



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

**Y Pwyllgor Diwylliant a Chymunedau
The Culture and Communities Committee**

**Dydd Mercher, 21 Hydref 2009
Wednesday, 21 October 2009**

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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

Eleanor Burnham	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Alun Cairns	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Janice Gregory	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Lesley Griffiths	Llafur Labour
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
David Lloyd	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Naomi Alleyne	Cyfarwyddwr Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru Director of Equalities and Social Justice, Welsh Local Government Association
Dr Siriol David	Seicolegydd Rhanbarthol Regional Psychologist
Brian Gibbons	Aelod Llafur, (y Gweinidog dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a Llywodraeth Leol) Labour Member, (Minister for Social Justice and Local Government)
Peter Jones	Cyfarwyddwr Cynorthwyol, yr Is-adran Diogelwch Cymunedol Assistant Director, Community Safety Division
Y Fonesig/Dame Anne Owers	Prif Arolygydd Carchardai Ei Mawrhydi Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
Lyndon Puddy	Rheolwr Opsynau Tai, Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Torfaen Housing Options Manager, Torfaen County Borough Council
Yvonne Thomas	Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol, Gwasanaeth Cenedlaethol Rheoli Troseddwyr Cymru Director General, National Offender Management Service Cymru
Chris Watkins	Dirprwy Reolwr, Carchar Ei Mawrhydi/Sefydliad Troseddwyr Ifanc Parc Deputy Controller, Her Majesty's Prison/Youth Offenders Institute Parc
Steve Williams	Pennaeth Cymorth Gwasanaethau i'r Cyhoedd, Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Torfaen a Chynghorydd i Gymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru Head of Public Services Support, Torfaen County Borough Council and Advisor to Welsh Local Government Association
Elke Winton	Rheolwr Cefnogi Pobl, Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Torfaen ar ran Panel Prif Swyddogion Tai Cymru Gyfan Supporting People Manager, Torfaen County Borough Council on behalf of the All-Wales Chief Housing Officers Panel

[8] Thank you for the invitation. As you know, the consultation exercise has finished, and officials have started work on it, so now is an appropriate time to come back to committee. So far, the consultation has received 57 written responses. As you may know from your independent briefing, three full-day stakeholder events were held, to which almost 100 people turned up. That shows a high level of engagement, and at at least one of the events there was a Home Office presence to link in to what was going on in Westminster.

[9] The consultation ended on 21 September, but, during the time that it was open, I met a number of different groups, formally and informally, and they had a lot to say about the group, including Wales Women's National Coalition, which has been active in promoting awareness of the issue of violence against women. Other messages in my meetings were that we need to provide more services in relation to prevention activities, more support for victims, and that more work needs to be done for male victims as well.

[10] You know that, in the budget, we were able to provide an extra £1 million to the domestic abuse and violence against women budget, and that is a substantial increase in the order of 33 per cent or so. It is a significant increase. The purpose of the increased investment is to be able to move the action plan forward.

[11] If I may, I will summarise the main emerging themes, and then we can proceed. The themes emerging from the consultation, in no particular order, were the need to work to international conventions in light of what those conventions ask us to do, but also given the definitions that we use. A lot of attention was drawn to what is going on in Scotland. Many of the submissions stated that we should develop a separate strategic plan on violence against women and that more needed to be done by preventative services, rather than just responding. In schools, we got the message from young people that areas such as sex education should have a much greater emphasis on relationships and respecting people, and not just be biology classes. There was also the message that we need to send a strong indication that it is violence, end of story, and that there are no degrees of violence, from bad to disgusting and terrible violence, but that violence as a way of dealing with personal problems is not the way forward, and that we needed to remember that.

[12] There was a lot of concern about front-line professional training, particularly in relation to the health service, education, police, social services, and so forth. People need to be more aware in relation to violence against women, domestic abuse, female genital mutilation, forced marriages and honour crime, and front-line workers need to be increasingly sensitive to that. As I said previously, there needs to be more support for men and lesbian victims, as well as transgender people and older people. There were strong messages in relation to cross-departmental working in the Assembly Government. There was also a plea for increased awareness of the rural dimension to this issue and the geographical distances.

[13] Perpetrator programmes were mentioned and the need to evaluate and accredit those programmes. A good few comments were made in relation to the integrated family support teams, which could be summarised as needing to move more quickly and more widely. However, the IFS teams are very much about building on good practice, and I do not think that you can boil an egg any quicker than you can boil an egg. We need to be careful with this.

[14] Finally, there needs to be more support for children who are often the hidden victims of all of this, whether it is in the majority of cases where the mother is the victim, or whether it is the father, the children are always in the firing line. We need to be aware of that and we need to do more.

[15] Those are the main emerging messages that we are taking on board, but we are still working our way through it. Peter mentioned to me before we came in that the English

document, which is relevant to this because it deals with many non-devolved areas, will be published at the end of November. So, as for coming up with a definite plan for Wales, apart from the timescale for considering the response to the consultation, we would be well advised, on the basis of the conversation that we had five minutes ago, to see what is in that document rather than us launching a definitive plan only for something to come out in England that meant that we have to go back to refashion our plan to take account of the non-devolved issues. However, that is just a preliminary view at this stage, as we will have to discuss this later on.

[16] **Janice Gregory:** Thank you very much, Brian—we appreciate that. We have a number of questions and time is constrained. The first one is from Joyce Watson.

[17] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you for your summary, Minister, and I congratulate you on the effort that you have put in, not least on the extra £1 million. Welsh Women's Aid stated that it is concerned that the new strategy as it stands will not be an integrated strategy. What is your response to that?

[18] **Brian Gibbons:** The title of the document contains the words 'strategic action plan'—it is an action plan, and not a 'start from square one' definitive strategy. One of the reasons why it is an action plan is that we want to take action. So, in the sense of it being an end-to-end new strategy, that is a fair criticism, if that is what it is intended to be.

9.40 a.m.

[19] That is one message that we must take from the consultation. However, we also have to evaluate the action plans that are in this document and see whether they are consistent with the actions of other people who have developed a more strategic overview of what needs to be done. That is, we need to look at whether our actions are consistent with the actions that they want to take. Given that we have had extra resources and so on, I would not like to see us lose time at the beginning of the next financial year if the action points of this strategy pick up the points that are in the consultation responses. I would like to get on with implementing those action points, if at all possible. However, we need to take on board the wider point as to whether or not this is part of a holistic approach going forward and see whether we need to take some time out to take a strategic overview of what is going on, but I would not like to lose momentum on getting things done for people, particularly as we have the resource to do so.

[20] **Joyce Watson:** I hear what you are saying and I welcome the fact that you want to move on, but it is the view of Welsh Women's Aid that there is a heavy bias towards domestic abuse, even among those actions that have been added to address the wider agenda on violence against women.

[21] **Brian Gibbons:** Is it saying that that is a bad thing? Domestic abuse is wrong. Unless Welsh Women's Aid is saying that we are overstating the risk, I am not sure what it is trying to say. Is it saying that we should not give as much as attention as we are to domestic abuse?

[22] **Joyce Watson:** No, that is definitely not what it is saying, because we all know that domestic abuse poses the greatest danger in the first instance, but, if we look at it as a dimension of violence against women, which is violence between people, without looking at the much wider agenda that might result in that violence, and you have run through some of that, that is what raises the concern, because it becomes a narrow focus, rather than a wide-ranging one.

[23] **Brian Gibbons:** I would not like to use the word 'bias', because it suggests that an inappropriate level of attention is being given to domestic abuse, and I do not take that view

at all. We could be criticised for not doing enough, but I do not think that we could be criticised for being too biased, and that is not the word that I would use. However, we accept that a substantial part of domestic abuse has its roots in the wider concerns about violence, and we will not solve the problem in relation to the majority of domestic abuse if we do not tackle wider violence against women. That is a point well made, and that is why, when we responded to the committee report, our response was to update the domestic abuse strategy. However, because of work that has gone on since we responded to the committee report by you and other people, we have broadened what we are trying to do. I have tried to encompass action points that will address issues to do with violence against women that were not in our initial response to the committee report in February.

[24] **David Lloyd:** To pursue the same points and to get some of the philosophy right, we are talking about an update to the domestic abuse strategy, but we are also trying to get a handle on the whole agenda of violence against women, of which domestic abuse is a part, along with all the other aspects, such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and so on. In other words, the domestic abuse strategy is part of the overall strategy on violence against women. Do you therefore agree that in order to be philosophically consistent, the domestic abuse strategy needs to be gender specific to address the particular issues with regard to women in the domestic abuse situation? You can also be gender specific towards males in a separate gender-specific domestic abuse strategy, rather than have a domestic abuse strategy that is non-gender specific, as it is at present. You could argue that that fails both men and women. What would be your response to that?

[25] **Brian Gibbons:** I am not sure that I would agree with the thesis. We have a gender-inclusive approach, which means that we recognise that men and women are victims of domestic abuse. Everyone who is a victim of domestic abuse deserves equality of treatment and it should not be down to a gender issue as to the importance of your victimhood. Anyone in a domestic abuse situation needs equal response from the Assembly Government. Our strategy is gender inclusive to make sure that that strong message is sent out. As I say, one of the responses was that we need to send out a message that all violence is not acceptable. We certainly do not want to create a hierarchy of domestic abuse, saying that some domestic abuse is less or more important.

[26] We do have gender-specific policies. We realise that the majority of victims of domestic abuse in Wales are women. The vast amount of money that we spend on services goes to women. We have developed antenatal and gynaecology pathways. Equally, most of the refuge money—around 90 per cent—is spent on women. On the other hand, we have the Dyn Wales helpline for male victims of domestic abuse. There are plenty of examples in the strategy where our approach is gender inclusive. Every victim counts, but, where appropriate, there are gender-specific services. That is the way that we need to go. As I said in Plenary, I accept the criticism that some people understand equality of opportunity to be 50:50, but that is clearly ill-conceived. If 90 per cent, 80 per cent, 70 per cent or even 60 per cent of the victims are in one category, a 50:50 response is not equality of opportunity. The response has to be on the basis of need. I think that we are trying to do that. However, I am sure that we could do better, and I accept that.

[27] **David Lloyd:** Would you be willing to consider separate gender-specific domestic abuse strategies?

[28] **Brian Gibbons:** That is very dangerous because if you look at issues like forced marriage, and repeat attendees at accident and emergency departments, which leads to these things being picked up, and where there may be consequences for children, and if you start segmenting it, you will see that there are real dangers of a lack of joined-up policy and people falling through the net. In all of these areas where families come under strain and there are victims within families, the clear message relates to the lack of joined-up policy, the lack of

communication, and the lack of people working together coherently. Setting up two separate strategies seems to be going in absolutely the wrong direction, but you do need to be gender specific. This pink document gives an example of a refuge being ordered to take men. With respect to the people who made that decision, that is clearly an ill-conceived decision. However, it is a better approach for those organisations that would make such a decision to understand equality and human rights issues, rather than developing a separate strategy, because the consequence of a separate gender-based strategy would be not to have joined-up Government.

9.50 a.m.

[29] **David Lloyd:** May I ask a supplementary question?

[30] **Janice Gregory:** I already have three people who want to ask supplementary questions; I must remind you of the time. Alun is first and then Lesley.

[31] **Alun Cairns:** Minister, we are not talking about a 50:50 split of funding, as was suggested in one of your answers to Dr Dai Lloyd. We are talking about the fact that the needs of men who are victims of domestic violence are completely different, and the provision must be completely different from that made available to women, because of the very decision that you just talked about. We are not talking about a 50:50 split in funding because, clearly, more women are under threat than men, but that does not mean that you can ignore the needs of those men who are under threat within their environment.

[32] **Brian Gibbons:** Absolutely. As I said, a key area that came up in the consultation was awareness, namely that front-line workers are aware that women and men can both be victims of domestic or gender-based abuse. So, ensuring that front-line workers have that cross-gender awareness is the way to go. It is not sensible to suggest that front-line workers should have female-related problems stored in one half of their brain and male-related problems in the other. People have to be aware that gender-based violence exists for women and men. Perhaps there is domestic violence in gay partnerships, or if they are transgender, for example, and there needs to be that awareness if the same people continually turn up at accident and emergency departments with injuries.

[33] We need to think across the whole field in this area, and if we start compartmentalising it, there will be risks. The service response must be appropriate, but that is not to say that the best way forward is to create completely separate strands. For instance, would you have a strand for gay victims of domestic abuse? I am not sure that that is a good way to go at all.

[34] **Lesley Griffiths:** According to the Home Office's figures on the prevalence of domestic abuse cases, 94 per cent of defendants are male. On rape, 99 per cent of the defendants are male, and 96 per cent of defendants of sexual offences are male. So, while I appreciate what you say about not having a gender-specific strategy, do you not think that these figures back up the fact that we should have one?

[35] **Brian Gibbons:** There have been two or three responses from pro-men groups—although perhaps that is not the right way to describe them. They feel that men are not properly catered for. Their concern is that only one gender is taken account of in the entire domestic abuse agenda, and that is women. In their evidence, they report much a higher incidence of male domestic abuse than the figures that you report. It is true that probably 95 per cent of calls to our domestic abuse helpline are from women but, then again, the Dyn Cymru helpline gets how many calls?

[36] **Mr Jones:** The Dyn helpline received 457 calls last year and 180 so far this year.

[37] **Brian Gibbons:** That is about 10 calls a week or something like that. So, there certainly are male victims out there.

[38] Going back to Alun's point, I do not want to get into a bean-counting exercise about this. It is too important to end up arguing about these issues with a 'one for me, one for you' approach. We must have an integrated strategy and we must look at needs in that strategy. We must recognise that certain groups will need a gender-specific approach, whether for men, women, gay people, children or whoever. That is the way to go. I would not like to see a conflict between victims—and we are talking about victims. I would be worried that this could end up as a slanging match about which set of victims has the greater priority.

[39] **Janice Gregory:** The final supplementary question to this first question is from Dai.

[40] **David Lloyd:** Thank you for your indulgence, Chair. I will probably not be allowed to ask another question for weeks.

[41] **Janice Gregory:** If ever. [*Laughter.*]

[42] **David Lloyd:** The current situation fails all victims and, like the Minister, I want to avoid an argument about which victim has suffered the most in all this. However, women's groups are not happy with how the current domestic abuse strategy treats women, and men's groups are not happy with how it treats men. Does it not follow that we should have a gender-specific domestic abuse policy that can concentrate on the majority of victims, who are female, and provide specific services for them, without being diverted—as in the case that you mentioned—into having to cater for men who are suffering domestic abuse? We could have a parallel, gender-specific service for men alongside a gender-specific domestic abuse strategy primarily aimed at women victims. That would be a major first step in tackling the bigger picture of the whole violence against women agenda. That is bigger than domestic abuse alone. You cannot start to tackle that bigger picture without providing a more positive response to the slightly smaller picture of domestic abuse. Would you not agree that a gender-specific response to domestic abuse would be a positive way forward?

[43] **Brian Gibbons:** The services have to be gender sensitive and gender specific. People are creating artificial distinctions here. For example, look at the care of children in a domestic abuse situation. Presumably, you are not suggesting that the support services through Cymorth, and so on, for the children of a male victim would be different from those for the children of a female victim. Are you suggesting that?

[44] **David Lloyd:** No, I am not, but that could be built into two separate strategies. The overwhelming majority of victims are female.

[45] **Brian Gibbons:** Yes, I accept that.

[46] **David Lloyd:** So, the services should reflect that.

[47] **Brian Gibbons:** I think that the funding and resource being made available do reflect that.

[48] **David Lloyd:** That does not seem to be the evidence out there.

[49] **Brian Gibbons:** I do not think that anyone has seriously suggested that the vast bulk of the money that has been spent on this strategy has not been spent on women. I have not seen any evidence to suggest that. However, some providers have said that men and women have to be treated on an equal basis in certain care settings, and I think that that is a mistaken

approach, because some of those services are not sufficiently gender specific for those victims. That is not acceptable. However, none of the evidence that I am aware of has suggested anything other than that the vast majority of money that we are spending on this goes to women's services. I would not like to give a precise figure for the proportion that goes on women's services, as I do not have the details to hand, but let us say that it is 85 per cent or more. If there is any evidence to the contrary, we will have to look at it. However, I am not aware of any evidence to suggest that.

[50] **Janice Gregory:** Let us move on now to other parts of the action plan. Bethan has the next question.

[51] **Bethan Jenkins:** The consultation response by womensgrid indicates that the new strategy does not include any specific references to cross-cutting agendas such as child poverty. It also indicates that there is no specific mention in the action plan of human rights, or any connection with the UN convention to eliminate discrimination against women. Can you provide some practical examples of how the new strategy will dovetail with other departmental strategies to end violence against women?

10.00 a.m.

[52] **Brian Gibbons:** I am not sure that I agree with what you say. Action point 1.3 in the strategic action plan refers to Flying Start and Cymorth, which are key parts of our child poverty strategy on improving the life chances of children. Action point 1.8 states that

[53] 'Future Welsh Assembly Government publications about domestic abuse will carry, where appropriate, explicit references about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child'.

[54] So, there are a number of references in the document that interface with the child poverty strategy. I do not know exactly where they are, but there are references in the document to the integrated family support teams, which are a key part of the Proposed Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2009, which we have introduced to tackle child poverty. If the argument is that we could be doing more, that might be a fair point if there were resources available, but I do not think that the case can be made that we have not linked these.

[55] **Bethan Jenkins:** This is based on information that we have had on gaps in the action plan in the womensgrid consultation response. It is not my opinion. I am just saying that that is what has been said.

[56] **Brian Gibbons:** Right, I see. Action point 1.3 refers to Cymorth and Flying Start, which are key programmes in the strategy for tackling child poverty.

[57] **Bethan Jenkins:** Generally, do you think that other departments will be able to dovetail with this strategy? How much work are you giving to other ministerial portfolios to come together to work on this agenda? Perhaps that is the question that should be asked.

[58] **Brian Gibbons:** Some good points have been made. One point in the document is about making people feel safer in public spaces. One response suggested that the Assembly Government's Department for the Economy and Transport should be an action partner in that. That is a good point because the department's work covers car parks, highways, and railway and bus stations. So, some good suggestions have been made.

[59] On the Department for Rural Affairs not being involved in the development of the strategy, I would say that the Minister for Rural Affairs is signed up to it and is a keen

supporter of it. I do not have any doubt about her drive or her commitment as a Minister to see that this is relevant to her department. However, perhaps that should have been brought out a little more in the text. There have been some good comments like that that we need to take on board.

[60] **Bethan Jenkins:** Is there a ministerial sub-group on domestic violence, like the one on child poverty chaired by Jane Hutt?

[61] **Brian Gibbons:** No. However, we have an advisory group that advises officials and me, which is made up of many of the key stakeholders, including Welsh Women's Aid, the police and so on. That is a high-powered expert group. How often does that meet, Peter?

[62] **Mr Jones:** It meets quarterly.

[63] **Brian Gibbons:** I see the minutes of its meetings, and I have been along to one or two of them. That is our main platform. Its members meet with officials.

[64] **Eleanor Burnham:** Another important and distressing issue is that of women fleeing domestic abuse who have no recourse to public funds—what you rather euphemistically call NRPF. There are stories in the papers, and the evidence that we have received is horrendous. It shows that 72 women were turned away in 2007-08. Some of these women from certain ethnic backgrounds are experiencing some horrendous abuse. I saw a film about it a couple of weeks ago and it was really quite distressing. In our report on domestic abuse in Wales, this committee made a recommendation on the needs of these women, but your Government rejected it on the grounds that it is a reserved matter. Is there not anything that your Government could do to help these desperate women in this horrendous situation?

[65] **Brian Gibbons:** In the main, if people do not have access to public funds, it is because of their immigration status. That is the determining factor and, clearly, it is not we who decide their immigration status.

[66] **Eleanor Burnham:** Surely you have something to say on this distressing matter.

[67] **Brian Gibbons:** I will say something on it if you let me finish.

[68] **Janice Gregory:** If you let him finish, Eleanor, you will hear what the Minister has to say.

[69] **Eleanor Burnham:** I have been very patient all morning.

[70] **Brian Gibbons:** Joyce Watson has raised this in her cross-party group, and I have also gone along to one of those meetings. There are legal constraints because people's access to public funds is determined by their immigration status, but we have, for example, established support facilities for people fleeing prostitution, regardless of their status. Equally, we support many third sector organisations in Wales, for example Black Association of Women Step Out, that work with women who do not have recourse to public funds. On the health service side, we have indicated that people, regardless of their immigration status, will be treated as ordinary citizens in the national health service. We have continued to lobby Westminster on this, because we share some of your concerns, and we think that there is scope for further progress. Our understanding is that the Home Office is developing proposals. It has been on the verge of making an announcement for at least three or four months. It does not seem to have a fully developed policy. We are as much a victim of that as the women—and it is predominantly women—who are in this situation. We would like to see progress on this, because we are not totally happy with the situation. We are not doing nothing.

[71] **Eleanor Burnham:** Could you not press Westminster on this as a tripartite pressure group, with Scotland and Northern Ireland? I am sure that those countries have similar situations. Rather than do it solo from Wales, could you not, as the Celtic fringe, have a little go at the Home Office, which is not known for its humanity?

[72] **Brian Gibbons:** We have had 'a go' at it already.

[73] **Mr Jones:** Whitehall has a ministerial group that Dr Gibbons sits on, and Scottish and Northern Ireland representatives also attend that, so all the countries are pressing for this. We are also keeping in close contact with BAWSO and Welsh Women's Aid about this scheme, as it is being developed.

[74] **Brian Gibbons:** Unfortunately, it is probably more accurate to say that I receive invitations to attend the inter-ministerial group meetings. It is always held on a Wednesday, when we have Plenary meetings. We have tried to persuade the group to schedule its meetings for another time so that we can be more active. We try to ensure that officials are aware of what is going on, but it is proving very difficult for me to get to several of these inter-ministerial groups, simply because of the scheduling of Assembly business and the way in which business is scheduled in Whitehall.

[75] **Alun Cairns:** Some third sector organisations feel that the new strategy is focused on criminal justice solutions to domestic abuse, There is no specific crime of violence against women or domestic abuse. Can you provide us with greater clarity on how these actions regarding criminal justice will be implemented?

[76] **Brian Gibbons:** One of the most consistent messages that we get is that people who engage in this activity are not brought to account in any way and that the perpetrator gets away with it. The conviction rates for domestic abuse have increased. I believe that about two thirds or three quarters of some types of cases result in a conviction, which is a substantial increase. Many victims have felt that they have not been adequately supported in the past and that, with the development of specialised domestic violence courts, for example, victims and witnesses are treated much better than heretofore. The conviction rate for sexual assault, which Dai was talking about, and assaults against women more widely, is pitiful—the percentage is still in single figures. The number of cases that go to court and where a conviction is secured is very small. That is unacceptable, and it is a legitimate grievance of victims of sexual abuse. Until we are able to bring perpetrators to account, the victims of wider gender-based violence will not feel that we are tackling their problems seriously enough.

10.10 a.m.

[77] You will be aware that we have six sexual assault referral centres in Wales. The plan was that there would be one in every police authority area, but we have actually ended up with more than the plan envisaged. That is not a bad thing; it is a good thing. The SARCs are there to try to make the situation much better. Victim Support in Wales tries to work with the police to support victims, and we have given extra money to the rape crisis centre in Caernarfon. We have also provided extra money to New Pathways here in south Wales to try to support those witnesses and victims of sexual assault who go before the courts. I would not say that we can be totally happy with the situation, and, again, there is uncertainty on a year-to-year basis about the funding. The money comes from the Home Office; it is very keen to mainstream it, but these are often non-devolved areas of activity. We are not masters of our own destiny in that regard.

[78] **Joyce Watson:** I have a brief supplementary question about criminal activity; there

are two sides to it. We know that 11 women have been killed as a result of domestic violence this year alone. There are danger areas and danger signals, and there is dangerous behaviour. How do you intend to promote public and individual awareness of that dangerous behaviour? More specifically, how do you intend, through this strategy—because we do not deliver it; other people do—to guide people to deliver appropriate training for those who are working in the field and those who will be prosecuting, in order to identify dangerous behaviour, which keeps people isolated, as opposed to loving, caring behaviour?

[79] **Brian Gibbons:** We need an integrated approach so that front-line workers are aware that a person is a victim of gender-based violence every time such a victim comes before them, whether those victims are men or women—although, obviously, women are more likely to be victims. This is one area where we do need a gender-inclusive approach. We should not be segregating people, because people will then fall between the cracks. You are right on this issue. I had a meeting this week with the Independent Police Complaints Commission, and the biggest issue that arose at that meeting related to failings with regard to domestic abuse cases. An upshot of that meeting was that the commission wanted to send representatives to the new national criminal justice forum that we have established here in Wales, at which all the criminal justice system players come together to discuss issues. The next subject on its agenda will be domestic abuse, and the IPCC wanted to attend that meeting.

[80] I have had meetings with the Crown Prosecution Service; I meet it two or three times a year. Getting justice for victims of domestic abuse and violence against women is constantly one of the big issues that it is concerned about. There is a degree of awareness among the main agencies out there that deliver the service. They are conscious of their own failings in this regard, and they are keen to make as much progress as possible. Through things such as the advisory group that we have working with us, and the national criminal justice forum that we have just established, these are the sorts of issues that we will be able to address in a more coherent way in the future.

[81] **Janice Gregory:** Brian, we are seriously over time now, and for the first time in my time as the Chair of an Assembly committee, we will write to you with the rest of the questions. They cover some very important aspects of the action plan, and I would be most grateful if we could have detailed answers to the questions. I apologise to Members, especially Eleanor who wanted to ask another supplementary question. Perhaps Eleanor can let me have her supplementary question and I will put it in writing to you. Thank you for coming to committee this morning, and for the very detailed responses that you gave to Members. We appreciate it. I apologise to Members, but another half an hour would not have covered the questions that were left.

10.16 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i Gyfiawnder Ieuenctid Inquiry into Youth Justice

[82] **Janice Gregory:** I welcome to the table Yvonne Thomas, who is the director general of the National Offender Management Service Cymru, Dr Siriol David, who is a regional psychologist, and Chris Watkins, who is deputy controller of Her Majesty's Prison/Youth Offenders Institute Parc. Good morning to all three of you and welcome to committee. Thank you for taking the time to come to committee and for providing us with a paper prior to your visit. I am happy for you to briefly introduce your paper. I apologise at the outset for the fact that you are coming in late to us, but I am sure that you watched our previous discussion, which was important, on the television in the waiting room. With apologies, please introduce your paper, Yvonne.

[83] **Ms Thomas:** Thank you for the opportunity to give an oral representation this

morning. The main issues that we would like to bring to the committee's attention are in relation to the two significant but, in our world, separate groups for which we have responsibility—the under-21 population and the 21 to 25-year-old population. The National Offender Management Service looks at those two populations separately. There are a number of points of interest that we think that the committee may wish to consider. You will see in the report that we have given you some general background, which I will not restate, as I am sure that you are very familiar with most of it. In particular, I draw the committee's attention to some of what we believe are key issues for you to consider.

[84] The first is in respect of the under 18-year-olds who are held in HMP Parc, and there are three significant issues that we would like to bring to your attention. Over the past years, one of the difficulties that has been raised with regard to the holding of children in the facility at Parc has been access to community and adolescent mental health services. I will update the committee that we have now agreed with the Welsh Assembly Government health representatives that there will be a trial of nine months' CAMHS provision within the facility at Parc. That will be provided by means of a senior psychologist one day a week, a junior psychologist two and a half days a week, and a full-time mental health nurse. This is a significant step forward in the provision of mental health services for the children held in the facility, who, as you can imagine, are among the most difficult and most troubled individuals that we deal with. So, there is very positive movement in that area.

10.20 a.m.

[85] There has recently been an inspection of the facility at Parc, carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons. The inspection is as yet unpublished, but I wanted to bring to the attention of the committee that the inspection is generally positive, but does raise issues around mental health care, to which we will respond in the way that I have outlined.

[86] The second area that the inspectorate raised, which we will look into as a separate matter, is the way in which young people are escorted to and from the facilities, including mixing with adult prisoners and the holding of children in vans for an unnecessarily long period of time. I will ask my staff to look into that issue as a matter of some urgency, because there is appropriate contractual provision for that service to be carried out correctly. It is now down to us to ensure that that is delivered.

[87] The third area of concern highlighted by the inspectorate is education provision. There has been an absence of continuity in the provision of education services for the population in Parc and we have worked with G4S, which provides the service. It has now put a head of education in place and we will monitor that situation extremely carefully.

[88] So, those were the three main areas of recommendation. Once we have responded to the report's recommendations in full, the inspectorate report will then be available publicly. I thought that it might be useful to give you some advance notice of that.

[89] The other area of concern to us is the resettlement of these children in their home communities. We have agreed with the contractor that a full-time social worker will be taken onto the staff at Parc. That person will start imminently. One of the primary reasons for that is to aid resettlement in the community. I have noted from our statistics that only a quarter of the children held in Parc are deemed to have appropriate accommodation provision for their release. That is something on which we could work more effectively with local authorities, the Assembly Government and so on.

[90] **Janice Gregory:** There will be a separate question on resettlement, so you will be able to expand on that.

[91] **Ms Thomas:** The final, and perhaps the biggest, point that I would like the committee to consider is the overall suitability of the facility. Parc is an adult male prison. It is a category B prison. While the 64-bed children's facility there is well, decently and humanely run, we have reservations about the appropriateness of such a facility within an adult male establishment. From my perspective, a longer-term strategy of more appropriate provision of an appropriate size would be something on which we would welcome a review. In conjunction with that, the matter of diverting that population from a custodial sentence in the first place is also something that we would welcome and support very heavily.

[92] **Janice Gregory:** Thank you, Yvonne. We will move to the questions.

[93] **David Lloyd:** With regard to the National Offender Management Service, and further to your opening comments, can you outline your responsibilities in managing the contract of the young person's unit at Parc and can you confirm that the prison is meeting its statutory obligations and commitments as set out in the contract?

[94] **Ms Thomas:** Yes, certainly. We operate the contract on behalf of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales and the National Offender Management Service are part of the Ministry of Justice. Our responsibilities in respect of managing that contract are to ensure that the services defined in it are delivered in accordance with the contract and that it meets the statutory obligations. I have no reason to believe at the moment that we are not meeting those statutory obligations. In addition, we seek to extend the delivery provision, wherever possible, to include those specialist policies that are set by the Welsh Assembly Government.

[95] **Bethan Jenkins:** You highlight that you have now taken over responsibility for senior and junior attendance centres in Wales. What evidence do you have about the impact of the attendance centre order on reducing reoffending compared with other interventions?

[96] **Ms Thomas:** We recently took over responsibility for this area and, therefore, I do not want to comment on the independent research on the effectiveness of attendance centres, because the evidence is not clear cut enough for me to be able to comment on it. However, the purpose and use of attendance centres is subject to a review, which I have just commissioned, because we wanted to consider the 32-hour-type intervention that attendance centres primarily deliver. Some indicative data from other programmes that we are running in the community—in north and south Wales probation areas—lead us to believe that we could deliver more focused interventions through attendance centres' 32-hour orders and that the courts would potentially use those as consideration for potential diversion. The basis for that is our intensive supervision and control order pilot schemes currently running in west and south Wales. So, we believe that there is a great potential in using attendance centres, but by doing so in a more focused and more programme-based way, liaising with centres to deliver a better outcome.

[97] **Eleanor Burnham:** In 2007, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation found that many youth offending team staff had little knowledge of what happened at the attendance centre and were unlikely to promote such centres in court. It also found that few magistrates had visited attendance centres. Do you agree that there is a reluctance on the part of sentencers to seek such a proposal and are you confident that YOTs deal with breaches appropriately?

[98] **Ms Thomas:** I will answer that in two parts. I agree that the profile and use of attendance centres could be improved and I welcome the fact that, having taken over responsibility for them around four months ago, the review that I commissioned will start to address those specific issues; that is, a greater awareness by the YOTs of attendance centres and to recommend them to sentencers. We will start to promote our proposals on diversion

with sentencers, as we currently do with other types of sentence packages.

[99] On the YOTs and their dealings with the court, that is outside my area of responsibility and I am afraid that I do not have information on that. The YOTs sit elsewhere.

[100] **Eleanor Burnham:** But is that not part of the problem, namely the lack of integration and lack of seamless delivery? I know that there will be a question on that later, but our visit suggested that those on the inside did not know what those on the outside were doing and vice versa. Therefore, there is no continuation for the youngsters; that is glaringly obvious, and I speak as a former magistrate.

[101] **Ms Thomas:** I agree with that. The integration of local authority services, YOT services and the probation and custodial services could be much better. That is a key and urgent area that we would seek to address.

[102] **Eleanor Burnham:** I would like to continue, with your indulgence, Chair. Some of these issues relate to location of how far YOTs have to travel to the attendance centre and so on.

[103] **Ms Thomas:** Yes, the location of the attendance centres will be considered by the review, because the historical reason for them being where they are is not clear to me. There is nothing to prevent us from reviewing and restating where those should be.

[104] **Alun Cairns:** In what ways are programmes at the attendance centres developed in consultation with young offenders and how do you engage attendees and deliver relevant material, for example, that might suit a 10-year-old and not a 17-year-old?

10.30 a.m.

[105] **Ms Thomas:** The current programmes of activities and engagement that are delivered at the attendance centres have been developed in a less cohesive way than we would want to see, from the National Offender Management Service's perspective. Each of the attendance centres is led by dedicated and qualified professionals who, using core principles, develop effective programmes that they believe will suit the purpose of the courts. The review has been commissioned because we believe that a more structured approach is more appropriate and we think that the age range is so wide as to be less than useful at the moment. So, the current opening hours, the mixing of the age ranges, the programmes delivered and the physical location of the attendance centres are all areas that I am currently investigating, with a view to potentially changing them.

[106] As an addendum on the materials provided, we are currently delivering a programme that was started by the North Wales Probation Service and is now national across Wales. It is delivered by the third sector and is called Future Skills. It is that programme that we are thinking of in light of its appropriateness for attendance centres, particularly for the over-16s. It is a 32-hour intervention that deals with citizenship and basic skills. It is a good, wide-ranging programme. For the younger people in the attendance centres, I will be looking for some much more specialised and behaviour-based provision, which is where the gap is, I believe.

[107] **Alun Cairns:** What about the point about using the young people themselves to provide feedback on the material and its quality as part of your ongoing review?

[108] **Ms Thomas:** We adopt that principle more widely anyway. We have just completed a very important piece of work with the children and families pathway for the Reducing Re-offending Strategy Board for Wales. Working closely with the Department for Children,

Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills and the Assembly Government, we have produced a range of literature for children—comic books, websites and so on—that were developed with young offenders and the children of offenders. It is that type of approach that we would want to bring for particularly the under-16s, who need to be able to relate to the materials that are presented to them. Using both offenders and non-offenders in that age group is a way of developing materials that we would continue to want to develop.

[109] **Joyce Watson:** You highlight the importance of ensuring a joined-up approach between the community and justice services. The HM Inspectorate of Probation report, ‘Joint Inspection Findings of Youth Offending Teams in Wales 2003-2008’, concluded that, on release, partner agencies such as health, education and social services do not always provide the services that are needed. Based on your experience of working with adult offenders, what action do you think is needed by us, the Welsh Government, and local authorities to improve that resettlement package for young offenders?

[110] **Ms Thomas:** There is no doubt that the joining up of services between agencies remains a crucial issue, not only for resettlement, but for a wide range of reducing reoffending issues. That is not confined to Wales. I think that it is recognised as probably one of the biggest challenges that the agencies face. I would say that there are some pockets of excellence in Wales where, having actually really focused our attentions and joined up the agencies properly, the results have been startling. The Bont project, here in Cardiff, is a scheme that is aimed specifically at prolific and priority offenders. It is a scheme that provides one team from the police, Jobcentre Plus, the local authority for housing, probation and the courts and so on. They sit together, they share systems and they are co-located. The reducing reoffending figures for the population of extraordinarily problematic offenders with whom they deal has shown a dramatic reduction, to the extent that the reoffending figure in Cardiff on the whole has reduced by 2.5 per cent, and we believe that that is the direct result of that initiative. So, we know what a good solution looks like.

[111] Our intention is to replicate that solution where we can, and we would prioritise it according to need. In our terms, the need would be in those areas where the reoffending rate is highest. The data that we have lead us to believe that Swansea, Newport, Wrexham and Merthyr would be the four places where we would concentrate our efforts.

[112] If we add to that our knowledge of the effectiveness of mentoring services, the TSS and the Women’s Turnaround Project, in replicating those types of interventions among younger people, we have great evidence that would lead us to believe that that would be a successful approach. All of those are predicated on joining up agencies and putting the offender at the centre of service provision, because the person whom I look at as an offender is usually a mental health patient for the local health board, or could be a NEET for DCELLS. They tend to be the same population, as you will be aware. There are compelling arguments, socially and economically, for taking that approach, and we are actively working on that.

[113] Our next major initiative will be to go into a close service development event with the City and County of Swansea Council and the Assembly. That design event starts on Friday, and it is being co-sponsored by me and the chief executive of Swansea council—so, it is progressive service provision.

[114] **Bethan Jenkins:** The committee has heard evidence that current practice in information gathering and exchange does not always allow other agencies across the public, private and third sectors to effectively deliver interventions and support to young offenders. Based on your experience, what are the barriers to effective information sharing, and how can this be overcome, considering the different make-up of those agencies?

[115] **Ms Thomas:** At the most basic level, it tends to be a problem of integrating

information technology. Infrastructures and systems are very separate. A great deal of data is available, particularly in Wales, where we have the Universities' Police Science Institute. There is possibly a greater level of data sharing and transparency here than in England, from what I have observed.

[116] In NOMS, we publish an annual business and commissioning plan, and that includes a full needs analysis based on the offender assessment system that we use, that is, OASys. From that, we consult with our partners and we share those data with them. We also receive data from Her Majesty's Courts Service, for example, on predicted sentencing patterns. We get very detailed data, obviously, from the probation and prisons services. If there is a gap in the data that exercises us, it is good data on what works. Perhaps you would like Siriol David to comment on that, as that is her area of expertise. It certainly occupies much of our time.

[117] **Dr David:** With young offenders, there is very little evidence to show which types of interventions are likely to be effective. In the Ministry of Justice, large teams of researchers look to see what constitutes good, effective practice and what is likely to have an influence on reoffending. List literature on younger people is not available yet. For example, there is only one accredited programme based on the principle of what works, that is, based on identifying the criminogenic need and what is likely to affect reoffending. There is one programme, called JETS—the juvenile enhanced thinking skills programme—which is designed to help to teach good impulse control, good emotional management, and good perspective-taking skills. However, even that programme is quite difficult to run, in that individuals have to be part of a group, and young people find it incredibly difficult to talk about their problems in front of others, and they will often storm out of the session. So, the attrition rate for those programmes is very high.

10.40 a.m.

[118] Finding good quality interventions is incredibly difficult for this young population, so most of the interventions that are undertaken in Parc, for example, are one-to-one interventions. Programmes are being piloted—there is a new 'stop and think' programme being piloted, which teaches people good problem-solving skills, emotional management skills, impulse control and conflict resolution. Again, that is probably better done on a one-to-one basis, rather than on a group basis. We are in the early stages of finding good interventions that are likely to work, because the young offenders bring such a number of difficulties to the sessions.

[119] **Eleanor Burnham:** When we visited the privately-run Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre near Rugby, we spoke to a psychologist there. Do you share information with people over the border in that type of institution, particularly as that was a privately-run centre and you are in the public domain?

[120] **Dr David:** Yes, the psychologists in Parc would share information relevant to the offender.

[121] **Eleanor Burnham:** The psychologist whom we met seemed to be very productive and was supervising some very important work.

[122] **Janice Gregory:** The information is being shared, then, is it?

[123] **Dr David:** Crucial information would be shared from psychologist to psychologist.

[124] **Janice Gregory:** Going back to your answer to the previous question, Yvonne, would it be possible for us to have a note on the good practice? You mentioned a few schemes, but Members would be interested to hear more.

[125] **Ms Thomas:** Yes, we would be very happy to do that.

[126] **Lesley Griffiths:** You refer in your paper to the fact that you are currently carrying out a review of young offender placements, and that there is also no UK Government initiative to merge young offenders with the general adult prison population. However, during this inquiry we have heard evidence that young offenders aged between 18 and 21 in England are being moved into adult prisons. Do you have concerns about that, given that the Welsh Assembly Government's 'Extending Entitlement' agenda goes up to the age of 25?

[127] **Ms Thomas:** I will take that question in two parts. A small number of institutions in England mix the under 21 population. There is no English or Welsh policy to do so. We are currently undertaking a population review, which was prompted by the fact that there are currently 400 young men in Parc, in what is probably the biggest and most problematic unit of its type. That has been obvious from the differences in serious assaults in that unit, because they always run higher than in any other establishment in Wales, although it is consistent with other facilities of its type. There are two schools of thought on this. There is a school of thought that says that under 21s should be held separately, and there is a school of thought that says that it can be helpful to mix carefully selected under 21s to their benefit. When I say 'to their benefit', I have concerns around that, because we will all be familiar with the very local nature of communities in Wales, and many of the young offenders held in Parc are from Cardiff and the surrounding areas. If they are from Swansea, which has the second biggest population after Cardiff, there can be local tensions. It is not an ideal location, and it is certainly not ideal in that if you coop up 400 young men in one place, you get what you would expect. If you want a more operational view of that, Chris Watkins has supervised that facility for many years. It might be helpful for him to give you a flavour of what we see.

[128] **Mr Watkins:** Of the 2,800 or thereabouts prison population in Wales, almost 1,100 of them fall into the age group of 18 to 25. We have a number of dynamics in Wales that we must consider. I will call it tribalism, but there is the English/Welsh dynamic, because we suffer from a number of transfers from England because of the prison population problems. So, we have that dynamic and we also have the local eastern valley/western valley, Cardiff/Swansea, Newport/Cardiff dynamics. Put all that together in, effectively, four house blocks in Parc, and it can be a problem. Stability can come about; for many years, we have accommodated lifers in general population areas, which is good practice, because they bring stability. There is an argument that mixing older adults with younger adults can have the same effect. However, perpetrators can become victims in those circumstances. There is already an existing practice and procedure whereby young adults can be placed in the adult area, normally because of their physical size and behaviour. Sometimes, they need a more mature group than their peer group to survive. Quite often, big prisoners get bullied by smaller prisoners and they find that they need to migrate to an adult population. So, there is an argument for a combined unit, but you need a risk assessment process that will allow that to be safe, because of the risks. Although they may be adults, they are susceptible to significant degrees of bullying or other influences by more mature adult prisoners.

[129] **Lesley Griffiths:** In relation to the delivery of offender management services, how much of the 'Extending Entitlement' agenda is recognised by the probation service?

[130] **Ms Thomas:** The 'Extending Entitlement' agenda forms part of NOMS Cymru's service considerations, because we have a lot of co-funding initiatives with the Assembly Government and there is a great crossover in the provision of services. If the committee looks at previous commissioning plans and future commissioning plans, it will see that we seek to build the 'Extending Entitlement' service levels into our core service provision wherever we can.

[131] **Lesley Griffiths:** Does that extend to 25 years of age?

[132] **Ms Thomas:** Yes, absolutely. Again, we define services for NOMS in Wales differently, because we want to keep in step with the Assembly Government. It also informs English thinking, in that there is a growing view that under 25 is the right categorisation, as we have known here for some time.

[133] **Janice Gregory:** Joyce is next.

[134] **Joyce Watson:** I think that my question has been answered.

[135] **Janice Gregory:** Do you want to ask anything further to it?

[136] **Joyce Watson:** No.

[137] **Janice Gregory:** If you are happy; that is fine. Eleanor has a question.

[138] **Eleanor Burnham:** On devolution of the secure estate to Wales, which might be a prickly issue for some, what would be the benefits of that for the management and rehabilitation of children and young people in custody? Do you envisage any difficulties around devolving responsibility for the secure estate to Wales and, if so, how could those barriers be overcome?

[139] **Ms Thomas:** I recently gave evidence on this matter to Professor Rob Morgan, who is conducting the current review. Our first issue is that we do not have sufficient provision in Wales to provide all the service requirements. So, the first barrier is whether there is a possibility of providing enough places in Wales. The second consideration would be the intensity of current provision at Ashfield and whether that could be replicated. As a point of principle, it is absolutely desirable for young people to receive their sentence and their treatment in Wales. However, the journey to managing that delivery is problematic. There are economic and logistical problems. Whichever Government is responsible for that delivery is not my concern; I support the principle that those facilities should be available for Welsh children in Wales, and I do not think that the National Offender Management Service or the Ministry of Justice would take much issue with that either.

[140] **Eleanor Burnham:** We have heard some evidence that different provision could be contemplated, for instance, specialist fostering. We are looking at the issue of fostering in general in another committee, so I have been trying to ask the questions in both committees. I was a magistrate in Wrexham and I am very aware of Stoke Heath, for instance, which we visited recently. It is obvious that Stoke Heath is not a problem because, given that it is so close to Wrexham, many of the people who work there are from the locality. The issue is that people in north-west Wales have difficulty accessing it, and the fact that they possibly—and probably—would be more Welsh and Welsh-speaking, which can cause issues. You then have the issue of the curriculum and so forth. What do you think of specialist fostering and would that be a solution, perhaps, rather than building more secure units?

10.50 a.m.

[141] **Ms Thomas:** Our aspiration should be to reduce the number of children held in secure accommodation overall. In order to do that, we need a range of facilities, of which specialist fostering would very probably be one. However, there could be other considerations—small specialist-based community units with intensive support. There is no doubt in my mind that there will always be a need for some secure facilities. I have met many young people who one would struggle to put anywhere but in a secure facility for their own good and that of the public. I would like to see an overall aspiration of a significant reduction.

We were discussing this matter before coming here to give evidence. One has to question some of the children that are being held in custody. I think that the diversion is the critical issue, which will be a mixture of alternatives, including specialist fostering, but I think that there could be other community-based facilities that we could, between us as agencies, start to propose.

[142] **Eleanor Burnham:** I suppose that, in a democracy, that would be the aspiration. The difficulty that we have, in my humble opinion, is that there is often a hue and cry. Bail hostels, such as the ones in north Wales for instance, have always had difficulties with the media given that the media whips up a storm about who is being held in some of these bail hostels. My point is that that is not a secure unit. If you had small secure units for young adults, would that not be an issue that you would have to address?

[143] **Ms Thomas:** I think that public opinion and offender management in the community will always be a very difficult issue. Perhaps it is not necessarily understood that we are holding children in prison.

[144] **Eleanor Burnham:** Absolutely.

[145] **Ms Thomas:** That may not be a practice that Wales would find acceptable if it understood the issue better. That may help communities to understand what could be good for those youngsters.

[146] **Janice Gregory:** Thank you very much. We have come to the end of the session. We are most grateful to you for coming here this morning to give evidence to the committee. You will be sent a transcript of this morning's evidence. Please check it for factual accuracy and contact the clerk if there are discrepancies. We appreciate your contribution. We will now take a break for 10 minutes. Please be back on time.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.53 a.m. a 11.03 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 10.53 a.m. and 11.03 a.m.*

[147] **Janice Gregory:** Welcome back. I thank everyone for being on time. I apologise to our witnesses that the committee has run over time this morning. As I explained earlier, our first session, which was an important session with the Minister, ran over.

[148] Let me introduce Katy Young, who is the head of service analysis and improvement for the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales, and Dame Anne Owers, who is Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons. Thank you both very much for coming to the committee. Forgive me, but I do not know whether you have been to an Assembly committee before, so, to explain, Members will ask you a series of questions. There are no trick questions; it is a serious attempt to gather as much information for this inquiry into youth justice in Wales as we can. I am happy if you would like to take a minute or two to introduce yourselves, but, if you are more comfortable with going straight to questions, we are happy to do that.

[149] **Dame Anne Owers:** I will introduce myself very quickly. My inspectorate inspects prisons and young offender institutions in England and Wales. We do not inspect secure children's homes or secure facilities. In Wales, we work very closely with Estyn and the Healthcare Inspectorate Wales. In fact, we inspect together. That is the background from which I will speak.

[150] **Ms Young:** CSSIW inspects secure children's homes. There is only one in Wales: Hillside. We join with HMI Probation in the inspection of the youth offending teams service. When we inspect Hillside, we work with other inspectorates at different times.

[151] **Janice Gregory:** Thank you very much. We will move on to the first question. In your paper you say that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child must underpin the treatment of young offenders, including those in custody. Based on your experience, how effective is the secure estate in England and Wales in delivering these basic rights and entitlements for young people?

[152] **Dame Anne Owers:** There have been considerable improvements in the treatment of children and young people in prisons, which is the only thing that I can speak about, since the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales came into existence. Obviously, the focus of any work with children in secure settings should be rehabilitative, and should be on education and training. There has been considerable movement on that; there has also been movement since a case was taken to the High Court to establish that the Children Act 2004 applies to children and young people in prisons, even though the prison service itself is not subject to the Act. That has caused quite a bit of movement, more multidisciplinary work, greater use of training and planning that is based around the child, as well as the development of a more child-centred approach.

[153] However—there are a number of howevers—prisons have a default setting of security and of dealing with adult men. Sometimes, the way of dealing with children can be counterintuitive for prison staff, however good they are. There is a distinct absence of enough training and support for residential staff in prisons dealing specifically with children, young people and disturbed adolescents. We have expressed concerns about a range of issues relating to what you might call ‘behaviour management’ within those settings. The use of force, the strip-searching of children and young people, and the use of segregation and adjudications are all adult-centred approaches, which are not necessarily linked to care planning and training planning.

[154] Another issue that we have, which does not apply to Parc prison, but which certainly applies to Ashfield prison, where many Welsh children and young people are held, is the sheer size of the prison units in which children and young people find themselves. That is not really a good setting in which to have a child-centred, individualised approach.

[155] **Ms Young:** In relation to Hillside, we inspect by seeing all children as children first, rather than as offenders. Our standards relate to whether the needs of the child are being met within the unit. Generally, our inspections have found that there is a real acknowledgement of the fact that children are children, that their needs under the UN convention should be recognised and met, and that staff training should be such that it raises awareness about the needs of the children. I am not saying that it is perfect, but that it is a secure children’s home and it is focusing on the children’s needs.

[156] **Bethan Jenkins:** Many young people who enter the youth justice system are vulnerable, and we know that 50 per cent of young people who enter the criminal justice system have been in the looked-after system. In your opinion, how effective are current safeguarding arrangements for young people in custody? What further action is needed to ensure that their needs are seen to or delivered upon in these settings?

[157] **Dame Anne Owers:** Again, this is an area that has improved, but there is considerable room for improvement. As you say, there are many children and young people who have been in care. Other statistics show very high levels of reported previous sexual abuse of children and young people who are in prison. A third of girls and young women in prison have reported that. So, we feel strongly as an inspectorate that the separation into ‘sad children’ and ‘bad children’ is a completely false dichotomy, because they are, in fact, the same children.

[158] We find some good use of multidisciplinary input. One of your previous witnesses talked about an area about which we had a concern in relation to Parc prison, which is that there was no social worker there. That was a particular issue for looked-after children who were going to go back into care. The positive thing at Parc prison, which we do not always find—and which, in fact, we rarely find in establishments in England—is that there are very good links; it has links with Bridgend social services and with the Bridgend Local Safeguarding Children Board. So, there are some positive and helpful links. That applies to those Welsh children and young men who are able to be at Parc prison. Many Welsh children and young people are an awfully long way away and, therefore, the safeguarding arrangements would not be so good for them. However, there have been some improvements in care planning and, where multidisciplinary work does work, it works well. However, the need is great and the support, for example, of child and adolescent mental health services, which are a crucial part of that, is often lacking.

11.10 a.m.

[159] **Joyce Watson:** You mentioned the sexual exploitation of children and females. I would like to explore that, because it contributes towards a large number of such individuals ending up in prison. I know that you represent an inspection regime, so you are looking, in the first instance, at those who are in prison. However, do you have an opinion on locking up people who are victims to keep them free from harm, rather than treating them as victims? In my opinion, and that of Barnardo's, once you lock someone up, you are treating them as a guilty party rather than as the victim. The impact of that has to be—and Barnardo's states this in its paper—detrimental and will somehow lead to that person going back into the system.

[160] **Dame Anne Owers:** This may be more of an issue for Katy than for me since, by definition, the children whom I see in prison may be victims, but they are also offenders, which is why they are in prison.

[161] **Ms Young:** We would not want victims to be treated as offenders, but sometimes children need the security that a secure unit or a children's home can provide. So, the child needs to be able to access the service that they require to keep them and others safe. That has to be based on good assessment and a determination to meet the child's needs. Sometimes, it is the right place for individual children to be. It might not be ideal, but sometimes they need that security.

[162] **Joyce Watson:** Could I explore that further?

[163] **Ms Young:** I should add that that is not to say that they should not receive therapeutic input and other services alongside that. Sometimes, you have to stop a child, calm them down and provide them with the other services that they need to progress and to move on with their lives, but that has to be done in tandem with everything else.

[164] **Joyce Watson:** I know that we are running late, but if you will allow me to, Chair, I would like to explore this because I feel strongly about it, as we all do. When you inspect and come across such a situation, do you find that those support mechanisms are in place? They should be automatically in place under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

[165] **Ms Young:** We found that support mechanisms are in place in Hillside secure unit, so there is access to psychiatric and psychological support and to education and therapeutic services. However, children do not necessarily stay in the unit for a long time, so the important parts of that process are the care planning and the links back into the community. I think that, as the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation stated, those links are not always as strong as they could be, so services need to be more joined up.

[166] **Bethan Jenkins:** My next question follows on from what you said about safeguarding. To put it into context, when young people who had been sexually abused left the secure unit, we found that they would end up returning on numerous occasions because they had simply been returning to the perpetrator of the abuse. How effective is the care planning to get those bodies that are outside the secure estate or the prison to work together, so that those young people are safeguarded from having to go back into the custodial system? That is a different question as regards offenders' care plans. Is the process sufficiently effective as it currently stands?

[167] **Ms Young:** It is difficult to give a blanket answer. If it is known that a child has been abused, the care plan should not include returning that child to the perpetrator. I would be very concerned if that was in the care plan. The care plans have to be joined up across all the services—social services, the youth justice service, health and the like—and there has to be constant vigilance and assessment of whether those care plans are meeting the child's needs. I think that it varies. Our recent safeguarding inspection across Wales found that practice is varied. Services are quite good at identifying where abuse is taking place, but they are not so good at doing a very forward-looking care plan and not just focusing on the immediate. The thing that impacts on that is the level of experience of the social care workforce. We have a very inexperienced social care workgroup trained in child protection, so it is mixed. However, if we, as an inspectorate, found that children were being put back into the same position as they were in when they left, that would be a source of extreme concern.

[168] **Dame Anne Owers:** May I just say something about the situation in prisons? One problem is the split between children categorised as offenders and children categorised as being in need of protection and welfare care. What tends to happen throughout England and Wales is that, once they go into prison, they somehow cease to be the responsibility of the services that have cared for them outside prison. The services that have cared for them on the outside often breathe a sigh of relief because the child is off their budget and is no longer their concern. These are very difficult, damaged and troublesome, as well as troubled, children. I have heard many people who have worked with children outside prisons say that once they go into prison, they lose them. So, the connections are not always good enough, even though they are better than they were, and I think that that raises questions about how and where those children should be held and the services that should be looking after them.

[169] **Bethan Jenkins:** Which practical ways would you suggest that that could be improved if you are finding disparities between different areas? There may be best practice in some areas that could be transferred to other local authorities. What is the main example of how care planning practice could be improved?

[170] **Dame Anne Owers:** Where we have seen it work well in a prison setting is when there is the involvement of a social worker as well as prison staff, where you have the engagement of social services and where it is accepted that these are our children. They may be our children who are currently in prison, but they do not stop being our children just because they are there. As I said, there are some examples of services in Parc prison being good at that, with the absence of, at present, a social worker. It is also about the services that exist once the child leaves prison and the readiness of the services outside to provide more structured support than a child would have ordinarily. One thing that concerns me greatly is the number of children whom I see and speak to in prisons in England and Wales who are in the safest place that they have ever been and who are scared of leaving. Unless we invest in the services outside prison, prison itself will never do much.

[171] **Ms Young:** I think that it starts before custody. The fact is that the same vulnerable children are being dealt with by the same services in different ways from a very early stage, and it is very sad that they end up in custody. So, it is about making an holistic assessment, working effectively together, and keeping a constant vigil of what is happening with a

particular child and its family. That is the main message: it has to be more joined up.

[172] **Lesley Griffiths:** Where young offenders are placed is of huge significance to their rehabilitation or reoffending. Do you have any evidence of the outcomes for a child or young person placed closer to home?

11.20 a.m.

[173] **Dame Anne Owers:** I do not think that anyone is yet very good, or good enough, at evaluating outcomes, either from individual interventions or from places where children and young people are held. However, when you see what can happen in placements where children are close to home, you get a clear view of what does not happen when they are not. I have already mentioned the possibility at Parc of good partnerships with local social services and safeguarding children boards, but the other thing that Parc is able to do is engage families. One thing in the Parc inspection report, which has not yet been published, but the committee will see it when it has been, is the involvement of families in the induction of children and young people, in behaviour management for children and young people, in training plans, and in releasing young people on temporary licence to get college places and employment places. How the families to which the children will return are engaged in that process is impressive.

[174] Look, by contrast, at young people in Ashfield and Eastwood Park, which are the two places in which young Welsh men and women are likely to be held. When we were at Eastwood Park recently, we found that all the young women there were more than 100 miles away from home. Some 40 per cent of them told us that they had never had a visit, and 20 per cent told us that they had not had a visit within the previous month. You already have a picture of young women who, just by virtue of being in Eastwood Park, are distanced from their families. Those will not all be Welsh women, because some come from the midlands, so I cannot give you a geographical split, but it is an indication of what distance from home means.

[175] When we looked at training planning for young men in Ashfield, we found that families were present in only 25 per cent of training plans. So, the dislocation that inevitably happens when you hold children away from home is evident in those statistics.

[176] **Ms Young:** I have little to add other than that it is also good for parents to have these children closer to home. Certainly, it is the Welsh Assembly Government's policy that looked-after children should be as close to home as possible.

[177] **Joyce Watson:** We have heard evidence that improving housing options could help to rehabilitate young offenders and reduce reoffending. Based on best practice, what type of housing and placement options do you think might help to achieve that aim?

[178] **Dame Anne Owers:** We do not look specifically at what happens after prison, because we inspect what is in prison. Kate may be able to add more than I can. We are looking for some sort of secure accommodation, and not simply temporary accommodation. Accommodation may be with families but, in that case, work needs to be done with those families, because that is where the child will be. However, I do not really have a clear view of what kind of accommodation is available or most appropriate.

[179] **Ms Young:** All that I can say about that is that it is all a part of the care planning and the assessment of an individual child's needs. Some young people are better able and prepared to live independently than others, and it comes back to having a range of resources. The difficulty is when you do not have that range, and children are put in positions that are not ideal and do not really fit their needs. It is about having a range of resources and an active

and proactive plan that the child has signed up to and agreed to, as far as is possible, and to which the family and all the agencies are party, with all the range of resources that you need.

[180] Somebody who moves to become independent needs support, and they also need to have developed some skills before going into that independent setting. So, you need to plan well ahead of time.

[181] **Eleanor Burnham:** Are you satisfied that access to mental health and substance misuse services is suitable for young people in secure establishments, and are those released from custody well served in the community?

[182] **Dame Anne Owers:** I can speak more from the custody side of it, but about links with the community. Given what we know about Parc, the answer to the first part of your question is 'yes', and to the second part, 'no'. The young people's substance misuse service has improved considerably. When we inspected Parc, we were impressed by the service in the prison and by the links with communities outside. However, there was a significant gap in the child and adolescent mental health services, within Parc prison and in what was available outside.

[183] **Eleanor Burnham:** Is the issue about the care plan ongoing?

[184] **Dame Anne Owers:** It is. Care planning is another indication of the gap that there can be. As I said to Ms Jenkins, young people in prisons are subject to a training plan. It does not always include what you would expect to find in a fully fledged care plan. For example, it is completely separate from the behaviour management strategy, the vulnerability strategy or the safeguarding strategy. We often complain that, in young offender institutions, there are all these different planning things being done for the same child, and it is rather like a holding pattern around an airport, because there is no coherence to it—there is no single plan that is based upon the child. There is one plan based on the child as an offender, one as a vulnerable person in need of safeguarding and another one in relation to the child as a potential bully or aggressor. There is no coherent care planning system that can deal with the whole child.

[185] **Eleanor Burnham:** As you said before, when they go back into the community, particularly if they have been a long way from home, some of the evidence suggests that the YOTs cannot get to the integrated community plan beyond custody, because they are too far away and they do not have the staffing, and so on.

[186] **Dame Anne Owers:** Absolutely—the further away they are, the more problematic it is.

[187] **Ms Young:** The lack of CAMHS is an issue across Wales and probably across England as well. It is about taking a holistic approach to the child. It is very difficult to get CAMHS as early as needed, and if more preventative work is done, that would hopefully impact on the numbers that have to go to the secure estate. My issue would be that you need joined-up services early on, as well as to aid rehabilitation when they go home.

[188] **Eleanor Burnham:** Is it an issue of funding, attitude or even management of the secure estate? I am thinking of how we are going to make recommendations for improvement, which may not even have to cost anything.

[189] **Dame Anne Owers:** I think that it is probably both. There is a funding issue around mental health services—Kate will know more about that than I do. There is also an approach that we keep stressing. Our criteria for inspecting young offender institutions are not the same as the contracts or the same as NOMS expects. They are based on the best interests of the child, as we mentioned earlier. We keep on saying that there should be a single care planning

strategy for each child that starts before they go into custody, and ideally keeps them out of it, but which continues afterwards.

[190] **Eleanor Burnham:** When I was on the bench in Wrexham, we would have had a report before the decision for sentencing would be made. Is that not part of the process of ongoing care?

[191] **Dame Anne Owers:** Indeed, and to some extent it is, but it is not always pulled together into the same document and the same approach.

[192] **Ms Young:** I think that some of these very vulnerable young children need therapeutic services. Sometimes, you can have an assessment that says that a child is a risk to themselves or others, but the therapeutic services that are available to that child can be very limited. We know that there is a problem in relation to CAMHS and 16 to 18 year olds who are making the transition into adulthood.

[193] **Dame Anne Owers:** To add a note to my previous answer, one of the disturbing things that we found at Parc prison was that, because there were no children and adolescent mental health services there, a small number of young people who had acute needs and needed that service were moved to England. So, some of the most vulnerable children in the system were being moved the furthest away.

[194] **Eleanor Burnham:** Thank you. My second question was on the thematic review on the care and support of prisoners with a disability. That review by HM Inspectorate of Prisons in 2009 showed that there is considerable under-reporting of the extent of disability in prisons. Can you clarify a little more about this study? Do you have any evidence that young offenders with disabilities have poorer experiences in custody?

[195] **Dame Anne Owers:** Yes, there is a lot of evidence on that. Part of our inspection methodology is that, before we go into every prison or young offender institution, my researchers go in and do a confidential survey with a randomly selected group of prisoners. On children and young people, we publish the results of those surveys every year for every juvenile establishment in England and Wales.

11.30 a.m.

[196] One of the questions that we ask in our survey is whether people consider that they have a disability, and we found overall—I do not have separate figures for children and young people—that 15 per cent of those answering our survey said that they have a disability, yet the National Offender Management Service's statistics acknowledge only 5 per cent of people in prisons and young offender institutions with a disability. There must be a number of people with a disability who do not know that they have one, so I suggest that even our figures are probably an under-recording.

[197] The issue with children and young people is focused, not entirely, but quite significantly, on learning disabilities. When we do our surveys, we can separate the responses from prisoners in answer to a range of questions about prison life and their experiences into different groups. When we separate the responses that we get from prisoners who say that they have a disability from those who do not, we find that their experience of prison life is almost entirely more negative than everyone else's, particularly in relation to feelings of safety and access to activities, but generally in how they cope with the prison regime. We recently found that there was a much higher incidence of the use of force on young people who said that they have a disability than others in prison. Learning disabilities can be linked to behavioural problems and issues of comprehension and understanding.

[198] To give an anecdote that illustrates that, I was talking to a young person in prison who had a severe learning disability, and I asked, 'How do you understand the rules? Do your friends explain them to you?'. He said, 'No, miss, but I know if I go down the punishment block, it is probably against the rules'. That sort of electric-fence learning is probably all too familiar to all children and young people. The Prison Reform Trust has done some excellent work with young people with learning disabilities that illustrates how extensive those problems are.

[199] **Eleanor Burnham:** Are you confident, or would you like us to recommend, that young people, particularly those with learning disabilities, should be dealt with in a much more sensitive way, so that they can overcome such difficulties in whatever way? There are statistics about dyslexia and basic skills issues, and comprehension of what is going on is important in such a rigid regime.

[200] **Dame Anne Owers:** That is right, but it needs to start way downstream from prison. There is evidence throughout the criminal justice system of treatment by police, courts and so on that shows that there is a lack of understanding of the degree of misunderstanding or non-understanding of the system. However, more care needs to be available both before and after prison to children and young people with problems and learning disabilities. There is more work with dyslexia; prisons are much better—and Parc, in particular, is good—on dyslexia and educational disadvantage, but this is about the whole issue of disability.

[201] **Bethan Jenkins:** Evidence to this inquiry has highlighted the need for resettlement to be given a higher priority. What issues for post-custody resettlement have been raised by your inspections and how important is the role of local authorities and partners in this regard?

[202] **Ms Young:** Inspections have highlighted again that, while young people are in Hillside, there needs to be a greater emphasis on what will happen when they go home and that they also need help and support to plan and have opportunities to learn before they go home about the things that they will need when they are back in the community. To me, this always keeps coming back to the care plan. I am afraid that I sound like a broken record. For some children, it works well, but the issue is that it does not work well for all children and the question is why that is the case. It is all about care planning and agencies working together and, where it works well, learning from that and looking to transfer that knowledge.

[203] **Bethan Jenkins:** Would a cross-agency performance framework be useful in providing more cohesiveness in this regard?

[204] **Ms Young:** Yes, just as a cross-inspectorate framework also helps to pick up some of the issues. That is the line that we are looking to develop more.

[205] **Dame Anne Owers:** At Parc prison, we have seen some good examples of work with children and young people due to the location and because Careers Wales has been able to go in. There are links with employers and colleges, and there is a very good use—which we do not usually see—of what is called release on temporary licence to allow children and young people to go out to secure college places and to try to secure employment. That side of resettlement is better than we normally see. There is still this big problem of the gap between what young people hope for when they leave and what they actually find when they get out.

[206] **Bethan Jenkins:** I have a brief supplementary question; I will be asking the Welsh Local Government Association about this later. From my experience in Bridgend and Porthcawl with the Llamau initiative, many people are being housed in one-bedroom flats in a certain estate and find themselves going back into the custodial system because they mix with people who are not assisting them in their progression, so to speak. Do you find that that is a theme throughout Wales? Would a framework help to alleviate some of these problems?

[207] **Ms Young:** Our inspection has not—

[208] **Bethan Jenkins:** You have not dealt with that.

[209] **Ms Young:** I would not be able to comment on that.

[210] **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay. Thank you.

[211] **Janice Gregory:** The final question is from Joyce Watson.

[212] **Joyce Watson:** I know that you might think that this is outside your remit but do you have any view on the type of secure estate provision that is needed in Wales? What would have the greatest impact on rehabilitating young offenders?

[213] **Dame Anne Owers:** It is slightly outside my remit but the inspectorate has expressed views on it. If you look over to England you can find some examples of what not to do in Wales, which would be very helpful. It seems that what not to do is to have very large units in which children and young people cannot be looked at individually, which are very difficult to make safe, and where staff and children really struggle.

[214] What we have found to work best, particularly for children and young people, are small units close to home, that are staffed by people who have chosen to work there, want to work with children and young people, and have training, support and multidisciplinary support in doing so. Some of the small units that have been set up in England for young women between 16 and 18 years of age are very good examples of that, and there is an extremely good unit outside HMYOI Wetherby in north Yorkshire that deals with some very vulnerable and damaged young men in an extremely good way, the problem being that many of them are far too far away from their homes. Those small units work best.

[215] The problem with some of this is that we always start by thinking about prisons. We often talk about alternatives to custody as if prison was the default setting and alternatives are what you think of instead. If you look at some of the things about intensive work with families and intensive fostering, a very good report was recently published by the Prison Reform Trust about some of the things for children and young people that have been tried in other countries, but they do not always automatically read over. However, it seems that unless you work with the family, and his or her environment—assuming that the individual child is an island is a huge mistake—more work with agencies that are already working with the child and young person in the community, and a more permeable approach to dealing with difficult and damaged children, is what we would recommend.

[216] Finally, another thing that we are very concerned about is the great break that happens when a child is 18 years old. Suddenly and mysteriously, by osmosis, they become an adult. All of those kinds of services and support, both legal and actual, fall away and suddenly they are put into an adult prison. That cannot be right. Surely, we should be looking at young people up to at least the age of 21.

[217] **Eleanor Burnham:** I am really pleased that we mentioned intensive fostering, because it is something that is raised with me constantly. Thank you for that. What about housing associations? Some of us, obviously, go to see housing associations. I recently visited one in north-east Wales that has some fantastically supportive elements. Would you agree with that as well?

11.40 a.m.

[218] **Dame Anne Owers:** Yes, absolutely. There is a project in east London that is doing precisely that. It is trying to ensure that the children that it has been looking after in that housing association are not lost when they go to Feltham young offenders' institution on the other side of London.

[219] **Janice Gregory:** Thank you both again for your attendance here at committee this morning; it is much appreciated. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of this morning's evidence session; please check it for factual accuracy and come back to us if there are any issues. Thank you.

[220] We now move on to the final part of this item, which is also the final item on the agenda this morning. I welcome to the table representatives from the Welsh Local Government Association and the all-Wales chief housing officers' panel. Good morning, everyone. I introduce Naomi Alleyne, director of equalities and social justice at the Welsh Local Government Association, Steve Williams, head of public service support at Torfaen County Borough Council and adviser to the WLGA, Elke Winton, Supporting People manager at Torfaen County Borough Council on behalf of the all-Wales chief housing officers' panel, and Lyndon Puddy, housing options manager, at—yes, you guessed it—Torfaen County Borough Council. I take it that Torfaen is empty today. [*Laughter.*] Good morning, everyone; you are very welcome at this committee.

[221] Thank you for providing a paper, which Members have had an opportunity to look at, and I will invite you to speak to the paper. I apologise for the fact that we have kept you waiting; we have been questioning the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government on the domestic abuse strategy, which ran over and, unfortunately, we have been unable to make up that time. Forgive me if you already know the format of this committee—I know that Naomi knows how we work—but you will be asked a series of questions. There are no trick questions; they are a serious attempt to get as much information as we can on this important subject. Who will lead this morning? I need not have asked. Naomi, it is over to you.

[222] **Ms Alleyne:** Thank you for the opportunity to present to the committee this morning. The paper that we submitted to you prior to this evidence session follows on from another paper that we submitted earlier on as part of the inquiry. We have come late into the process, so we have had an opportunity to look at the other evidence that has been presented to the committee. So, we have tried not to repeat anything, which is why we tried to set out, in paragraph 3, some of the key principles that underpin our evidence and which also reflect comments made by others.

[223] We did not just look at the issue of Welsh children in the secure estate, but also at much broader issues around young offending. Custody is one aspect of it, but there are other issues that lead people into custody, as well as issues around what happens post custody. So we have tried to focus on that. We are, obviously, aware of the evidence provided by Neath Port Talbot Youth Offending Team, which has the most experience of dealing with children within the secure estate there. We tried to highlight some of the key issues around reducing reoffending and supporting children and young people in challenging their own offending behaviour and amending that behaviour accordingly.

[224] Some of the other points that you will have heard in evidence are around, for example, agencies working more closely together, more effective planning of services for children and young people, and the issue of vulnerability of the young children within the youth offending service. We have tried to cover the role that local authorities can play in some of the areas where we think improvements are required in driving forward this agenda. I am pleased about the housing aspects, on which I have not read a lot of evidence. It has been very useful to have representatives of the all-Wales chief housing officers' panel with us today, and I know that Bethan already has a question ready for them.

[225] We have tried to look at this issue in a much broader sense, but we need to ensure that those in custody have the appropriate support when they come out of custody. What we are trying to do is prevent people entering the youth justice system in the first place.

[226] **Janice Gregory:** Thank you. Bethan has the first question.

[227] **Bethan Jenkins:** It is not on housing, so I will change the subject for a few minutes. It is about the all-Wales youth offending strategy, which obviously should be an important way of monitoring the issues associated with the secure estate. How effective is the strategy in delivering services to young people in the secure estate, and how can improvements be made to it?

[228] **Ms Alleyn:** We support the updated, revised youth offending strategy, which very much attempts to link youth offending to other key strategies, plans and work ongoing in Wales. The tone is much better; it focuses on prevention and ensuring that services are joined-up, so that we can plan accordingly, and look at the needs of the young person in a broader sense than just their offending behaviour. The big challenge is ensuring that that happens in practice. It is about ensuring that the implementation of that youth offending strategy is joined up effectively. I should hand over to Steve on some of the practical elements of that.

[229] **Mr Williams:** I was one of the original group that informed the all-Wales strategy, because my background is as a youth offending team manager. I was doing that job until quite recently, so I have a degree of vested interest in this. To be honest, I think that the jury is out. The intent of the all-Wales strategy was right, it has been refreshed, and the vision is right, but it is the behavioural change of the organisation that needs to happen. The proof will be in the pudding—in the delivery. It is not about focusing on process, but on outcomes for children. The leadership of the organisation needs the buy-in of the core agencies to do that, and we need to stop counting things rather than focusing on the progress that has been made for children. There seems to be a buy-in to do it that way this time, but it will mean breaking through some of the Welsh Assembly Government bureaucracy, to be blunt—ensuring that we can deliver, and are not impeded by different departments and silos.

[230] **Ms Alleyn:** The youth justice committee that has been established for Wales is helpful in ensuring that the agencies seated around the table are able to debate the key issues in the strategy. It is about how we drive that forward. Some of the structures are there, and it is just about ensuring that we are working to that, delivering, and monitoring the outcomes, not just some of the processes that are in place.

[231] **Lesley Griffiths:** Naomi, you referred to the importance of supporting a reduction in reoffending, but we have heard evidence that, when a young person is released from custody, agencies such as housing and social services do not work together, and do not have a joined-up approach to ensure that the young person has all the services to which they need access. The problem persists, so what do you think can be done?

[232] **Ms Alleyn:** I will start on that and hand over to Elke, from housing, because we were talking about this earlier in the waiting room. One of the issues is around planning—ensuring that clear plans are in place and are communicated at an early stage. One of the problems that we have is that, when people come out of custody, information is not made available to other agencies to help them put services in place at the time. If I can give some examples, we find that agencies are being reactive after the fact, and having to pick up some of those services rather than being aware, with reasonable notice, of the young person's release, their support needs, and how those needs will be met. I think that Elke has some examples of where that has happened.

[233] **Ms Winton:** From an operational point of view, it probably varies across Wales. However, it is about having a planned approach to helping individuals earlier. In Torfaen, social care and housing work quite well together, and there are some good examples of clients working together to provide services. I also wanted to mention that each local authority has a Supporting People team, which basically plans and commissions services, including housing support services for vulnerable people. Those teams also talk to the commissioners to ensure that we plan and fund the services in the first place. There is a referral route, but it is also about planning services to help those individuals. Lyndon could probably cover more of the operational side, on referrals between services, and so on.

11.50 a.m.

[234] **Mr Puddy:** Speaking from an operational manager's standpoint, what sometimes happens, regardless of the person's age, is that we are not aware of an individual being released from custody. It may be that we have not received any notification or, if we have, it may be at the stage when it is difficult to provide anything other than emergency accommodation. A typical example is that of someone released from prison late in the day, and particularly on a Friday. That causes us significant difficulties in trying to plan an appropriate placement, because we are then relying very much on that emergency type of housing provision for the night, or the weekend if they are released on Friday. We would not then be able to make a proper assessment until the Monday.

[235] It causes us difficulties on a number of fronts. First, there is the risk element, because we do not know the offender's history and we are sometimes placing a person in an environment where individuals from other authorities have been placed. That is a huge cause for concern for us. It has been recognised by AWCHOP and my colleagues in social care. I am a member of the National Homelessness Network in Wales, and all of my colleagues face the same issues. It is not just about the relationship between housing and social services; it is about the relationship between housing and social services, the youth offending teams and probation services. It is recognised by AWCHOP and the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru, through which we can look to improve this. Some work has been done on developing a national template through which we can better forward-plan the management of people being released from custody into an environment where we can appropriately plan the temporary placement, or even the permanent placement in mainstream housing.

[236] **Lesley Griffiths:** I just wish to pick up on something that Naomi said about the lack of information that goes with the young person. I represent Wrexham, which is obviously a border constituency, and this issue has been raised with me, particularly with regard to people coming from England. Is the situation worse if someone is coming from England into Wales or is it a general problem?

[237] **Mr Williams:** It is a general problem. We have the technology and the processes are in place; in all honesty, the problem is our performance in doing this. The bit that does not change, and this is reiterating one of Katy's comments earlier, is the care plan, right the way through. It is for us to ensure that we do that.

[238] **Eleanor Burnham:** That is an interesting point. When we went to Stoke Heath and the private prison in Rugby, they said that there is a problem in the opposite direction—that when offenders come back, they do not get any feedback about what has happened. Some of that is to do with the youth offending teams being so far away that they do not have the ability to visit. On that positive note, how confident are you that local authorities are willing and able to deliver robust and joined-up resettlement care plans for young offenders? Do you agree with Estyn that the role of children's services in overseeing resettlement provision should be strengthened and that the role of local authorities in Wales should be reinforced through children and young people's partnerships?

[239] **Mr Williams:** Yes. [*Laughter.*]

[240] **Eleanor Burnham:** Excellent. What might the specific benefits be of the cross-agency performance framework to ensure that local authorities and partners work together to improve services for young offenders? Which agencies should be involved? I know that you have said some of this, but perhaps you could pull it all together. Thank you.

[241] **Mr Williams:** The reality is that we have a care plan that identifies individual need. We have performance frameworks coming out of our ears. The reality is that we concentrate on given standards. For example, the provision of 25 hours of education is a time and an entitlement, and it is right. However, 25 hours of education in the wrong place and in the wrong style is simply a matter of ticking a box. If the performance framework exists, and you identify what should be done to improve the life conditions of the young person, and to lessen the risk that they pose to themselves and the community, that is what the performance system should be around. It should monitor the distance travelled and the outcomes and then do an analysis of what does and does not work. Instead, we create system after system of bean counting, rather than focusing on the outcome.

[242] **Eleanor Burnham:** Are you saying that we are reinventing the wheel?

[243] **Mr Williams:** If you are creating new systems that just count bits of it, yes. That is part of what we are talking about with regard to the all-Wales strategy. If we agree the outcomes that we want for young people, we can look at the progress that has been made from an individual point of view, but then there is disaggregated information when it comes to looking at how the services are working.

[244] **Eleanor Burnham:** So, what should we recommend if these frameworks already exist? What should be the trigger to ensure that all this effort is co-ordinated?

[245] **Mr Williams:** A responsible body. The management structure of youth offending teams varies, in all honesty, and the degree to which it is taken seriously varies from authority area to authority area. Some are led by chief executives and some are not. You have partnerships and you also have local service boards. The reality is that somebody needs to be responsible for an overall outcome—

[246] **Eleanor Burnham:** At the very highest level.

[247] **Mr Williams:** Yes. I believe that it needs to be wider than the YOT for vulnerable children. A YOT badge stops when an order finishes and so on, but the need does not. There is a still a child that requires that risk assessment.

[248] **Eleanor Burnham:** Dame Anne mentioned the issue of services dropping away once a young offender turns 18. What should our recommendation about that be?

[249] **Mr Williams:** The children's partnership has the ability to work with young people up to the age of 25.

[250] **Lesley Griffiths:** In your written paper, you highlight concern about the vulnerability of children and young people held in the secure estate. What more can you tell us about that?

[251] **Mr Williams:** Before a young person goes into the secure estate, an assessment is done of the risk to the young person and to others. Very often, it falls down and the risk to the young person gets lost. Young people who may not have been outside Wales can be placed outside Wales, so there is a change of culture for them. There are also issues such as their

emotional wellbeing to consider, and how they will react to where they have been placed. We tend to look at the crime that has been committed rather than at the risk posed to the young person. So, from a safeguarding point of view, more value should be placed on that. It goes back to the planning process. I do not believe that this is beyond our wit. If there is a likelihood of a young person being given a custodial sentence, the pre-sentencing report should acknowledge the risk. The risk element should be clearer. The provision in the custodial facility needs to be held to account for ensuring that the risk from and to the young person is managed. It should be part of the planning process, part of the evaluation, and part of the inspection process.

[252] **David Lloyd:** You say in your paper that it is imperative that the youth justice agenda and the children's agenda are more closely intertwined and that all opportunities to support young offenders are taken: for example, the new integrated family support teams. In what ways could new legislation be used to improve the experiences of Welsh children in the secure estate, and would you like to see further legislative developments in this area?

[253] **Ms Alleyne:** That is a broad question. I do not believe that we are in a position, not having considered it, to provide an answer on any new legislation, but I believe that there will be some opportunities with the Proposed Children and Families (Wales) Measure to develop these areas.

[254] With the integrated family support teams, the focus is on the family and ensuring that appropriate support is provided so that families with children who are at risk of going into care are supported so that that does not happen. It is about joining things up, as many of the children will also be vulnerable in those instances, and ensuring that a holistic approach is taken to the family and to the issues that are of concern relating to why that family is involved with the integrated family support teams in the first place. It is not just about the health and social services aspect; it is also very much about the wraparound services that need to be provided by voluntary sector organisations to ensure that we take a holistic approach. Rather than looking at the barriers, we should talk about public services as services, so that it not about what health or local government provides but about what is provided as a whole to those children. I am hopeful that the pilot projects that are being developed will go down that route, so that we can look at the vulnerability of children and take appropriate steps, using all the processes that we have in place.

12.00 p.m.

[255] As is stated in the paper, it is sometimes difficult, particularly for the public, to see young offenders as vulnerable children who also need to be safeguarded. However, we need to start to address the issues that led to the offending behaviour. For example, we have talked about substance misuse and mental health support. In some instances, these are issues that are ingrained in the family set-up. Therefore, there is an opportunity for the proposed Measure to be used in a much broader way, incorporating the youth justice elements as well.

[256] **David Lloyd:** Moving on, you express concerns about the needs of young offenders in the secure estate who are from minority groups. For example, you highlight the lack of information on the needs of young offenders who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. How can current arrangements be improved to ensure that more work is done and greater consideration given to the needs of minority groups, so that they are adequately met?

[257] **Ms Alleyne:** I do not have statistics on the number of young offenders in Wales who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. The numbers of black and minority ethnic children, particularly those in custody, are very low. In certain ways, it is about how you deal with what could be hidden problems. We have talked about the monitoring of data, but, as you know, not everyone wants to disclose his or her sexuality. At that age, young offenders may still be

going through the process of considering their sexuality. We need to ensure that appropriate training is provided to all staff within the system, so that, should someone wish to discuss an issue that relates to a particular characteristic, everyone is able to do that. We are aware that prejudice exists in the broader society, and these are issues that people find it difficult to talk about.

[258] Some of the work that Stonewall and the LGBT Excellence Centre are undertaking, particularly in relation to education, could be extended into the secure estate. So far, the data show that that is very effective in raising awareness of those issues.

[259] **Eleanor Burnham:** You say quite categorically that custody for children and young people should always be the last resort. What might be the benefits of implementing an intensive fostering scheme in Wales, which others have said would be a good idea? Do you agree with Nacro Cymru that non-secure placements for young offenders should be prioritised in Wales?

[260] **Mr Williams:** To be blunt, yes. You can call intensive fostering support all sorts of things, such as a 'shared living experience', and so on. Having that level of wraparound care in a nurturing but responsible setting is massive, and, to be honest, we have shied away from that because of the resources that it takes.

[261] **Eleanor Burnham:** Do you also agree that there is a problem relating to the fact that the media can often whip up views against it? I remember when I was sitting on the bench in Wrexham that the local bail hostel was an enormous and constant issue. How do we get over that?

[262] **Mr Williams:** The numbers are not vast, and there are different levels of need. It goes back to what you were talking about earlier with the inspector of prisons. A small number of supported places are the way forward. They are far more discreet, and are far easier to achieve. The resourcing of them is there, but it is about how we operate in order to do that. One example is shared care, where the child is not taken away completely from the family. It is somewhat along the same lines as Naomi's point: you work with the family, and have intensive support for young people, so that they can have different behavioural experiences together. We have not got that far, in all honesty, in exploring those issues.

[263] **Eleanor Burnham:** From the point of view of cost, and otherwise, it is more effective.

[264] **Mr Williams:** I do not have information on the costs, in all honesty.

[265] **Eleanor Burnham:** But when you think about the cost of incarcerating someone—

[266] **Mr Williams:** Yes, absolutely.

[267] **Ms Winton:** In relation to preventative services within supported housing and the Supporting People programme, there is a raft of services aimed particularly at vulnerable families, domestic abuse and other situations. So it tackles the whole family. Another example is a young person who might have been in a family situation with an abusive parent. There are services in place that would provide that support, which would help prevent, in the longer term, some of the issues that young people face.

[268] **Eleanor Burnham:** Are they readily available? Are they available throughout Wales, and do the people who should be using them know about them?

[269] **Ms Winton:** A lot of the services are based within the voluntary sector, which is

another point that I wanted to make. They are commissioned through local authority Supporting People teams. So, people can self-refer. There will be various referral groups, depending on the type of service in place. What we are trying to do across Wales, specifically around tackling young people with offending behaviour, is to provide other options to secure situations, such as supported housing with intense, around-the-clock support.

[270] **Eleanor Burnham:** I questioned the earlier testimony about that, because there are lots of wonderful housing associations. Clwyd Alyn in north-east Wales is doing a fabulous job. So, are you involved and in support of all of that?

[271] **Ms Winton:** The Supporting People programme will commission supported housing services. You have the larger scale services, which are, typically, for want of a better word, 'homeless hostel' type services, which can be specifically for young people aged 16 and above, and provide that very supported setting. What we are also trying to do, on a much smaller scale, is develop many more supported housing projects across Wales. For example, three or four young people will live together with their own locked door, but there will be around-the-clock support. They will be helped to access education, training and employment and offered support to liaise with whatever bodies, whether it be the youth offending, probation—

[272] **Eleanor Burnham:** The one in Holywell is absolutely brilliant.

[273] **Ms Winton:** Yes. There are excellent examples and providers across Wales, such as Solace and Llamau, as we mentioned earlier. We are trying to develop that much more within the Supporting People programme. At the moment in Wales, we have a limited market in that type of provision, and what happens is that sometimes young people are released from custody and are set up to fail within a housing environment. There needs to be that great level of support in a variety of settings to help young people to claim benefits and so on. There are services there, but we need a lot more intense, around-the-clock services, which helps those individuals not to be set up to fail and end up homeless or whatever.

[274] **Lesley Griffiths:** How do you think local safeguarding boards contribute to a reduction in the use of custody for children and young people, and what would the benefits be of placing a statutory duty on these boards to monitor and intervene in the use of custody?

[275] **Mr Williams:** It has been patchy, in all honesty. The journey from area child protection committees to local safeguarding boards has been varied, and people have accepted the breadth of responsibilities differently. However, there should be a linked element there and it should be the reporting and oversight responsibility of the local safeguarding board. As we said earlier, people should be held to account for assessment of the risks to a young person in custody and the risks posed by young people in custody, and there should be links back and forth between the agencies as those people come around the circle back into the community. The safeguarding board seems to me the place to do that, because it focuses on the child as a child first.

[276] **Ms Winton:** Following the publication of the report yesterday by the Deputy Minister for Social Services around safeguarding, there is an opportunity now to look further at the role of local safeguarding children's boards, particularly in relation to youth justice, and we will also be developing that with the youth justice board.

[277] **Bethan Jenkins:** I wanted to ask a question on housing and on the problems with accessing housing locally. I know that you have talked about it in answer to Eleanor Burnham, but my experience in Bridgend is that many young people were being put in single housing occupancies and that perpetuated the cycle of reoffending. There was also the fact that there were only two training providers in the area, and the crisis line in the area closed at

5 p.m. so that when people were coming out of prison, as you said previously, there were no facilities for them to use over the weekend. Llamau and other agencies that I have visited have said that there needs to be more provision, as you have mentioned, for homeless people. Perhaps less use should also be made of the mixed-use single occupancy provision. How do you think you could work with other agencies more effectively so that this does not have to be the reality, as is currently the case? I used Bridgend as an example, but I am not focusing on it as I am sure that it is reflected across Wales—in case they read the Record and contact me, as many people have done previously. So, my question is about how you see the situation across Wales changing in the light of that.

12.10 p.m.

[278] **Mr Puddy:** Across Wales, we recognise that that has been a problem for some time. In fact, the homelessness network, the Spin network and the Youth Justice Board have commissioned a piece of research to look at the needs of those individuals being released from custody and the fact that we are failing them with regard to housing.

[279] The answer to the question is twofold. The first area is the initial temporary accommodation, but then the move-on facility. Under the current legislation, it is up to the local authority to make a homelessness determination on someone being released from custody. The initial duty for us is to provide the interim accommodation. That is the difficulty I spoke about when we are not informed about the individual. We need to be notified about the individual so that we can better plan for that.

[280] To take the second bit—and perhaps come back to the first if you have a supplementary question on it—the move-on accommodation is a serious issue for every local authority in Wales. If we accept the full homelessness duty, then we have a duty to provide move-on accommodation into a secure tenancy, or, by agreement, into a shorthold assured tenancy. The housing supply across Wales does not provide sufficient accommodation for the needs of everyone in our communities. Over the years, the single accommodation that has been built has been clustered. So, there are developments of one-bedroomed accommodation in certain areas. That sometimes causes difficulty with regard to placing high volumes of offenders or single people with complex and often very difficult needs in a particular area. We provide the bricks and mortar and rely on other services to provide the accommodation.

[281] So, there is an accommodation supply, but there is another element. It is difficult for those under the age of 25 to access private sector accommodation. If they are being released from prison, it is unlikely that they have a job, so they will be reliant on housing benefit, which is set at a different rate for those under 25. So, by offering different housing options to provide private sector accommodation, it then comes down to affordability. Supply and affordability are two of the major issues facing all single people in Wales who are homeless, but particularly those leaving custody. It is a difficult scenario to access.

[282] We are hoping that this paper will outline how we can adopt a Wales-wide approach to things, because we all work differently across local authority areas. Our methodology in Torfaen differs from that of Wrexham, Cardiff or other local authorities. Adequate provision of the appropriate temporary accommodation is a major concern, but appropriate move-on accommodation is also part of the discussion. Elke talked to you earlier about better supported housing schemes on a national level. We have quite a large scheme in Torfaen, which has 20 beds. It would be better if there were smaller clusters of units and if they were structured to meet the needs of the individuals going into them rather than a generic approach being taken.

[283] **Ms Winton:** It is also a matter of taking a view on someone's accommodation needs and thinking about their support needs. We can apply services in a housing environment. For example, we may have a supported housing scheme for young people that is accommodation

based—it could be through the homelessness route or it could be that it is a young vulnerable person that the Supporting People programme recognises, so a scheme is developed around it. We also commission services that are more peripatetic, but many of these might operate only within office hours and not necessarily cover weekends.

[284] The role of the Supporting People programme is to help people to set up and maintain a home and to live as independently as possible. There is a host of schemes that includes the provision of refuge or sheltered accommodation, or whatever, but schemes for young people, particularly given the type of support that they need, would be quite different from other types of schemes. For example, they may need help to set up home or, if they have a flat, you may need to ask what furniture or white goods they have and how they will get an income, whether through benefits or a job. So, this is about ensuring that when local authorities consider the debate on housing for young people, whether for young offenders or young people in care, they also tackle the issue of support because, often, those clients will need support. So, this is about local authorities continuously having that debate with the strategic planners and commissioners from the Supporting People teams and programmes, and ensuring that the services within those programmes are commissioned and prioritised, particularly when those programmes also have to deal with a range of other client groups. It is a finite budget, but they have that role and responsibility to not set up young people to fail.

[285] **Bethan Jenkins:** So, when will that paper be available to us? Will it be available within the committee's reporting timeline?

[286] **Mr Puddy:** It is currently at the stage where we are going to demonstrate to different areas, so we are starting to gather evidence.

[287] **Bethan Jenkins:** So, you are just gathering evidence now.

[288] **Mr Puddy:** Yes.

[289] **Ms Alleyne:** In our paper, we refer to research that we undertook on adult offenders and on custody and housing. So, we could send you a copy of that because although it relates to adult offenders, many messages will also apply to children and young people.

[290] **Mr Williams:** I have anecdotal evidence from my experience of working with young people for many years, but it is not based on any research. A problem is that the majority of sentences are short term and therefore these young people lose their accommodation. So, one issue relates to why they cannot keep their accommodation. Another issue that increasingly frustrates young people is the need to identify, in the planning process, a place for them to go when they come out of care, which then becomes their home. For example, why do they have to keep going somewhere for a short term and then somewhere else and somewhere else again? A specified number of lets with registered landlords should be secured every year so that that becomes part of the planning process and so that the young person knows that that is their home, where their roots are and where they can get support. The process needs to be kept simple. Young people ask why they have to keep moving; that is my observation based on their experience.

[291] **David Lloyd:** The subject of my next question has been partially covered, but we will get it spelt out properly: there is guidance that housing services should be involved in the strategic management boards of youth offending teams, but it is only guidance. In your view, should housing be one of the statutory partners? Would that help to overcome some of the challenges that you have outlined?

[292] **Mr Williams:** Absolutely.

[293] **Alun Cairns:** I apologise for much my absence for much of this morning. You say that,

[294] 'local authorities and other public services and partner bodies in the voluntary and business sectors could open up employment opportunities for young offenders—this is gaining more support in relation to looked after children. Similar schemes could also be developed for those in the youth justice system.'

[295] How confident are you that local authorities are willing and able to facilitate the training or employment of former young offenders?

[296] **Ms Alleyne:** The WLGA facilitates an all-Wales community safety forum. This issue was discussed a while ago, particularly in relation to adult offenders, but, again, similar ongoing discussions on looked-after children highlight an opportunity in this respect. However, I am not aware of current discussions between us and local authorities on this. That suggestion was the result of work undertaken by many authorities to offer training opportunities to looked-after children and that there was an opportunity to extend such opportunities to those who have offended.

[297] The WLGA has discussed developing a protocol for public services on this because some issues would need to be addressed, for example, to ensure that the type of offence committed would not pose a risk. So, some issues would need to be worked out and assessments undertaken. However, this is suggested in the paper as something that could be developed because we could build on some of our current work on looked-after children. Again, young offenders are another group of vulnerable children that do not often have the opportunities.

12.20 p.m.

[298] We ended our paper with a little bit of feedback from a recent conference that the WLGA held with the youth justice board. One workshop involved children and young people who had been through the youth justice system. I think that housing is very much a key issue for them, but so are training opportunities to develop their skills and experience. I know that you have had evidence on this from elsewhere, but there was one young person who was very keen to start work on building skills but was unable to find a placement or apprenticeship. It is difficult when people are ready, have challenged their behaviour and want to move away from offending behaviour, but the opportunities that they think could help them to do that are not there. He was very frustrated at the time, but we also get very frustrated as service providers that we cannot always provide what is necessary. Again, on reducing reoffending, employment opportunities and ensuring that the skills and training and education are there are key. So, I think that the local authorities could be looking to do more to provide some opportunities for young offenders locally.

[299] **Janice Gregory:** Joyce, your question has been touched on, but you may expand on it if you wish.

[300] **Joyce Watson:** For the record, I will ask it as a direct question. You have said that you have concerns that YOTs are assessed on the amount of time that young people spend in education, rather than the outcome and the focus being on the outcome. What contribution do you think could be made to improving the quality of education, learning and experience, other than outcome? How do you think it can happen? I think that we have to be brief.

[301] **Mr Williams:** I think that you could do it if you were to look at individual learning plans. People start from many different places and if they primarily need some life learning or life skills before they can tackle formal education, that needs to be recognised. However, the reality is that it takes place in different boxes at this moment in time. So, it is about the overall

concept of learning—learning to be part of the community, learning to be responsible for oneself, and learning in its widest sense. We have the means to do it, but it is just that our focus is still on ticking boxes.

[302] **Ms Alleyne:** It is about building on the framework that is there, but we just need to ensure that young offenders fully benefit from that. I think that other evidence that you have had shows that that is not always the case. To be fair, the youth justice board did review its performance framework last year, so what we have in place at the moment is an improvement on what was there previously, but it is again just focusing on the outcomes and what is being achieved, and the performance measures do not always drive that in that way. That is not just here; it is across the board.

[303] **Bethan Jenkins:** The ‘Youth Crime Action Plan 2008’ contains a proposal for possible new local authority responsibilities for funding custodial places in England. Has the WLGA been involved in any similar discussions in Wales and what might be the benefits of such arrangements?

[304] **Ms Alleyne:** We have not been involved in discussions. Part of the difficulty with the youth crime action plan is that it was developed by a UK Government department that does not always understand some of the issues of devolution. Therefore, when we received it and read through it, we had to wonder which parts relate to us and which do not, because it is not always clear in the documents. At the moment, we have had no discussions on this subject.

[305] **Janice Gregory:** Thank you, all four of you, for coming to committee this morning. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of the proceedings, so please check it for factual accuracy. Again, we appreciate the fact that you have given of your time to come here to give evidence to committee. Thank you very much indeed. Thank you, everyone, for attending and staying until the last.

[306] **Bethan Jenkins:** On evidence given during a committee meeting on 7 October, I just wanted to clarify the situation as to what the Magistrates’ Association said about Merthyr having higher custodial sentencing rates than other areas. I spoke to Barnardo’s Cymru unofficially at an event that I hosted and I wondered whether we could have a note from Barnardo’s to clarify that situation because I think that there are two conflicting messages about the rates of offending in this area.

[307] **Janice Gregory:** That is fine. I will request that. The next meeting is on 4 November. The first part of the meeting will be another oral evidence-gathering session and then we will go into private session to discuss the emerging themes from the inquiry. Thank you very much and I declare the meeting closed.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 12.25 p.m.
The meeting ended at 12.25 p.m.*