



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

**Y Pwyllgor Cyfle Cyfartal
The Committee on Equality of Opportunity**

**Mawrth, 8 Mawrth 2011
Tuesday, 8 March 2011**

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

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

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Mohammad Asghar	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Veronica German	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Janet Ryder	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Anna Morgan	Ymgynghorydd Hyfforddi, Cymdeithas Lywodraeth Leol Cymru Training Adviser, Welsh Local Government Association
Holly Pembridge	Rheolwr Cydraddoldeb, Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru Equality Manager, National Assembly for Wales

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

Sarah Hatherley	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members' Research Service
Catherine Hunt	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Claire Morris	Clerc Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.30 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.30 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everyone. Welcome to this meeting of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity. I remind Members to switch off their mobile phones, please, and also BlackBerrys, as apparently they interfere with the translation and broadcasting equipment. We operate bilingually. The floor language is on channel 0 of the headsets and the translation from Welsh to English is on channel 1. We are not expecting a fire alarm test; therefore, if an alarm sounds, we will wait and follow the ushers' instructions. The assembly point is outside the front of the building, almost by the Pierhead building.

[2] We have a full house today; I thank you all for attending.

Cynllun Mentora Camu Ymlaen Cymru
Step Up Cymru Mentoring Scheme

[3] **Ann Jones:** When we considered the Assembly's annual equality report on 1 February, we requested an opportunity to discuss the Step Up Cymru mentoring scheme in greater detail, because we just skirted over it at the time. Therefore, thank you very much for the report and for agreeing to come along today. We are delighted to have Holly Pembridge with us, who is the equality manager in the Assembly, and Anna Morgan, who is a training adviser with the Welsh Local Government Association. You are both very welcome. Do either of you have a brief opening statement, or are you happy to go straight to questions?

[4] **Ms Pembridge:** I would be happy to move straight to questions.

[5] **Ann Jones:** Are you sure?

[6] **Ms Pembridge:** Yes, thank you.

[7] **Ann Jones:** All right. I will start with the questions. I mentioned the annual equality report, which stated that this mentoring scheme was a great success. What were the outcomes of the scheme? It is an awful thing to say, but there is also a monetary element. How much has it cost, and has it been good value for money?

[8] **Ms Pembridge:** The initial outcomes from the scheme, when it concluded, were that mentees' understanding of the different levels of government had been enhanced and increased. Mentees had significantly improved their understanding of the differences between the political institutions, and there was an increased understanding of the roles of elected representatives—Assembly Members, local councillors and Members of Parliament—and the wider democratic situation. There was also an increase in their confidence in elected representatives. Significantly, mentees were asked to rate themselves at the beginning as active citizens. The average response rate was 4.4 out of 10. The average response rate at the end was 8.1 out of 10, which is what we were hoping to achieve.

[9] Another outcome was that feedback from elected representatives suggested that they had an increased understanding of the barriers facing some of the under-represented groups. Those are just the initial findings. We plan to issue another questionnaire next month, which will be a year since the scheme was concluded, to see how far mentees have come.

[10] Would you like to respond on the value for money, Anna?

[11] **Ms Morgan:** In terms of value for money, you ask an interesting question about how much it cost. As a partnership between the Commission, the Welsh Assembly Government, and the Welsh Local Government Association, we set aside a total of £90,000 for the scheme. There was an underspend, and the final outturn was £75,000 from start to finish. As to whether it was value for money, if you ask the people who took part in it, I think that the majority would say absolutely that it was. In terms of a more longitudinal piece of work to see what return and investment there is on that £75,000, we would probably have to wait to give a more detailed answer. However, my initial response to that would be, 'Yes, it is'.

[12] **Ann Jones:** Thank you. Janet is next.

[13] **Janet Ryder:** You rolled off quite a lot of statistics there, Holly. Did you say that 4.4 of the respondees felt that they had increased their participation?

[14] **Ms Pembridge:** The mentees were asked to rate themselves as active citizens. They gave an average response of 4.4 out of 10 at the outset of the scheme, and, at the end of the scheme, the average response was 8.1 out of 10.

[15] **Janet Ryder:** That is quite an increase. One aim of the scheme was to increase active participation. Are you satisfied that the scheme met its objectives?

[16] **Ms Pembridge:** I am largely satisfied. I forgot to mention that we have a lot of anecdotal evidence about outcomes. Some mentees have set up community groups or become chairs of local voluntary organisations. One participant is standing in the forthcoming Assembly elections, and another participant expects to stand in the forthcoming local government elections. I know that two mentees are considering returning to higher education. Generally, there has been an increased sense of them getting more involved in local issues and people are happier and more confident to lobby at the local level and know who to go to in order to influence change. Also, one mentee has become a school governor since participating in this scheme. We hope to find out even more in terms of those hard outcomes.

[17] **Ms Morgan:** The questionnaire next month will probably reveal further outcomes. That is what we are hoping to find out about. We questioned the mentees and the mentors directly after the scheme had finished, so it will be interesting to see what has happened over time.

[18] **Janet Ryder:** Did everyone who participated in the scheme complete the questionnaires?

[19] **Ms Pembridge:** I believe that there were 23 respondents to the pre-scheme questionnaire, and 22 to the post-scheme questionnaire. That is out of 34 participants.

[20] **Janet Ryder:** Did you do anything to chase them up?

[21] **Ms Pembridge:** Yes, we chased up. We also held an independent evaluation session to build on the questionnaire responses. We chased with e-mails and telephone calls and gave people opportunities to feed back in whatever way was easiest for them—whether via a telephone conversation or via e-mail. It was difficult to follow up. I think that that was because some mentees had different experiences, and some people were even more engaged than others, so we had many people coming back and forth via e-mail. Those people tended to respond more to our surveys.

[22] **Janet Ryder:** Are there any who still have not responded at all?

[23] **Ms Pembridge:** Yes. We will follow this up again in April with a robust questionnaire, because it is important to get feedback from everyone.

[24] **Janet Ryder:** Of those people who have not responded, is there any sign that the course has had any impact on them at all—have you noted anything? Do you know whether they are standing in any elections or are doing anything?

[25] **Ms Morgan:** That is an interesting question. I think that there would be a varied response. I could be forgiven for suggesting that one individual, who is now a school governor, probably had the best experience. Her mentor came to the launch event with a list of dates and a variety of different experiences for her to undertake. That individual has become a school governor; I know that because I sit on the same governing body, and it was a lovely moment when she walked into the room a few months ago. However, she has never completed a questionnaire.

[26] **Janet Ryder:** It could be a personal thing, because some people do not like answering questionnaires. However, with such a small number of people, and given that it is such a high-profile scheme, I would be concerned if everyone did not at least respond in some way, especially if it has had an impact on them. Would it alter the way that you measure feedback and development in the future if you were to repeat the scheme?

[27] **Ms Morgan:** It probably would. I think that your point is valid one in terms of it being a small group. There are issues around the use of IT; we must be honest and realise that some people do not pick up all their e-mails, or they miss e-mails, and so on. However, there is scope to consider a variety of methods. I think that the focus group helped people to give their feedback. One person who came to the focus group meeting had thought about not attending because they did not feel that they had much to contribute. However, when the day dawned, they realised—it was a sort of reflection in action process—that they had a lot to contribute in terms of their experience of the scheme.

[28] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning. You say that the scheme was specifically designed to encourage individuals from across the multiple equality strands. The evidence is that that was the case. How important was it that you had third sector organisations or representatives from networks involved in encouraging individuals to attend?

[29] **Ms Pembridge:** We had a steering group made up of the representative organisations that were involved in the design of the scheme. That gave us some reassurance that we were picking up the issues that were affecting the under-represented groups. The other key issue was that we used their contacts and networks to promote the scheme and so we always had that fallback position, in that we could speak to our partners from the voluntary sector about issues that we were concerned about. We also involved the Wales Council for Voluntary Action's Voices for Change Cymru project in delivering some of the training. That increased the networks between the partners and also between us and the mentees. So, we were using an established project to train the mentees.

[30] We were grateful as a partnership for having that support from the voluntary sector. I mentioned that some of the mentees have become more involved in the voluntary sector, so I think that that was an important part of it.

[31] **Joyce Watson:** Are you satisfied that you had representation from all the equality strands in Wales? If there was such a scheme in future, would you do anything different to increase the accessibility of the scheme and to find ways of including the most marginalised individuals?

[32] **Ms Morgan:** That is one issue considered within the report; I do not know whether everyone has a copy of the report with them. However, in the report, you will see that there is a breakdown of equality characteristics, and a breakdown of men, women and transgender people. We had 40 applications from disabled people, 24 of which were shortlisted, and 12 of whom were successful. The problem with those figures is that they do not reveal whether an applicant is disabled and belongs to a black minority ethnic group. So, while it appears that quite a large proportion of disabled people applied to this scheme but did not get through, that may not necessarily be the case. On a positive note, just under a third of the people who took part in the scheme were disabled.

[33] The feedback that we received from the assessment centres on our application process was very positive across the board from those people who responded to the questionnaire. If I remember rightly, the report suggests that we could simplify the application process, because some issues were raised with a member of the steering group by one organisation about trying to make it as simple as possible, because not everyone has the same literacy skills, for example. That is why the scheme co-ordinator at the time completed application forms for

people over the phone.

[34] As a project board, we were happy with the representation of the people who took part in the scheme. I am not suggesting that it was perfect. There is probably some room for improvement.

[35] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you for that. My next question has been answered, Chair.

[36] **Mohammad Asghar:** I have a further point about the recruitment of participants. There was a good approach. Fifty-four of the applications were from women, with applications from men being less than half the total. Of the successful applicants, 27 were women, while only one third were men. Did you set any criteria in that regard, or was it just that men were not interested? What was the reason for that?

[37] **Ms Pembridge:** Basically, the criteria were about having an interest in learning more about democracy. Perhaps women came forward because we named the under-represented groups, but I hope that that did not signal to men that they were not welcome on the scheme. That was not our aim. Many women did come forward and we are really pleased about that. The whole thing about this scheme is that we were entirely reliant on mentors coming forward across Wales and on people from under-represented groups applying in the first place. So, from the outset, we knew that if we did not get enough mentors, or if we did not get enough mentees from diverse groups, we could not run the scheme. I am sorry if I have not answered your question about women. More women did come forward, and perhaps we could do some research as part of the questionnaire or surveys that we do about why that is the case.

9.45 a.m.

[38] **Mohammad Asghar:** I am very pleased that women had more success than men. Did you experience any geographical difficulties during the running of the scheme? If so, can you tell us what these challenges were and how you overcame them?

[39] **Ms Pembridge:** Yes, we had some geographical challenges. I have just mentioned that we needed mentors to come forward from across Wales, and we were reliant on mentors to come forward voluntarily. The take-up of training courses in some rural areas where there was less concentration of mentees was so low that we could not always run courses, but we tried to offer alternatives and we also tried to schedule training sessions around caring, family and work commitments so that people could attend. We always tried to be fair to people in north Wales, rural mid Wales, south-east Wales and west Wales in terms of where and how often we held events. Sometimes, the distribution of mentees across Wales made it very difficult for the scheme co-ordinator to make sure that he could visit everyone and take on 34 pairs of mentees and mentors. If we were to run the scheme again, I would imagine that we would offer as much flexibility as we could to mentees to enable them to participate, as that could have been a barrier to them getting the most out of the scheme.

[40] **Ann Jones:** Joyce and Janet, could you ask your supplementary questions, as they are probably on the same issue?

[41] **Joyce Watson:** They are, as they are about the geography of north and mid Wales, and that is a bit of a cause for concern when you look at the figures. If you were to run this scheme again, would you use regional Members in a more structured way in terms of trying to pair up regional Members with a mentee from a specific area? I speak as a regional Member. It is very difficult, if that pairing is not correct, as we cover such a big area, to give opportunities to someone who lives a long way away, or to engage with them. People's expectations are that you are in a single area all of the time. I suggest that that needs careful examining before you ask regional Members to sign up and to engage.

[42] **Ann Jones:** Janet, do you want to ask your question?

[43] **Janet Ryder:** It is very striking that we had no applicants from Gwynedd. What would you do next time to turn that around? There was only one applicant from Ynys Môn, and no mentees ultimately made it through from Ynys Môn or Gwynedd. How much was that to do with people being concerned about having to pick up overnight costs, or were they met by the scheme? What kind of support was given to people, and to what extent was that made known before the scheme was advertised?

[44] **Ms Pembridge:** That was one of the things that we outlined in the pre-recruitment literature, namely that travel and subsistence costs would be paid. We also offered to pay childcare costs. We had people staying overnight in hotels, and we provided a list of appropriate hotels in the area. The scheme co-ordinator was very helpful in helping people with the logistics, so it never became an issue. I am pleased that we did that. Again, the issue was about the availability of mentors in the area. In north Wales, we did not have as many mentors as we did in the south. Do you have anything to add on that, Anna?

[45] **Ms Morgan:** The issue comes back to the recruitment of mentors. One of the key learning points that came from the scheme was on the recruitment and development of mentors, particularly for local government. The Welsh Local Government Association wrote to the leaders of every local authority in Wales to ask them if their local authority would be willing to engage with the scheme. As I am sure you know, a number of shadowing and mentoring schemes have been under way over the last few years, particularly around women. Two or three local authorities said that they had been involved quite heavily with mentoring and shadowing schemes for elected Members and that they simply did not have room for another one at this time. That was certainly the case for one authority in north Wales and one or two in south Wales. However, that did not stop individual elected Members who wished to engage and become mentors, which they did.

[46] **Ann Jones:** What about the issue that Joyce raised about linking the mentor and the mentee? Regional Assembly Members represent areas that are very big—Joyce probably has the biggest region, but Janet has a fair-sized region right across north Wales. You can imagine someone in Anglesey, for example, wanting to do it, but Janet is based centrally, so there is a great distance to travel. It is about linking the issues of the time element and giving some careful thought to who become mentors and mentees.

[47] **Ms Pembridge:** Another issue was that some mentees indicated political affiliations and we had to be sensitive about Members' party groups. That might have made it difficult for mentors to engage their mentees with the wider party groups. The point about regional Members and us being more flexible is a good one. I know that some mentees indicated that they would like to engage with other Members as well, and the mentors were happy for them to do that. I think that that was a good idea, because, as long as all the Members were happy, it exposed the mentees to a wider group of Members and political experiences.

[48] **Ms Morgan:** That is certainly what happened on the local government side of the scheme. For example, in Torfaen and Caerphilly, some mentees were working quite closely with more than one mentor. That was simply because, in some cases, we had more mentors than we had mentees, and they still wanted to be involved in the process. That afforded them a much wider variety of experiences and personalities of course.

[49] **Mohammad Asghar:** Assembly recruitment is still in the limelight. Some mentors raised concern about the management of the scheme, saying that it could have benefited from additional structure and training for mentors. Do you agree?

[50] **Ms Morgan:** Yes, I probably do agree with that. What you will find from Step Up Cymru is that we were quite pushed for time at the outset of the scheme. Had we had more time, you would have found a more structured scheme. What we actually had was something that was quite unstructured. The feedback from the evaluation was that people wanted more structure; I do not think they wanted to be tied down to very prescriptive instructions, but I felt that they wanted more structure. On reflection, we provided mentees with more training and development opportunities than we did mentors on this scheme, if we are honest, and that is a learning point. We developed some guidance for mentors between the partners, be they Assembly Members or local councillors, and that is great as a handbook, but we cannot guarantee that that has been read, digested and understood. Although that is a great resource for a prospective mentor, I do not think that it solidifies the learning. So, yes, I would suggest that something semi-structured would be preferable, and that is what mentors said.

[51] **Mohammad Asghar:** What was the role and responsibility of the scheme co-ordinator in ensuring that the needs of the mentors, as well as the mentees, were met fully throughout the scheme?

[52] **Ms Pembridge:** The co-ordinator kept contact with both local councillors and Assembly Members on a regular basis. From the outset, we said that, if mentors needed extra support, the scheme co-ordinator was based here in the Assembly's corporate unit on the fourth floor and was available to be contacted. His time was particularly stretched in administering and deciding upon elements of the scheme and parts of the training. So, the role of the co-ordinator is key, and is instrumental to the delivery of this scheme.

[53] To go back to the point that you made about mentors' preparation for the scheme, I would reiterate what Anna said. The guidance was, to an extent, helpful. It said what the first meeting could look like, it set objectives, the role of the mentor and what was expected. In the future, maybe we could look at holding some kind of workshops for mentors. We will have case studies from this scheme, so we will have more to say to mentors. Feedback from Assembly Members has indicated that, time permitting, they would be happy to have some kind of coaching or workshops with the scheme co-ordinator in the future.

[54] **Veronica German:** It has been interesting to read the report, not having been here at the time when all this was taking place. Having said that, I was on Torfaen council, but I did not know anything about it. It was probably done through a certain area and a certain group, and not everything comes through to everyone. I am not being picky about it, but the point is to ensure that everyone knows about it and not just lead groups, as this is a partnership scheme. Do you feel that the partnership between the three elements worked well? Is there anything in particular to learn from the way that the three of you interacted? Is there anything that could be improved upon in the future?

[55] **Ms Pembridge:** I learned about sharing resources, saving money by using our estates creatively, pooling expertise and building networks and contacts. One member of the steering group said that seeing the Welsh Government, the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Local Government Association pulling together for a common objective was empowering and set a good standard, and that stuck in my mind. Administratively, there were some difficulties in ensuring that the needs of Assembly Member mentors and local councillor mentors, as well as the needs of mentees across Wales, were met. It was very much a resource-intensive project, but to come to where we are today has been a valuable experience for all the partners.

[56] **Ms Morgan:** I concur with Holly.

[57] **Veronica German:** Have you had any discussions with other organisations across the UK, such as political bodies, about the lessons learned and whether anyone else might be

using something similar, or feeding it into what they are already doing? I know about the Be a Councillor scheme in England, because I have been involved in it from a distance. That scheme is, again, trying to get a more diverse range of people coming forward to be councillors. It runs a variety of different projects. I have mentioned to the Minister here that I think that that is something that we should tap into. It would be interesting to know whether you have had any dealings with it or whether it has had any dealings with you. How do we spread the word, as it were?

[58] **Ms Pembridge:** We have not had any contact with that group, but it is interesting to know about it and I do not think that there would be any harm in sharing the evaluation with the group. It is on the website. In the last UK Parliament, the Speaker's Conference visited Cardiff and came to the Senedd and people were interested in Step Up Cymru and cited it as something that could be run elsewhere in the UK. We were in the middle of the scheme at that point. I have also shared it with partners in the Scottish Parliament and colleagues in the House of Commons Commission and the Northern Ireland Assembly. They are all aware that we have done this. We will shortly be meeting in an interparliamentary conference and we will share what we have found in Wales in a network meeting. In terms of disseminating it more widely, it is on the net, as I said.

[59] **Veronica German:** Excuse my ignorance; it is because I was not here. Are we the pathfinders? Are we unique or have there been other, similar schemes?

[60] **Ms Morgan:** There are other schemes that are similar. Operation Black Vote was specifically—

[61] **Veronica German:** I was thinking of Scotland and Northern Ireland and anything that they have done in particular.

[62] **Ms Morgan:** There are none that we know of, and certainly none that take a multi-stranded approach. We looked at all of the protected characteristics in this scheme. We widened it out, and we are certainly not aware of anything else like it in the UK at this time. That is not to say that they do not exist.

10.00 a.m.

[63] **Ms Pembridge:** It would have been useful to have had a benchmark with a multi-stranded scheme. I think that it is important that people who are considering running such schemes take on board what we have learned. We have certainly reflected honestly what we think should be taken on board in the recommendations in the evaluation report.

[64] **Veronica German:** You have made some recommendations and you have referred to things that you have learnt for future participants. As you have already mentioned, you came in under budget, which is quite remarkable. Now that you have prepared the ground and learned those lessons, do you think that it would be possible to run the scheme for even less? I do not necessarily mean in cash terms. Would it cost less because you have done some of the groundwork, or has most of that money been spent on revenue items that must be paid for all the time?

[65] **Ms Pembridge:** Half of that funding was the salary for the scheme co-ordinator. That was an external appointment. In the current financial situation, if it is to run again, one option would be to use an existing member of staff from one of the partnerships. A balance has to be struck between open competition and a difficult financial climate. The one issue that we had when we started the scheme and got the budget was that we did not know how many people would have additional requirements that we would have to fund. For example, we did not know the level of childcare required. If the scheme was to run in future, again, we would not

know but we would have to budget for it.

[66] **Ms Morgan:** There are also the geographical issues. We would not want to cut the budget to the cost of people coming forward from all over Wales. However, I certainly think that there are some areas where savings could be made. Being honest, I think that we did incredibly well as a partnership to make use of the resources available to us. There were quite a few events, such as Excellence Wales and the Royal Welsh Show and so on, which we managed to piggy-back on in order to offer more opportunities and a wider range of opportunities for the mentees at minimal, if any, cost. So, I think that we did quite well there.

[67] **Mohammad Asghar:** My question is also on funding, which is crucial. It is very important for people to know about this political structure. I have not seen any reference to the Electoral Commission or the European Commission. I am sure that there should be some sort of funding for such a project. Did you look into that?

[68] **Ms Pembridge:** We did not look into it because the Assembly Commission and the WLGA partners were keen to fund this and to show their commitment to promoting equality. However, it is something that we would look at, yes.

[69] **Janet Ryder:** I wish to go back to one of the answers you gave me earlier. You said that you know that some of the mentees who have been through the scheme are now actively involved in their communities. However, there is not a great deal in the report about the impact that the scheme has had on them. We know that you have said that you are going to carry out a further survey, and presumably you will gather a raft of further information. Is it your intention to publish a further report and analysis of those surveys so that people can see, a year on, what the impact was?

[70] **Ms Morgan:** Yes. It is not going to be another full report, obviously, because we have already done that for the initial findings. However, it will be a supplementary document to support the initial evaluation.

[71] **Janet Ryder:** I would not want to lead you in any way, but would you be concentrating on the impact that the scheme has had in creating active citizens and how you can measure that by their impact in their local communities?

[72] **Ms Morgan:** Yes, absolutely.

[73] **Janet Ryder:** We look forward to that report. Is there any intention to have the scheme independently analysed, perhaps by an academic body?

[74] **Ms Morgan:** I know that we came in under budget; I am conscious of that, so there was money left, although I think that has been returned. At the moment, there are no plans to undertake such an analysis. As you will see, one of the recommendations is that any evaluation should be undertaken independently. Initially, the idea was that the scheme co-ordinator would undertake the evaluation and write the report. Someone who has had such intense involvement is not best placed to do that, which is why partners who were seemingly detached from any developing relationships were able to write what I believe is an objective report. However, you will have seen from the recommendations that, for its credibility and objectivity, someone independent would be valuable.

[75] We went as far as we could on this occasion, and we were, again, battling against time. We wanted to ensure that the report came out within a reasonable amount of time following the closure of the scheme, so that the momentum was still there. As I believe Holly mentioned earlier, we engaged Voirrey Manson from the NHS Centre for Equality and Human Rights, who is a great facilitator, and who was not involved in the scheme in any way,

to undertake focus group sessions, where we looked for qualitative data. She could explore attitudes and behaviours regarding the scheme, more so perhaps than people who would be perceived to be in a position of power in terms of the project board. We were trying to get away from the idea of someone just telling us what we wanted to hear.

[76] **Janet Ryder:** Have you made any approaches to any of the universities? Their post-graduates may be looking for a research subject.

[77] **Ms Morgan:** No, we have not, but now that you mention it, perhaps we will get them to do the job in April. [*Laughter.*]

[78] **Ann Jones:** I am sorry, Veronica, we moved on; that was my fault. Had you finished your questions?

[79] **Veronica German:** That is okay. My last question is: how important is it to run a similar scheme in the future?

[80] **Ms Morgan:** In terms of its initial outcomes, it is probably important that it is run again. However, when that might happen is like asking, ‘How long is a piece of string?’ Currently, it is not viable to run it. It does not cost a huge amount of money, but it costs a significant amount, particularly with the impending Assembly elections, and next year we will have local government elections. Therefore, the timing for such a scheme would need to be right for the Welsh Assembly Government and for local government. However, there is definitely a place for it, and, having spoken to and having seen the mentors and the mentees, I know that the majority of them would love it to run again.

[81] **Ann Jones:** Is everyone happy? I see that you are. I thank you both for coming to give us evidence today, and for answering our questions. If we run such a scheme in the fourth Assembly, we look forward to evaluating that one as well. Thank you for your time this morning.

[82] Before we move into private session, I wish to take this opportunity to recap on the Assembly’s term, and on what we have done as a committee. We have undertaken valuable inquiry work, covering issues such as the accessibility of polling stations—which is an ongoing issue that I hope the next committee will consider—issues affecting migrant workers, housing adaptations for older people, discrimination against people with HIV, and the accessibility of public transport. These issues have been key to making Wales an easier and more accessible place for people to live in.

[83] Therefore, I wish to thank you all, including past committee members, for your time. I also wish to place on record our thanks to the committee staff—Claire and Cath. None of this would happen without their prodding me in the right direction and, at times, poking me when I have gone past agendas. I also wish to thank the legal advisers, and the Members’ research team. It has been a team effort, and I wish to thank you all for that. Janet is stepping down gracefully at the end of this term, so thank you, Janet, for your help on this committee. For those of us who will return, I hope that the next Committee on Equality of Opportunity—whoever may be on it—will take up the issues that we have raised. I want to go on to discuss that matter in private.

[84] **Janet Ryder:** I wish to say a few words before we move into private session. I sat on this committee at the very beginning, in 1999, and I am back on it now. I wish to thank you, Ann—perhaps on behalf of the other committee members—for the way in which you have chaired this committee, in an equitable and inclusive manner, as befits the Chair of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity.

[85] **Ann Jones:** Thank you.

10.09 a.m.

**Cynnig Trefniadol
Procedural Motion**

[86] **Ann Jones:** I move that

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

[87] I see that the committee is in agreement.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.09 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.09 a.m.*