations, socioeconomic geography and so on. So, they all approach this from a different starting point. Had there been more discussion and consultation before embarking on the transformation agenda, perhaps some of these issues could have been addressed beforehand. Some of the characteristics of Carmarthenshire capture much of the variation across Wales.

[100] From our experience, we know that rural parts of Wales, which are sparsely populated, and other parts of Wales where the Welsh language presents challenges for provision have found responding to transformation difficult. Other areas, such as the more densely populated parts and the larger towns and cities, have found it easier. As I mentioned earlier, in many instances, authorities had already embarked on this approach and were therefore further down the road. In other instances, for a variety of reasons, authorities were not as advanced. In those cases, we think that more sensitivity to the individual circumstances would have been useful. Vernon might want to come back on some of these issues, too.

[101] Could you remind me about your second point, on an inconsistent approach?

[102] **Paul Davies:** You mentioned a document on transforming education and training in Wales.

[103] **Dr Llewelyn:** That touches on a wider point. Authorities and schools face a significant challenge because of falling pupil numbers and the need for reorganisation. There is a range of issues, but among them is the fact that, in many instances, schools are located in response to nineteenth-century industrial population densities and movements, so there is a significant challenge for authorities to respond to contemporary demand. There are political challenges but also organisational and planning challenges. The feeling among many authorities is that a more joined-up approach between Government and the regulators would make life easier for authorities and schools. In this instance, it is the idea that, when the inspectorate provides feedback on its inspections, if the size of the school is ignored—whether it is a sixth-form college or a conventional school—it is difficult for authorities to reorganise. The idea is that the communication of messages from the inspectorate and the Welsh Assembly Government needs to be more joined up.

[104] On the last point about the IT issue, there needs to be recognition in the transformation document of the range of potential solutions. It is the sort of approach that has been adopted in the twenty-first century schools programme, which looks at innovative solutions to some of the challenges that I mentioned. It looks at best practice in Wales and elsewhere to see whether there are lessons to be learned. In a sense, the idea is to think laterally about some of these challenges, rather than taking a conventional approach. Some lead could have been provided through the transformation document on some of these IT-related issues to encourage authorities and other partners to think more laterally about IT provision and solutions.

[105] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch yn fawr iawn. **Gareth Jones:** Thank you very much.

[106] Christine has a follow-up question on that.

10.50 a.m.

[107] **Christine Chapman:** This has been an interesting discussion, which goes to the crux of the challenge. I think that everybody agrees that transformation is a good idea because, at the end of the day, you are putting the young person at the centre and so it is not about institutions. From what Mr Morgan and Dr Llewelyn are saying, it seems that these challenges or problems are still entrenched. There is still resistance, by the sound of it. Having extra time could help to address that but, even with extra time, I am not clear whether those resistances can be addressed. Can you say anything about that?

[108] You mentioned political pressures and all sorts of other things here. Is there anything else that we could be doing to get to where we want to be with transformation? Some authorities are doing it very well, but others, for whatever reason, are still lagging behind to the detriment of those young people and the economy of Wales. We need that change.

[109] **Mr Morgan:** I will give you some local examples. I had the great privilege of working in Merthyr Tydfil for some time. I feel a great deal of respect for that community. There were five comprehensive schools when I was there, but they now have four, in a very tight-knit, urban community. It is much easier to organise them in a coherent pattern of delivery than it is with 14 schools in a very large county such as Carmarthenshire. So, there are different demands and expectations. I am concerned because what is now beginning to happen in Merthyr Tydfil started some eight years ago. I only hope that what we are going through currently does not take eight years. It comes back to that awful word starting with an 'f': funding. It is about more than pump-priming; you need to put substantial funding into schools if they are to change, both by undertaking capital works and by having teachers and lecturers work in more than one school. You also need to talk about revenue funding, as there is a cost there. Inevitably, if you were bringing a number of schools together, as I suggested earlier, fewer teachers and lecturers might be needed. There are all sorts of costs related to

that, but I do not readily see an income stream in the support system that is available to us.

[110] There are other sensitive issues. I am not convinced—and I do not wish to be outspoken—that there is sufficient recognition of the rural issues or the Welsh language issues in the documentation. There are very real challenges in meeting the needs of our communities, as those needs are very diverse.

[111] On an inconsistent approach, I would not wish to over-egg it, but I have recently been looking at the outcomes of work that we have been doing locally in our own county council. We were trying to amalgamate two schools, not in the post-16 sector but in the primary sector. We were refused permission to do so because of issues of standards and value for money. The acknowledgement that we had was that the Welsh Assembly Government expects local education authorities to plan the provision of school places and allocate capital investment in school buildings to ensure high-quality education and value for money. The two schools concerned would have been brought together, and there would have been no more than 60 pupils, which is still a very small school but, at that stage, we thought that that was appropriate for that very rural, isolated community, but we take the advice that we are given and we move on.

[112] In the last period, between Easter 2008 and the summer of 2009—bearing in mind the fact that we have taken on board advice from DCELLS in the Assembly Government—two inspection reports came out. One was on a school that was built in 1878, which has 17 pupils and 60 surplus places—and we referred earlier to the cost of maintaining surplus places. The outcome of that Estyn inspection was that all available resources were being effectively managed, and so the school achieves good value for money. There is a contradiction there between the responsibility of the authority and of individual schools to secure best value for money.

[113] The second example is even stronger. Shortcomings in the school that I am referring to were identified in four of the seven key questions in seven of the 10 subjects inspected at key stage 1 and in the 10 subjects inspected at key stage 2. The acting headteacher, who had taken up her post two weeks prior to the inspection, is the fifth person appointed to the post in the past two years and leaves the school with 70 per cent surplus places. On this occasion, it was reported that the school was providing adequate value for money. I would suggest that different criteria come into play here. The cost of educating the 15 pupils in this school is £7,900 per year against an average cost for the county council of £3,560. This also transfers to post-16 education. So, we have to have clarity regarding what we mean by value for money. It seems that, if you are to engender a set of circumstances through which you can deliver 30 subject choices, which is totally right and proper—I think that 30 should be the minimum and there should be a balance between vocational and academic subjects—you need a critical mass of around 1,000 students at secondary level. Achieving that in a rural area, paying proper regard to both Welsh and English, will take longer than developing a scheme in a small, urban community.

[114] **Dr Llewelyn:** I would like to add to that. The last few points highlight the challenges that authorities face. I would not agree with the term ‘resistance’; I do not think that there is resistance within the system. The reasons that you outlined for needing to see transformation taking place would be acknowledged by everyone. There is consensus within the sector on these issues—between the Assembly Government, local authorities and other stakeholders. I know that you are taking evidence from Fforwm after us. We have a close relationship with Fforwm and share the same view on most of these issues. Similarly, the relationship between local authorities and their respective further education colleges are close. So, with regard to where we are trying to get to, there is a shared understanding and vision. However, as I mentioned earlier, in many instances, the starting point and the circumstances are different and the impediments can be more difficult for some authorities than others. If one was to look

at all of the transformation plans, one would see that the rural authorities in particular are finding it more difficult to respond to those challenges for the very reasons that Vernon outlined.

[115] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I am conscious of the time, so I will keep my question brief. It builds on the point that Vernon just referred to, namely the surplus places in primary schools and the way in which that moves into the secondary sector. That illustrates the importance of critical mass and the need for collaboration between the various sectors. I would like to talk about the FE sector. It has been reported to us—Fforwm will have more to say about it later, I am sure—that some local authorities are better than others with regard to co-operation with FE colleges. What is your view on that? Do you see it as a generally positive picture, or are there areas of concern? If so, why, and what can we do about it?

[116] Local authorities are large employers. Earlier, when we questioned the Minister, we talked about the key role of employers in this whole transformation agenda. How well do you see local authorities, as employers, pulling their weight in relation to seeking to influence learning so that they, too, will have employees in the future who are ready for employment?

[117] **Mr Morgan:** Once again, I am sorry if I am localising it, but I will draw on my own immediate experience. It is fairly obvious that some authorities will work better in this sector than others, because we are all different and we all have different strengths as individuals and as organisations. I am a member of the board of Coleg Sir Gâr, which is a privileged position, and we work closely with our college. Indeed, it seems obvious to me that, if we are going to change the pattern of provision in future, we need to change the governance arrangements for both colleges and schools.

11.00 a.m.

[118] We had a particularly useful meeting last June, where key members and chairs of our governing bodies received a presentation from Fforwm and our advisory service, on how we ensure that the needs of colleges and of schools come together to reflect the most important needs, namely the needs of our young people. So, we are currently working on changing governance arrangements. It may be useful to have some feedback and a national perspective on how that happens from Estyn or, indeed, from other bodies.

[119] On what I referred to earlier in Dinefwr, it seems fairly obvious to me that we will be developing a learning setting with a proper balance between vocational and academic work. We need a keen regard in the authority for its regeneration and for what skills we are teaching our young people. It seems to me that schools in that area serve a certain population, 80 per cent of which works in service areas, including a large percentage in the agriculture industry, and a small percentage in industry. So, the vocational courses that we need to provide should reflect that sort of mix and a wider mix, because not all of them will stay in that community. They need a deep understanding of the various skills necessary to make their way in the world outside Carmarthenshire and maybe outside Wales, too. That is the sort of mix that I will look for.

[120] **Ms Seabourne:** On local government as an employer and workforce development, there are many current examples of how local government is inputting into education and training. The specific example that I am thinking of is in Gwynedd, where the key education priorities are linked closely to economic development. Gwynedd sees the local government and public sector workforce as a whole as being vital to sustain the economy, directly related to what it is doing in education and training to sustain that workforce.

[121] At a national level, local government has been involved in the development of the children and young people's workforce development strategy, which considers nationally how

we can develop the workforce, including in the local government sector and how we can influence education and training in that way. At a local level in all authorities, they have to have regard for the workforce, including the local government workforce, when doing the section of the children and young people's plan that relates to workforce development.

[122] **Sandy Mewies:** I raised with the Minister my concern that we have a strategy, the Measure, and this and that coming out, and that they all have to blend together. I was reassured that a document on the journey would be coming out in November, which will bring all of these together for people like me who find it hard to have to cross-reference all of the time. I look forward to that, because I have always been concerned that we should provide equality of opportunity in Wales; despite the fact that we have 22 local authorities and LEAs, every student or pupil in Wales should have equality of access to education and training.

[123] Mr Morgan raised the question of surplus places, which have been a thorn in the side of local authorities and the WLGA, and everyone else involved in education, for a long time. You can have two small schools that are identical in many ways, but one will be able to deliver the curriculum and one will not. There are reasons for that; for example, as human beings, we have different abilities and skills and so on. In the same way, some sixth-form colleges allow a huge number of options to be taken by students and some do not—that is not always down to the amount of resources that a college has or to its size. Mr Morgan has raised a huge issue, which is ultimately political: who wants to vote in favour of closing schools? It often comes down to that.

[124] My concern about sixth forms in small schools is that, even if they are in a rural area, we somehow have to give those pupils and students equality of access. Do you think that this process will lead to that? We go on to talk about ICT—which is great; it is absolutely wonderful—but some of our most rural areas are the ones that will never get broadband. They may get it eventually, but they are unlikely to get it in a timely way to coincide with what is happening here. It can be extremely difficult.

[125] When we talk about travel, there is nothing worse for a student than to have to travel for hours on buses and so on. It will be avoidable in some areas, but in others it will not. I have these concerns about how we are going to ensure in Wales that all our young people—be they in Carmarthen, Wrexham or Ynys Môn—have the same choices. Are you confident that this process will lead to consistency in the end? This process is a huge overturning of many of the things that happen now. There also needs to be the monitoring that the Chair talked about—I think that he made a very important point about monitoring and reviewing and the ability to change things if they are going wrong. We all support this, but are you convinced that, at the end, we will end up with consistency for all our young people?

[126] **Mr Morgan:** I do not think that we have much choice really. The world is changing rapidly and I not convinced that the schooling system that we have at the moment is appropriate for all the needs of our young people. I think that the Assembly has been extremely brave in abolishing the standard assessment tests and introducing the foundation phase. I believe that there is still a bit of a sandwich between the ages of seven and 14 and many of the policies that I have made reference to are for the 14 to 19 sector, not the post-16 sector. On coherence, I think that we need to look at the system as a whole, as opposed to just looking at something that happens after the age of 16. It is like building your house on sand, if you do not have a full understanding and appreciation of what happens earlier on. Excuse me for mentioning Carmarthenshire again, but that is why I think that Carmarthenshire and Merthyr Tydfil did the right thing in bringing education and children's services together, so that they had a coherent range of services for young people.

[127] In direct relation to the point that you are making, one thing that is to be promoted through DCELLS at the moment, and I would be very supportive of it, is the school

effectiveness framework. I will just refer to a few things that it says in the school effectiveness framework. There is a section that refers directly to pedagogy. If we are not careful, we will be just talking about buildings and funding new buildings. We have to consider how these buildings relate to teaching and learning and how they enhance the range of opportunities available to our young people. Young people learn in a whole variety of ways, so we must consider whether those buildings support those sorts of expectations. Are they designed to enhance learning and teaching or is this simply a building programme so that we can say, 'We built x number of schools in the last 10, 15 years'?

[128] May I draw attention to the confusion that you have, and the confusion that I have, if that is helpful, over the general policy strategy, the school effectiveness framework and the key points that it makes? It makes direct reference to the children and young people's plan, which is one strategic plan for all local authorities for children from the age of birth—if there is such an age—up to the age of 25. Where does transformation fit in with that responsibility and the seven key aims in the children and young people's plan? How do we ensure that post-16 education, the issue of debate today, fits in with that in a more coherent way? That plan is based on the whole view of a child or a young person, and the voluntary sector, the maintained sector, and a whole variety of other sectors, such as health and social services, make a direct contribution to that plan. How does that plan capture the sorts of issues that we are sharing today?

[129] I suppose that you could argue that, if there is a single plan, you would need a single regulator to look at it. It is quite difficult when you are being inspected by several different regulators that come from different starting points and have different expectations. I think that there is some way to go yet in developing a greater coherence of expectation. If there is to be a single plan, we need a single discussion on it with a single person or organisation that has a clear view of all those things and how they can be brought together.

11.10 a.m.

[130] I believe that the school effectiveness framework can be turned into a very good job description for local authorities, for schools, and with regard to our responsibilities to our young people and to colleges, and there is an opportunity to develop a job description for the Assembly in that, because these are the aspirations that it holds. If we are to develop a SEF that is firmly based on self-evaluation by individual members of our community, how does that relate to the new inspection framework that is coming in? Is there coherence between the two? How do all the local authorities—we work in a consortium of six authorities in south-west Wales—relate to the challenge of offering support that each has a statutory duty to undertake? How do you weight the three of those together and ensure coherence in expectation? That will also impact on post-16 provision and the whole school system. I look forward to the paper that you alluded to, which will bring all of these things together. Perhaps it will be on my Christmas list.

[131] **Sandy Mewies:** Is that a 'yes, because we must'?

[132] **Mr Morgan:** It is a 'yes', because we must have greater coherence in Wales. We are a small country, and so it should not be difficult to develop greater coherence as opposed to in a very large country. We have a great deal to learn from countries such as Denmark, Norway and so on. They can do it, and there is every opportunity for us to do it here in Wales, but it must be coherent so that you and I have a perfect understanding of what is expected of the various people that contribute to children's welfare, wellbeing and education.

[133] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch yn fawr iawn **Gareth Jones:** Thank you very much for ichi am yr atebion hynny, a diolch ar ran yr those answers, and thank you on behalf of the Aelodau am y cyfnewid syniadau a'r Members for the exchange of ideas and

sylwadau a gawsom y bore yma. Yn sicr, fel pob Aelod arall yma, nodais yr angen am gydlynw polisiau. Yr wyf yn derbyn bod elfen bositif, fel y dywedaso, ond mae'n rhaid inni fod yn realistig hefyd; mae llawer yn digwydd ac mae angen inni gadw golwg ar bopeth a chael popeth i gydweithio mor effeithiol ag sy'n bosibl, a dyna gyfeirio at eich ateb diwethaf, Mr Morgan.

[134] Diolch yn fawr iawn i chi am ddod atom ni ac, ar ran y pwyllgor, hoffwn ddymuno'r gorau i chi mewn maes heriol ofnadwy ond un sy'n angenrheidiol i ni fynd i'r afael ag ef yng Nghymru. Diolch yn fawr iawn.

[135] Trown yn awr at drydedd ran y sesiwn graffu. Yn gyntaf, ymddiheuraf i'r tri chynrychiolydd sydd yma ar ran Fforwm am eich cadw i aros—yr ydym yn rhedeg ychydig yn hwyr. Serch hynny, estynnwn groeso cynnes iawn i'r tri ohonoch: Dr John Grayson, prif weithredwr Fforwm; Brian Robinson, pennaeth Coleg Sir Gâr; a Mark Jones, pennaeth Coleg Penybont.

[136] Yr wyf yn gwybod bod gennych bwyntiau yr hoffech gyfeirio atynt. Mae amser yn brin, felly os caniatewch, fe drowm at yr Aelodau ar gyfer cwestiynau ac wedyn, os bydd cyfle ar y diwedd, cewch ymhelaethu ar ambell bwynt os dymunwch. Trof at David Melding ar gyfer y cwestiwn cyntaf.

[137] **David Melding:** Thank you, Chair. I am going to ask a focused question about the economic difficulties that we are in. I am sure that other Members will talk about the structures and the transformation process as a whole and raise concerns about that.

[138] We had the Deputy Minister in earlier, and I asked him how this policy to improve the delivery of post-16 education and training has responded to the recession. I observed that, in his paper to us, there was one short paragraph, among 60, on work-based training, and in my view it was not very illuminating, although he demurred at that. I then asked how FE has been involved in ProAct, for instance, and it does not seem to have been involved at all. I am not quite sure that the Deputy Minister even thought of that route, despite the fact that it is the biggest intervention that we have made by way of spending in response to the recession. Are there structures in place to cope with the increased demand among the under 25s group, where unemployment has gone up most dramatically of all? We may need to concentrate on improving their skills even beyond what we may have thought of as optimum a couple of years ago, as they delay their entry into the labour market or they have been made unemployed, having already entered the labour market. They may spend more time in training and further education, so are the structures in place? If we are looking for productive activity for this group of people, the first port of call is your sector.

[139] **Mr Robinson:** In the context of 14 to 19 education, there is significant involvement

comments that we have had this morning. Certainly, I noted the need for cohesive policies, as has every other Member here. I accept that there is a positive element, as you outlined, but we have to be realistic as well; there is a lot happening, and we have to keep an eye on all of it and get everything to work together as effectively as possible, and that refers to your last answer, Mr Morgan.

Thank you very much for attending and, on behalf of the committee, I wish you all the best in what is an extremely challenging field, but one that is vital for us to address in Wales. Thank you very much.

We turn now to the third part of the scrutiny session. First, I apologise to the three representatives from Fforwm for keeping you waiting—we are running a little late. However, we extend a warm welcome to the three of you: Dr John Grayson, the chief executive of Fforwm; Brian Robinson, the principal of Coleg Sir Gâr; and Mark Jones, the principal of Bridgend College.

I know that you have points that you would like to make. We are short of time, so with your permission, we will turn to the Members for questions and then, if there is an opportunity at the end, you can expand on a few points if you wish. I turn to David Melding for the first question.

with a number of the sector skills councils in the development of the curriculum. There are particularly good examples with the Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies, ConstructionSkills and Skillfast-UK that are working within the 14 to 19 networks to develop a curriculum that has a strong vocational base, but is underpinned by the particular sector skills council. So, that is an example of good practice. I do not think that that is true of all sector skills councils across Wales—it is a patchy picture. However, that is a trend that has been evident over the last couple of years, which is quite encouraging.

[140] Work-based learning more generally is not necessarily within the context of 14 to 19 developments, but sits alongside it.

[141] **David Melding:** We are looking at post-16 education this morning.

[142] **Mr Robinson:** That is a vibrant alternative route—there is no question of it. The initiative that was introduced this term for the pathways to apprenticeships has proven successful, although it is early days and there is the usual bureaucratic bun fight to sort it all out. However, it is an attempt to bring people into work-based learning who might have missed that opportunity had it been entirely down to employers providing work for those people to be attached to. I would be reasonably encouraged that the work-based learning element of the curriculum is fairly vibrant.

[143] **David Melding:** By my calculations, there are approximately 20,000 more people unemployed in the under-25 group at the moment as a result of this recession. Is it your experience that the programmes are expanding and that they are flexible enough?

[144] **Mr Robinson:** Yes, there is no doubt. John will give you a rough picture of the sector, but enrolment in general this September is significantly up on previous years.

[145] **David Melding:** So why is the unemployment figure not falling, or will it start to fall now?

[146] **Mr Robinson:** You are looking at two issues that are not necessarily directly linked. We are talking about 16-year-olds coming into colleges—

[147] **David Melding:** We are looking at post-16 education this morning—it is not limited to 14 to 19 education.

[148] **Mr Robinson:** Yes, but the 16-year-olds who are taking the decision post-GCSE to continue with their education are clearly not in that unemployed pool. There is another group outside of that, and perhaps different measures need to be adopted to make inroads in that regard.

[149] **David Melding:** If we limit the question to this group that is in a position where it has not been able to enter the labour market, or it has and it has been made unemployed, are there programmes coming through in the necessary volume to meet that demand? If so, are we likely to see unemployment among the 25-year-olds, who currently have the highest level of unemployment of any section of the community, start to decline a little?

[150] **Dr Graystone:** To echo what Brian said, full-time enrolments in September went up by between 8 per cent and 10 per cent. There has been a dip in adult part-time education because of funding issues, which we are very concerned about and which we have raised with the Deputy Minister. Further education colleges are actively involved in programmes such as ReAct, which is aimed at those that are unemployed. However, once they have completed the ReAct programme, they need to go into a job—they cannot keep training forever. Some

colleges have been actively involved in the ProAct scheme and Coleg Sir Gâr is one of them, but not all colleges have. These are all partial measures, they are not solving the problem completely, because you cannot keep training people for ever. Eventually, there needs to be work out there for them to do. However, at the moment colleges are turning 16-year-old students away. I have had principals ringing me up, saying that they have had parents bursting into tears as their child is told that the school is full up and cannot fit them in. There is a growth in demand at a time of tighter resources and trying to square that circle is a huge challenge for any college principal.

11.20 a.m.

[151] **Gareth Jones:** I should have thanked you earlier for your written evidence.

[152] Diolch yn fawr ichi am y papur Thank you very much for that paper.
hwnnw.

[153] **Nerys Evans:** Yr wyf am ddilyn yr un trywydd ag yr wyf wedi'i ddilyn gyda phawb arall y bore yma, sef anghenion dysgwyr cyfrwng Cymraeg. Sail yr agenda weddnewid yw cydweithio i ehangu darpariaeth—yn amlwg, mae lefel isel o ddarpariaeth drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg yn ein colegau addysg bellach—a'i gplysu gyda gwelliannau Mesur 14 to 19 i hyrwyddo addysg Gymraeg a chontinwwm ieithyddol, a phwysigrwydd addysg Gymraeg. Sut mae hyn yn effeithio ar yr agenda o gydweithio rhwng colegau addysg bellach ac ysgolion Cymraeg?

Nerys Evans: I will follow the same lines that I took with others this morning, which are the needs of Welsh-medium learners. The basis of the transformation agenda is collaboration to expand provision—obviously, there is a lower level of Welsh-medium provision throughout our FE colleges at present—and to link that with the improvements of the 14 to 19 Measure to promote Welsh-medium education and the linguistic continuum as well as the importance of Welsh-medium education. How does this have an impact upon the collaboration agenda between FE colleges and Welsh-medium schools?

[154] **Dr Graystone:** I will start on that and pass it on to Brian. Today, we are holding the first national conference of further educational colleges, looking at the issue of the Welsh language alone—when I leave this meeting I will go straight there. It will have input from the Welsh Language Board, Estyn, and the principals of colleges with primarily Welsh-medium provision. We see that we must up the ante on that. We are 100 per cent saying that we need to make improvements there. We are discussing drawing up a strategy; we are going out for consultation and we will probably be seeking the views of some people in the room, in order to take the agenda forward. We know that there is an issue and we are working very hard as a sector, through Fforwm, to do that. We see Welsh-medium education as being central to the transformation agenda. In the conference that I will be attending shortly, that will be a central theme. While I have not answered your question directly, it is a work in progress. We know that there is an issue and we want to work closely to take it forward.

[155] **Mr Robinson:** At Coleg Sir Gâr, we work in partnership with all the Welsh-medium secondary schools in Carmarthenshire and Swansea, where there are five Welsh-medium secondary schools. In the context of the 14 to 19 network, a range of vocational courses is being delivered through the medium of Welsh, as well as some academic courses—we are delivering one A-level through the medium of Welsh—in partnership with the schools. That has increased the level and the variety of vocational provision that can be delivered through the medium of Welsh.

[156] **Christine Chapman:** In your paper on transformation, there is no specific mention of pupils or young people with additional learning needs. Are you satisfied that those young

people will fully benefit from this policy, not just within schools, but across FE and in employment? As David has mentioned, the recession may adversely or disproportionately affect younger people, who are more at risk, and if we do not address this now, we are storing up more problems for the future, not only as regards their individual potential, but for the economy as a whole—society as a whole will suffer because of this. Are you content with how this is being addressed?

[157] **Mr Jones:** To give Bridgend's view—[*Inaudible.*—]—from Heronsbridge asked exactly the same question as you just asked. It is slower, but the intention is to engage with special schools as much as we possibly can. Examples were given last night of secondary schools working with Heronsbridge and the other special school in Bridgend. As a college, we have a residential facility, which is taking on another 10 beds this year to give students more vocational experience going forward. It can be done, but it needs to be tailored to their specific needs. Therefore, it will be a bit slower, but the intention is to involve them as much as we possibly can in taking this transformation agenda forward.

[158] **Christine Chapman:** We have heard about special schools and the learning difficulties of the young people who attend those schools, and about even more minor additional learning needs. Also, a lot has been said about young people who behave in an anti-social manner, for example, and, quite often, those young people are like that because they have not been able to reach their potential. I think that that is the case. There is a risk if we do not address this early and confront it head on. We need to make sure that this is happening and that they get the support. I think that we will all have had cases where, for example, young people have been well supported at school, but when they went into further education they slipped through the net because of that transition. Transformation is about making this work much more smoothly. I wonder whether you have any comments on that.

[159] **Mr Robinson:** There are initiatives in place to address that particular client group, often in partnership with youth services. Frequently, one provider or agency is not enough to provide a solution for an individual with the characteristics that you have outlined—. You have to work with others to provide a complete package, and that is in place. I would imagine that due to the number of opportunities that are constrained by funding, they always are. Initiatives like Youth First have been looking at that particular group for a while.

[160] Within the college context, ordinary students who enrol often require this additional support. There are various ways in which this can be addressed, but it all has a resource implication. We have gone through the saga on previous occasions of the additional funding that comes into further education, when we have an intake in September and we get the funding in March. Therefore, there is that mismatch. I would almost guarantee that the sum of money involved would not be sufficient to meet the needs of all of those young people who need extra support. It is always people whom they need, in the form of extra personal support, such as learning assistants working with them in the classroom environment, helping them over the various hurdles that they have to cross to get through their course. It is an additional resource of a considerable amount. If it is in place, it works, and there is no question about it—the evidence is there, but is there enough? I think that the jury would probably be out on that.

[161] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you, again, for the written evidence. You know that I know the sector well and that I have had many discussions on the subject. I want to build on one of the points that David mentioned, so I will be reasonably brief. Before that, however, I will address the particular issue of relationships between the further education sector and local education authorities across Wales. There have been reports—and I think that you also made the point—that some areas are better than others. As a snapshot, but in as much detail as appropriate, how is the picture at present? Are you able to identify reasons for difficulties; is it down to geography, practical arrangements, or is it entrenched views? That happens in the

real world. Are there implications for the proper joined-up thinking that we need to make this policy a success for joint in-service training between college staff and school staff? Are there issues with the governance that need to be addressed to help this overall policy along?

[162] Finally, on the big picture, I made a point to the Minister that, for me, the biggest issue of all, and the fundamental purpose of the transformation agenda, is to offer the very best deal that we can for younger people, particularly to help them into meaningful employment, which demands the active involvement and participation of employers, be they public or private. In your view, what is that situation like? Are there improvements, is there better engagement, can we be positive about the future, or is there still a lot of fundamental work to do to get employers as involved as they should be?

[163] **Dr Graystone:** You have asked several questions, Jeff. I will start with local authorities, and then I will bring my colleagues in. On the relationship between colleges and local authorities, it is not an ideal world, and everyone will not be going in the same direction all the time. Some local authorities were less enamoured about the transformation agenda a year or so ago, but they have all moved a long way forward, and the feedback that I am getting from principals is that relationships are generally much better, but some are a little further ahead.

[164] We are coming from the need to look at transformation in light of the learner, raising standards, widening participation and improving employability. Sometimes, schools and local authorities might come from a slightly different angle, and we need to match that together. However, there has been a lot of progress. As the paper says, we are positive about transformation, but we are not there yet. We have a long way to go, and there is a lot to tackle, but once we agree on the agenda, these are challenges to be overcome, not reasons for not doing this. That is very much our philosophy. I will not name local authorities—I am sure that you would not ask me to do that. However, we have made a lot of progress, and I think that my colleagues would agree with that. On the other questions on joint INSET and governance, perhaps Brian would like to respond.

[165] **Mr Robinson:** A previous speaker mentioned the situation in Carmarthenshire—Vernon talked about joint governance arrangements—and we are in the process of setting up joint governance between the college, schools and other groups that are relevant to the solution; the voluntary sector would be one such group. It is too early to give any sort of analysis of whether it is successful or not. There is a willingness there; there is no question about that. There is a danger that it becomes very complicated, so that you split relatively small units—local authorities—into even smaller units for joint governance. In Carmarthenshire, we are looking at setting up four, so we will be asking governors to attend not only their own governing body meetings, but the cluster arrangements as well. There is a capacity issue and a question as to whether we are overcomplicating things. However, the desire to bring governance of various parts of the solution together is now a given in Carmarthenshire. The time to assess whether it has made a difference or not will be in 12 or 18 months' time.

[166] **Mr Jones:** I would reiterate everything that John and Brian have said. The same goes for Bridgend; if you had asked us two years ago if we would be in the position that we are in now, we would have said 'no', but the agenda is moving forward, and institutions are coming from individual perspectives. There are small numbers involved in some cases, particularly in rural areas, and so some have engaged quicker, but, as a team, with everyone working together, there is no doubt that the agenda is moving forward. However, it is very much work in progress.

[167] The same goes for employers. The link with employers differs depending on whether they are big or small companies, and therefore the engagement process needs to be different

in all circumstances. As a college, what we are trying to do is build up a series of business relationships with companies. Yes, some involve training and apprenticeships, while some are no more than master classes, or visits to a factory, while some are about sponsorship. We sit around the table with them and talk about the education agenda going forward, and again, current engagement compared with the position two years ago is very advanced, but this is still work in progress, and we need to keep working. Schemes like the learning pathways have helped dramatically, and the funding to assist some of this development has helped, because all the companies are struggling at this stage as well. I do not think that it is a simple solution; it is an ongoing business relationship. We are building it up and making good progress at a fast rate.

[168] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Everything that you said was encouraging and, on the points that Mark made, I accept that there seems to be evidence that we are moving forward, and that is to be welcomed. I also accept that relationships with big employers such as BT, local authorities, and so on, are reasonably straightforward when it comes to identifying training needs and building up a coherent programme and a good relationship. However, the economy of Wales is dominated by small employers, and it is not so easy in those cases. When times are tough, as they are now, this sort of thing may not be at the forefront of the proprietors' minds. Nevertheless, we cannot let it go, and we talked earlier with the Minister in particular about the stages of development of the sector skills councils, which I think are crucial. A lot of time and investment has gone into these. I understand the issue of re-licensing, but we must still get on with the job. So, for those occupational areas, which are very small employers, the sector skills councils still seem to meet the logical organisations to help bring them together. What is that relationship like?

[169] **Mr Robinson:** I referred to this in an earlier answer. Where the sector skills councils are functioning well, it is a very productive relationship, because they are getting into the 14 to 19 agenda, they are engaging within networks and they are developing a curriculum that is relevant to the needs of that sector. However, it is not uniform across the various sector skills councils, and there is a problem in Wales in that many of them are really quite small operations—literally one person—and given the geography that they must cover, their capacity is obviously limited. Having said that, if the relationship can be established, then they are crucial. It is the only way, as you say, that you are going to get smaller employers engaged at all through these organisations.

[170] **David Melding:** Lord Leitch said, about a year ago, that about a third of the sector skills councils were really excellent, a third were getting there but perhaps did not quite reach that level, and a third was struggling. Is that still the proportion, or are we in a better situation?

[171] **Mr Robinson:** That has a ring of truth about it.

[172] **Dr Graystone:** I know that one or two have not been re-licensed—I am not sure how public that is yet—so, obviously, that is not a third, but one or two others have also had to resubmit. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills is addressing that issue.

[173] On employer engagement, as Jeff will know as a college governor, do not forget that a third of college governors are from business, which is an important input. The thing with a partnership agenda is that, in a sense, the governing body is a microcosm of local partnership, as it includes businesspeople, local community and local authority staff, and students—people are co-opted on the basis of expertise. You have a model there that supports the idea of partnership and co-operation.

[174] **Gareth Jones:** I think that that was the final question and comment, unless you have a specific point that you wish to remind us about. We have looked carefully at the written

evidence and the concluding remarks that it is work in progress, and you certainly set out the critical success factors for us. I am taken with the final one, which seeks a regular and honest review to assess progress against targets. That is important and a point that we made earlier.

[175] I thank you on behalf of the Members—I know that we are reduced in numbers now, for which I apologise. It has been an interesting discussion and exchange of views, particularly in identifying key areas of concern, if I may put it that way. You have certainly highlighted, and I am sure that Members would agree, this linkage with the employers and how important that is in raising their awareness and involvement. I accept the point you make that they are there in the learning partnership somehow, but that needs to be enhanced if we are going to make progress and see success as far as the transformation agenda is concerned.

[176] We will turn to you again; this is work in progress and we, as a scrutiny committee, will be reviewing and keeping an eye on developments. In the meantime, I thank you for your commitment to the work on the transformation agenda itself, and for joining us this morning and sharing your views. I hope that we can all make progress in what is a challenging area. Diolch yn fawr iawn.

[177] **Dr Graystone:** We would be delighted to come back again at a later stage.

[178] **Gareth Jones:** Thank you.

[179] There is one paper to note, which is the minutes of the previous meeting.

11.40 a.m.

Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion

[180] **Gareth Jones:** Cynigiau fod

Gareth Jones: I move that

y pwyllgor yn penderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog Rhif 10.37(vi).

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 10.37(vi).

[181] Gwelaf fod y pwyllgor yn gytûn.

I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11.40 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 11.40 a.m.*