



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

## **Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg The Children, Young People and Education Committee**

**Dydd Mercher, 5 Mawrth 2014  
Wednesday, 5 March 2014**

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These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.  
In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol  
Committee members in attendance**

Angela Burns	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Rebecca Evans	Llafur Labour
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Chair of the Committee)
Lynne Neagle	Llafur Labour
David Rees	Llafur Labour
Aled Roberts	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Simon Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

**Eraill yn bresennol  
Others in attendance**

Kath Bevan	Pennaeth Ysgol Gynradd Pilgwenlli Headteacher at Pillgwenlly Primary School
Ann Broadway	Gweithiwr Cymorth Addysg i Deuluoedd, Ysgol Gynradd Goetre Education Family Support Worker, Goetre Primary School
James Hall	Rheolwr Prosiect Ymchwil Gweithredu, yr Uned Pobl a Gwaith Action Research Project Manager, People and Work Unit
Rachel Morris	Rhiant Parent
Bev Phillips	Pennaeth Ysgol Gynradd Blaen-y-Maes Headteacher at Blaen-y-Maes Primary School
Andrea Williams	Rheolwr Prosiect, yr Uned Pobl a Gwaith Project Worker, People and Work Unit

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

Marc Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk
Gareth Rogers	Ail Glerc Second Clerk
Sian Thomas	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:30.  
The meeting began at 09:30.*

**Cyflwyniadau, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon  
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Children, Young People and Education Committee. I will just go through the usual housekeeping rules. I remind you, if you have them on, to switch your phones off—this is one for me as well—as they affect the translation. Members can speak in either Welsh or English and we have translation facilities. So, if you need them, it is channel 0 for floor amplification, should you need it, and channel 1

provides the translation from Welsh into English. We are not expecting the fire alarm to operate, so, should it operate, we will wait to take our directions from the ushers, or, as I normally say, you can follow me because I will be the first out of the building. We have had apologies from several Members this morning. Keith Davies is substituting on another Assembly committee, and I believe that Suzy and Bethan are both unwell so they are not here. I believe that Simon and Lynne will join us later. With that, do Members need to declare any interests that they have not already declared? We are fine. That is great, so we will move on.

09:31

**Ymchwiliad i Ganlyniadau Addysgol Plant o Gartrefi Incwm Isel—Sesiwn  
Dystiolaeth 6  
Inquiry into Educational Outcomes for Children from Low-income  
Households—Evidence Session 6**

[2] **Ann Jones:** We are carrying on with our inquiry into the educational attainment outcomes for children from low-income backgrounds. We are delighted to welcome a packed first set of witnesses—that is an awful word to use; people who are going to give us some information from various places. If you would perhaps just introduce yourselves for the Record, and then we have some questions that we would like to ask you in order to hear a bit about the project. Andrea, do you want to start?

[3] **Ms Williams:** My name is Andrea Williams and I am a school-focused communities worker in Glyncoch in Pontypridd. My role is what it says on the tin—I work in the school and the community and act as a sort of brokerage between the two, to help families and young people to raise their aspirations and to engage in education, training and employment. At the moment, I am working with a cohort of what would be year 11 and year 12 pupils, who are coming up to exams and A-levels.

[4] **Mr Hall:** I am Andrea's manager, James Hall, and I am the action research project manager for the People and Work Unit. That charity and company limited by guarantee has been going for 30 years, and it looks particularly at the correlation between poverty and educational attainment. That is one of its core target areas in project work and in research, monitoring and evaluation. It has done a number of projects for the Welsh Government, local authorities and other third sector bodies over the last 30 years, and the charity employs me and Andrea.

[5] **Ms Morris:** My name is Rachel Morris and I am a parent from Glyncoch, and I have had a lot of involvement with the People and Work Unit and Communities First.

[6] **Ann Jones:** Okay. That is fine. Thanks very much. As I say, we want to hear from you as the people who are experiencing the projects, and that will hopefully give us some pointers as to where you think you are going. I will start with a general question to you, James, given that you are the manager of the People and Work Unit. Do you work across Wales or do you work in specific areas? Are you an all-Wales-based—

[7] **Mr Hall:** We are an all-Wales charity. Our project work over the last 20 years has tended to be focused on the south Wales Valleys and the south Wales coastal strip simply for logistical reasons. However, for research, monitoring and evaluation, we work across Wales in the medium of English and in Welsh. We are involved in evaluating the Raising Attainment and Individual Standards in Education programme and the Welsh Government's anti-bullying policy. We are currently looking at additional learning needs and the special educational needs staff training requirements for you and local authorities, and often, it correlates with the project work. So, in other words, the project work is about testing some of

the theories and things we learn from the work we do elsewhere on the ground in an action research methodology.

[8] **David Rees:** In terms of the project that you have undertaken, which, as you say, you have been operating for quite a while now, have you seen a change as a consequence of leadership styles changing? One of the questions we have heard in schools is concerned with the way in which leadership is important in schools. Has the leadership in schools been a major influencing factor for you?

[9] **Mr Hall:** Yes and no. I think that one of the things you will find from all of us is—I have worked for the unit for six years, but I am also a parent and I have seen two boys go through the state education system here—that there are a whole load of factors, and I suppose that is why you are asking these questions. In the school that we are directly involved with in this particular project, which is Pontypridd High School, there was a change of headteacher just before we started this project, and we have other projects with that school. Going on local knowledge and from our own experience, the change of leadership style has definitely impacted on how open the school is for parents and professionals such as us to engage, and they welcome community involvement with the school.

[10] **David Rees:** Obviously, Andrea, you work on the ground. How do you find the approaches in schools?

[11] **Ms Williams:** As James said, they had a new headteacher, which I think had a massive impact. For me coming into this role, going into the school was almost a seamless process. Previously, I had worked in schools in similar roles, and you can come up against a lot of issues as they are not sure who you are and what you are meant to do, but, with this role, it was seamless. I turned up on the first day and everyone accepted me, which shows that because of the headteacher's style and because the project had been running previously, they were used to it and were completely open to community projects and ideas. We have taken some of the young people on trips to universities and colleges, and there are after-school clubs and activities, and the school has been very supportive of that. They understand that link, and that makes a massive difference. When they can understand that my link is to work not for them but with them, they understand that my role extends beyond the school day.

[12] **David Rees:** Do you have anecdotal information, in that case, from others who have started up such a project, which would not have been in place for a long time and where there was an initial build-up time where people get confidence from the school's side?

[13] **Ms Williams:** In my previous role, I worked in schools where no project had ever been run there, and it took a good school year before the school—for want of a better word—trusted me with its children. My role was to work with some young people who were disengaging for various reasons across the board. Obviously, they are vulnerable and they do not know me and they do not know of the project. So, they will not all of a sudden say, 'Yes, that's fine, this is the young person and this is their family.' So, I would say that it did take a good school year before they understood the role. However, once they understand the role, it does fly.

[14] **David Rees:** You mentioned that they trusted you with the children, but, clearly, it is also about the parents.

[15] **Ms Williams:** Yes, of course, and the school link is vital in some cases, in that the best way to get involved with the family is through the school, but then, on the flip side, as was the case yesterday, the school uses me to go to families who do not engage with the school. So, if a school is trying to get hold of a parent and they are not answering the phone, they will ask me to pop around and see Mrs so-and-so.

[16] **David Rees:** So, it has evolved into a good relationship.

[17] **Ms Williams:** Yes, and that happened yesterday. The school asked me to go to someone's home because they could not get an answer. So, you build those links both ways.

[18] **Ann Jones:** On the back of what you just said, various people want to come in. I will come back to you, David. Aled and then Simon will contribute next.

[19] **Aled Roberts:** Your evidence suggests that the unit was working in five Communities First areas in Rhondda Cynon Taf. How many schools were involved in the project overall?

[20] **Mr Hall:** There are two elements to this. The initial funder is the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and we are on our second tranche of three years' worth of funding from the foundation. The first three years' funding was matched by the Communities First outcomes fund, and that work was clustered around the Porth County Community School and its eight feeder primary schools. We built that work on the basis of what we had already started to learn in Glyncoch, Pontypridd High School and two feeder schools to that, which are Craig yr Hesg and Cefn Primary in Glyncoch.

[21] We used a slightly different methodology in Porth. We decided that we wanted to try a different approach, and we allowed the school and Communities First colleagues to refer to us pupils and families who were, perhaps, in danger of disengaging, from across the age spectrum, going from the transition years 6 to 7 all the way through to year 11.

[22] One of the difficulties of that was that the default option in a lot of these projects, frankly, seemed to be that the school wanted to offshore the naughty kids, to put it bluntly. They were using us, at one point, as a behaviour management system, and I have had to say to senior management, 'You have a behaviour management system. I've seen the file; I've heard the talk, and you have professionals who do this. We're looking at those who are not necessarily misbehaving, but are in danger of disengaging.' The ones who are in particular danger of disengaging are the quietest ones at the back of the class, who are on Facebook on their phone, who are not misbehaving and are turning up. Some of the most difficult-to-reach families have been those whose children are in regular attendance at school. There is a really interesting question about how attendance and attainment really correlate. One of the cohort in the Glyncoch stream was getting levels 6 and 7 at key stage 3 and is flying in the sixth form, very sharp, but their attendance is regularly below 70%, with parents who are not particularly supportive. There is another girl, whose attendance is nearly always 100%, and she was at an infant school reading age when she got to secondary school. So, there is a whole load of things.

[23] The issue in Pontypridd was that we followed the same cohort, so, in research terms, it was a cohort study. They were in years 6 and 7 and now they are in years 11 and 12, so we know people like Rachel here and her boys really well, and it is very relational. I think that it is worth pointing out that we engage in very close partnership working with Communities First. Without Communities First inviting us in—we have a fantastic team of Communities First guys locally, I have to say; I know that there has been some difficult press about it, but I want to say, as a third sector worker, that we have experienced some really high-quality work from Communities First colleagues. With them, we go into the school to work and we base ourselves in the community and the families. We are not employed or paid by the school; we are not on its books. That seems to be one of the magic ingredients of this. I am able to go to the headteacher, running through that system, so is our worker and so are parents, and speak directly on the level, without worrying about procedures and management trees.

[24] **Aled Roberts:** Just so that I understand, then, the Porth scheme, which was with the secondary school and the feeder schools, was the first three-year tranche from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

[25] **Mr Hall:** No, that was all funded by the Communities First outcomes fund. Sorry, it came through the Communities First stream, but we managed it.

[26] **Aled Roberts:** So, that came to an end, or is that still ongoing?

[27] **Mr Hall:** That finished in September 2012.

[28] **Aled Roberts:** Given that the pupil deprivation grants kicked in then, what did Porth replace? One of my concerns is that these projects run for the period that the external funding comes in and then, as soon as that is over—

[29] **Mr Hall:** Sustainability is massively important.

[30] **Aled Roberts:** Yes.

[31] **Mr Hall:** However, what we did with Communities First in Porth—it asked us, and we were looking for this to happen—. During the third year of the project, the methodology of school-focused communities was built into the delivery plan for Communities First in the Porth cluster, so there are several identified workers who are working now on guided reading, on attendance and wellbeing in the primaries and in the secondary schools, following on from what we learnt and having honed some of the methodologies that we learnt from the community in the previous three years. So, it is not exactly the same, but I would say that quite a lot of the work has been mainstreamed.

[32] **Ann Jones:** I have got Simon and Angela, but I do not know whether your question follows on, Simon.

[33] **Simon Thomas:** It does follow on from Aled's point, actually, because I wanted to ask you a very unfair question. [*Laughter.*] I am sorry about this—

[34] **Ann Jones:** We are not doing unfair questions today. [*Laughter.*]

[35] **Simon Thomas:** To take a step back on intervention in this area and give a little anecdote, 30 years ago, my aunt and uncle lived on Glyncoch, and I used to go up there often enough, and there were a lot of interventions around the school then. That was 30 years ago. Indeed, I also worked for a couple of summers on one of the projects up in Ynysybwl, so there were things happening there that I knew about then. It relates to Aled's point about interventions that come and go and are not sustained, or the lessons from previous interventions that are not carried on. You are still in Glyncoch, working, and I knew the community then and I know of it now, so I can understand why the need is there to work, but is there any sense of continuation, of learning the lessons? Is there any sense that the school has a body of knowledge among teachers that is shared in terms of good practice, or does it always take organisations like yours going in and reinventing the wheel, time and again? How does it feel on the ground when you do it like this?

09:45

[36] **Mr Hall:** Should one of the others answer this, perhaps?

[37] **Ms Williams:** Yesterday was a good example. I work with a year 11 pupil, a girl. She is very clever. She can pass her GCSEs, no problem, but there is an aspiration problem. She is

told that further education is a waste of time, et cetera. I was talking to her maths teacher about something completely different, but the last day before half term she was not in. So, the maths teacher sent out all the work and explained it. She sent out past papers and a sort of booklet, plus a CD-ROM, which all the questions were related to, so that she could watch at home how the questions were being done, and answer them. She went into school yesterday and, you know, it was, ‘I didn’t get anything in the post’. The school can only do so much. We are very lucky at Ponty—a lot of the teachers go above and beyond their role, but it is our job, in the end, to pick that up, really. Given that we are not employed by the school, and things like that, we will just start with, ‘What did you do over half term?’, and ‘How is your maths going?’—you can see both points of view, and then you try to push them in a way that suits them, so to speak. It is very individual.

[38] **Simon Thomas:** It is clearly intensive.

[39] **Ms Williams:** Yes, and there are more of the cultural things, then, as well as the school things. The school is very good on the whole, I would say, at giving support.

[40] **Mr Hall:** We have very strong links with both primaries and other services. I think that your question is bang on, in that what we are really concerned about at this moment is continuity and sustainability—whether we learn, all of us, about cultural tipping points, and whether it becomes cool to earn and learn in Glyncoch. Rachel can tell you about her own son, and for a number of families, it now is cool to earn and learn. That is because of a multiplicity of interventions—not just this project. We have a construction skills project, a post-16 learning project, and we have a health and fitness project, all interleaved with the local Communities First, which has a multiplicity of interventions. When you get a large number of professionals and others and parents co-producing things, so that we are not imposing, but we are listening and working it out—. It is about getting enough families to say, ‘This is for us’. I would say that probably 10% of this cohort of families is different. That plays out in the fact that, when we arrived, there were no young people from Glyncoch in the sixth form at Pontypridd High School. This year there are seven. There are five in college, there are others in apprenticeships, and there is a whole bunch of young people who have gone on to get jobs and gone into other educational streams, as have their parents. One of the things that correlate very strongly when mums and dads, people like Rachel, start their own training, do their own learning, see the importance, and create something with their own business, as Rachel has, is that young people start to follow. It is about getting enough of those to have that input. We may be asked the same question in 10 years’ time. I hope not. Certainly, that is not my desire, but it does require a lot of passionate engagement and hard work, and some failures. I think that we need to be really honest about that.

[41] **Angela Burns:** Rachel, I was hoping that you might be able to shed some light on this, because James just said the word ‘multiplicity’, and part of the area I represent is, I suspect, not altogether dissimilar to Glyncoch—it is a place called Monkton in Pembrokeshire. While some of the parents are very happy to engage, I have met with an awful lot who actually just feel very resentful and angry, and they just feel that over the years they have been subjected to endless interventions, endless surveys, endless worthies knocking on their door and saying, ‘What do you want? How do you want it?’, and all the rest. I wondered whether you might be able to shed some light on what turns an angry, resentful parent who just feels that everybody is meddling in their affairs into somebody who actually says, ‘Okay, the situation that we have here is pretty tough, and I appreciate that you’re trying to do something, and I want to do something, too’.

[42] **Ms Morris:** Sometimes, it is just about facing the stark reality. I have always, from my own personal experience, been very wary of school and education, and particularly intervention of any type. However, I think that there comes a point when you have to say that you, as a parent, have to realise that you need that little bit of support, you need that little bit

of intervention, and you realise that those people are not actually there to dictate to you, or in any way to interfere, but actually to support you. It is all about having to hit the ground and build a relationship with that person, with very tiny baby steps, until the point where you get almost a sense of friendship, I suppose. The work that I have done, not so much with Andrea, because she is fairly new to her role, but with Andrea's predecessor and her counterpart within Communities First, has been very intensive with two of my three children. I hope that my son goes on to achieve his dreams and everything, but it is about perseverance; that is all I can say. It is about baby steps and perseverance. Unfortunately, you are not always going to reach those families because some people really just do not want it.

[43] **Angela Burns:** If we managed to reach the children, how much of the work that might be done in a school-based setting might be undone, if you like, when they go home to a parent who we have not been able to reach, or who has not got to a point where they accept that things need to change for the better?

[44] **Ms Morris:** I think that it depends on the situation. The majority of work done in school with a child will stay with the child. I believe that. Again, it is all down to individuals, and while 100% of that work will not stay with a child, 75% of it will.

[45] **Angela Burns:** Could I ask one last question? You talk about baby steps, and I note from this project that there is a caseworker for every 10 families. Do you think that that is a good enough ratio, because some of the people who I work with have 100 families that they are trying to get around, so you can argue that they cannot possibly help everyone? However, on the other hand, if you are trying to do baby steps with families who do not want to engage and you only have 10 families who do not want to engage, you have to ask, 'What else can that person do?' I just wondered whether you had any thoughts on that, and whether you think we need a more one-on-one relationship. Should we just cut our losses and put all of the emphasis on the child and those very extreme cases?

[46] **Ms Morris:** No; never. On the smaller ratios, if you have 10 families, as you say, and you have that one worker working with those 10 families, the chances are that you will knock those walls down eventually and you will build that bond. Unfortunately, it takes longer with some people than others. However, if you are working with 100 families, you cannot build that same personal relationship on the same level as you can with 10 families. You need to knock those walls down. You need to make people realise that you are not their enemy, and that you are there to support them 100%.

[47] **Angela Burns:** Having built that relationship, how important do you think the long-term sustainability is, so that it is not a case of you getting to know someone for two years, thinking you have changed everything and then disappear and leave that family?

[48] **Ms Morris:** I think that long-term sustainability is extremely important, especially throughout the period of education. I have a child at the moment in year 7 and a child in year 11, so knowing that Andrea's counterpart within Communities First will stay with my son right the way through his secondary education is extremely important. If the support suddenly disappeared two years down the line, I think that things would change very dramatically. If that support was suddenly gone, particularly for my child who has some very serious issues, it would be almost like taking a backward step, because as children progress and they hit different emotional and educational targets that little bit of support is going to make a massive difference.

[49] **Angela Burns:** I really appreciate that, because, given that resources are precious, I sometimes think that there is a slight element of 'Job done, we've got them on their path—now they can follow it'. Of course, everything changes all the time, does it not?



[50] **Ms Morris:** It is important that you see it right through to the end. I was unaware until recently that Matthew would be working with my son right the way through until he finished secondary education. As a single parent, that is a massive relief for me, knowing that I have got that little bit of support to help him with his issues and to hopefully enable him to finish education and not get excluded.

[51] **Angela Burns:** Thank you; I really appreciate that.

[52] **Ann Jones:** I am conscious that we are still on David's first set of questions, but I know that Aled has a very small point—one of your extremely small points.

[53] **Aled Roberts:** I have two very small points. Developing the theme that Simon mentioned, I have estates in my area where these interventions have been ongoing for 20 or 30 years, and, if I am honest with you, in most instances, there has been little or no improvement in attainment levels. You made the point about youngsters going on to further and, hopefully, higher education as well. Were you brought up in Glyncoch?

[54] **Ms Morris:** Yes, I was.

[55] **Aled Roberts:** So, given that we have heard that these initiatives have been going on for 30 years or whatever, how would you compare your experience as a youngster with what you see as being your children's experience, as far as this support is concerned?

[56] **Ms Morris:** I, personally, have no knowledge of any intervention that was around in Glyncoch during the time of my childhood. I was born and raised in Glyncoch; I went to the local primary school and attended the secondary school. If I had had the intervention that my own children have had, then my life would have been extremely different. I did not have a very supportive mother, and a school can only do so much, at the end of the day. However, if there had been a little bit of intervention to push me towards achieving the aspirations that I had for myself, which were shot down by my parents, my life would be extremely different. My own child has the support from me, from the People and Work Unit and Communities First and, at 16, has forged his entire future. He has a high level of aspiration, as do all three of my children, because the support is there for them.

[57] **Aled Roberts:** May I ask James, on that point, given what Rachel has said regarding the fact that she did not have a supportive mother, but that she is now a supportive mother, in the same way that school leadership is an important factor, are you very much dependent on the support that is given by one or both parents?

[58] **Mr Hall:** All of the evidence that we have from work on the ground shows that that is a massive influence. What I was thinking, when Rachel was speaking, was that part of what Rachel was describing is her becoming—and she has become, in our view—one of the new community leaders in Glyncoch, and a family leader. I do not want to embarrass her, but the amount of volunteering that she does, the help that she gives to other parents and families, and that community feel that spills over. It comes from someone who has the respect of having been brought up and grown up in Glyncoch and has been through the same school system. She is one of the people who asks, 'Does my past have to dictate my future?' This is the question for all of us: does our view of what happens to us now mean that we just lock ourselves away? Some of that psychological jump has to happen and, in Rachel's family, it has, and it has in quite a number of other families.

[59] It is about getting to that tipping point where enough people say, 'Actually, it is cool to go to sixth form in Glyncoch now', and it is cool for six girls to turn up and do extra mathematics, as they did at our office last night with a tutor—and part of the Technocamps system, you will be pleased to know, has engaged with us. Enough people need to say, 'It's

cool to go on a trip'. People were asking to go on trips to the college and university in the week before half term, and children and young people were asking to go on residential courses with our workers. There is, among a significant number—50%, I would say—a hunger, and the same is true for some of the parents. It is about getting to that tipping point where there are enough people and where there is collaboration across projects and you are not just ploughing your own furrow. That is crucial. Too many projects that we come across are contractualised and draw down the funding and say, 'We do this, we tick the boxes'. That is particularly true with European money, if I might say so, if that is not swearing in this company. It is a matter of ticking the boxes and getting the participants through. We are about internal change as well as external change. People have to ask themselves, 'Do I want it? Is it for me? Is this what my community is about?' To me, it is far deeper than being about just where you spend your money.

[60] **Ann Jones:** Rebecca wants to come in now, and I am conscious that we are still on David's first set of questions. We are at 10 a.m. and we have only about a quarter of an hour left. So, Rebecca, then David, and then we will try to make some progress.

[61] **Rebecca Evans:** I want to take you back, Andrea, to your comments about having to go around to homes, sometimes, when parents are disengaged from the school and it is difficult to maintain contact. How often does that happen? What do you think the main barriers are in terms of schools communicating with parents?

[62] **Ms Williams:** It does not happen that often. As I said, Pontypridd High School is very open to parents, so it does not happen too often. In that case, and in most of the cases where this happens, the young person is in trouble a lot and the school is phoning them all the time because the young person has done this or that, to a point where the parents are weary of it and they have heard it all before, so they say, 'I don't want to go for another meeting; they'll just say the same as last time'. It just gets further and further away each time.

10:00

[63] What I would do then is work with the parents in terms of asking, 'What was said in the last meeting? What steps did they want to take? Did your son or daughter stick to the agreements made and, if not, why not?' I would take a step back and see it from a bigger perspective. Obviously, because I am not employed by the school and the parents know that straight away, and know that I am not going to go back and tell the school everything that they have said, that makes them more open with me than they would be with a teacher.

[64] **Rebecca Evans:** The paper says that you have a good deal of contact with parents over Facebook and texts. Do you sometimes have concerns that perhaps we rely too much on technologies and that families that do not have access to mobile phones or computers might be missing out? How do we address that?

[65] **Ms Williams:** Yes, Facebook is invaluable, especially with the young people. As everyone here knows, I am a bit of a Facebook-phobe myself—I am not a Facebooker per se, I will be honest. It is invaluable, not just for contact, but in seeing what is going on. When you see the young people and what they have been up to, coming back to the community links and sometimes their parents too, it does help you to build that picture more fully. We work with a young person who does not have internet access at home, and you do think that they are missing out, but I worry more about their A-level studies than about their Facebook use. They come round to the office to use the internet there.

[66] **Rebecca Evans:** The other thing that I wanted to ask you about was that families come in all shapes and sizes nowadays. Do you find it equally easy to engage with mums and dads? How do you deal with situations where mum and dad are no longer together? Do you

just deal with one parent or can you deal with both? Does your work go wider to include grandparents or to reflect the different families that exist nowadays?

[67] **Ms Williams:** As you say, they do come in all shapes and sizes. I think that is why I enjoy roles like this and why this project has done so well is that you do just turn up. I say to the young people sometimes that it is *Doctor Who*-style—you turn up, you are on a planet, you do not know where you are, you do not know who you are going to meet and you have just got to go in there with that kind of attitude. Yes, at the moment, we have families that live with grandparents, we have a lot of single parents where the dad is still on the scene, and we have a lot where dad is not on the scene. You have to take them individually, step by step. For me, it is always about the young person and moving outwards—so, this is the young person, this is their family, here is their school, and this is out of school. I build it up from them, because it has to be for them at the end of the day.

[68] **Rebecca Evans:** Okay. Thanks.

[69] **Ann Jones:** David we will come back to you to finish this first set of questions.

[70] **David Rees:** I have almost finished, I think, as my colleagues have covered most of the questions. You mentioned the aspiration of that young pupil. Is the difficulty with the individual pupil's aspiration or with the family's aspiration?

[71] **Ms Williams:** That is a good one. I find it tricky. The young person that I was talking about has already turned a corner in that they have come on some of the college and university trips that I have put on. They enjoyed it and they came on their own and not as part of their friendship group. When I speak to them now, the family is very much saying, 'Oh well, she's got to learn to stand on her own two feet'. They have somehow all turned a corner over a few months. You do have it the other way as well, in that you can have a very supportive family, but the young person will say, 'I'm not doing that, I'm not going to school; I can't be bothered'. They are naughty in school and so on. Again, it is just working with each young person and family individually and seeing what is happening there. I tend to find in families where they are very supportive, but the young person is going off the rails, that the family, whether it is grandparents, mother or father, is—for want of a better word—a bit too soft. They are supportive to the point of not wanting to be strict with their children. Really, it is about working with the parents and saying to them, 'Quite frankly, you haven't got to put up with this. They have got to go to school; they have got to do this. You are well within your rights to put your foot down and do that'. I do find that some parents almost need to be told that it is okay to be strict and to enforce the rules. Some of them just need that kind of push.

[72] **David Rees:** May I ask another question? We have talked about the sustainability of the programmes and everything else, and, Rachel, you talked about the example of your son, who is going to be supported now until year 11, effectively. At what point do you think, regarding a family, that we have gotten as far as we can go, and that we can now let them get on with it because they do not need our support anymore, because as new families will come through, they will need the support as well?

[73] **Ms Williams:** When we come back to it being so many years, that is what you find it. As James said, when this project started, no young people were in the sixth form, and now, at the current sixth form, we have young people in the sixth form or in training, and some are in employment and some are in college. I am hoping that part of the sustainability will come from that, so that, in my current year 11, they have already applied to college, and have had their interviews, and so on. We have one this afternoon as well. Therefore, I am hoping that it is a kind of change of culture, and that the younger children coming through will see that, and see that as normal. When I talk to young people, I do it very much as a matter of fact, asking, 'Are you going to college?' I try to put it across as if it is normal, where they might not have

heard it as a normal thing to do.

[74] **Mr Hall:** May I intervene there? Last week, with Communities First, Andrea led a residential, where three of the young people from the cohort mentored a whole bunch of year 7 pupils, and taught them a whole load of skills. They were one boy and two girls. Part of the sustainability is to help the young people to become the leaders of the future. There are two or three young people in this cohort now who are already becoming community and youth leaders, in Glyncoch, at present. Your son, Jacob, was one last week, Rachel, who helped us with community litter picks, and the rest of it. I think that that is starting to turn over the culture.

[75] **David Rees:** As you said at the beginning, I think that your intention is to try to change the ethos and the culture.

[76] **Mr Hall:** Yes.

[77] **Ann Jones:** Do you want to move on with your questions, David?

[78] **David Rees:** Yes; I have a slightly different question. When we went out and saw other groups of parents, we heard that the cost of education is sometimes a major impact, because we are talking about areas of deprivation. You have talked about people who will want to go on educational trips, and there are issues with that. Is that another impact on those people then, when they get the enthusiasm, and they want to learn, but there is a financial difficulty in the family?

[79] **Ms Williams:** I know that Rachel and I will have a lot to say on this. [*Laughter.*]

[80] **David Rees:** Perhaps you can go first, Rachel, as it is your experience.

[81] **Ms Morris:** From a parent's point of view, it is extremely difficult. I currently have three children in secondary education, and I think that, a lot of the time, there is no actual leeway as to what a child can achieve. For example, my son is currently sitting a catering GCSE. He has very high aspirations to open his own restaurant, and to kind of be the next Jamie Oliver. His last exam ingredients cost me the best part of £50, which is one third of my income for a week, and there is absolutely no help to sustain that level of income. He now wants to go on to do A-level, which, again, means much more involvement, and much more practical preparation. Therefore, do I shoot his dreams down, or do I go on with the daily struggle?

[82] At the same time then, I have my middle child who wants to do football and after-school clubs. You always have to make that choice and say, 'No, you can't go on that trip, it is too expensive', or, 'No, you can't do this, because Jacob needs to do this, or we need to do this'. A lot of the time, on the ground, the school puts on these things, but it does not realise how much effect it has, particularly on single-parent families, but then, with the cost of living being so high, I would say that 99% of families these days would have difficulty sustaining that level of the catering equipment, school uniform, and everything that a child needs to develop and to go on to be a very strong individual.

[83] **David Rees:** I assume, Andrea, that you have seen a replication of Rachel's experience.

[84] **Ms Williams:** Yes, and I have gone through it personally as well. However, also, you have some of the year 11s now who want to go to college to do beauty and hairdressing, and you are talking about £244 for the kit, which has to be paid for in the first week. Therefore, you are going to have to have a very supportive parent to pay that, especially if the young

person is saying, ‘Oh, I’m not sure what I want to do, whether I want to do hairdressing or catering’. If they are not sure, for a parent to invest that, and to find the money to invest, is a big thing. Also, there are things such as, for example, before half term we had a trip down to the college for the young people, just to raise their aspirations and for them to know that it is okay. We also went down to Swansea University for the same reason. I do not think that enough is available mainstream in terms of that. So, in schools you have your more able and talented children—and like I say, in Ponty, the school will take them down and do the Oxbridge run and things like that—but there is nothing available for those children who get Cs and Bs at A-level and who will go to Swansea or will go to UWIC. You know what I mean. Just so that—

[85] **David Rees:** Do not let them hear you say that. [*Laughter.*]

[86] **Ann Jones:** Do you think that the fact that there is a hidden cost to education—. I think that most of us would assume that you just go to school, but you have just demonstrated there that your son needed ingredients. If you were not on part of this project, and had not got involved in Communities First and with the project, is that something that would make you—. I am not asking you, as a parent, to say, but do you think that is what makes parents, then, suddenly disengage from their children’s learning? Some children might feel that, when they hear of a trip coming up, they know the circumstances at home and so they will not go to school while the money is being collected or will not go to school the week before in case they are asked why they are not going on that trip. Do you see that as a huge barrier?

[87] **Ms Morris:** Definitely. Speaking from my own personal experience, I have a friend who would keep her son home from school the day that he was due to do his catering exam because she could not afford to buy his ingredients. There is no support from the school. If you ring up the school, people will not say, ‘We can run around and help you out’. My son forgot his ingredients, and it was a case of, ‘Well, you need to bring them over’. For a child, it is extremely embarrassing, and, for a parent, it is extremely embarrassing. It can even be that the child will want to go to school, but the parent will keep them home because the parent feels that it is their duty and that they are failing their child.

[88] **Ann Jones:** From the position of talking to the school, what would be the school reaction if that were to be raised? Andrea would probably be the person who would raise it with the school. Do they sort of just shrug their shoulders and say, ‘Well, that’s it. They knew when they started’? Why is there not that interaction with those parents?

[89] **Ms Williams:** I was talking to someone about this yesterday. She was talking about a young person who did not turn up for their catering exam and she said that, if they had phoned, she would have helped them and supported them. The problem and the barrier is phoning the school and saying, ‘I’m sorry; I haven’t got the money for this’. It is just a massive thing to ask of anyone. With a disengaged parent, at best, it just will not happen. If I knew the young person—if he was part of the cohort—it would have been a case of she could have told me that, and I could have gone to the house and said, ‘Do you know what? They’ll sort the thing out’, and I would then do the in-between things. I think that the school would be helpful, but I think that the barrier is working with the school, especially—

[90] **Ann Jones:** So, really, the school does not understand the barriers of the parent’s embarrassment, and the child’s embarrassment.

[91] **Ms Williams:** Especially if there has been negative contact previously. If most phone calls are about behaviour and things, then—

[92] **Ann Jones:** Yes. Okay. That is helpful. Sorry. Have you finished now?

[93] **Simon Thomas:** May I just ask a question?

[94] **Ann Jones:** Yes.

[95] **Simon Thomas:** I have a question that might be more for James Hall, in a way. In all of the answers that we have had, you are working very intensively with a cohort, but there is also a wider Glyncoch community, and there are lots of other things happening. You have mentioned Communities First, but there is also more focus now in Communities First on educational attainment, which is pretty new in Communities First, as such. Are any of the things that we have talked about here being addressed in those other projects? For example, if you had five pupils doing catering, you could club together, could you not? You could have some kind of way of saving money in that sense. Also, how do all of these people work together? You say that you have good relations with Communities First, but is that true in a wider sense? Is there co-ordination and cohesion? Are people working together, or do you still feel, sometimes, that you are picking up the pieces in terms of people who have really fallen through the cracks?

[96] **Mr Hall:** There were lots of questions there, Simon.

[97] **Simon Thomas:** Yes.

[98] **Angela Burns:** Rachel has something to say on that too.

[99] **Ann Jones:** Go on, Rachel.

[100] **Ms Morris:** This is just my point on the whole clubbing together thing: absolutely not, because each child is left to choose their own exam ingredients. That, for me, is the big 'uh'. When I was at school, my teacher would say, 'This is what you are doing. This is how much money you need. Bring it in next week and we will give you your ingredients'. I think that that is how schools should be today. I think that schools should rein them in sometimes a little bit and ask, 'Do you really think that it is realistic that you will need x amount of this?'—portion control, et cetera, speaking from a business point of view. But, no, that categorically could not happen.

10:15

[101] **Simon Thomas:** So, the school is doing something that it thinks is probably good for the pupil, which is giving them some initiative—

[102] **Ms Morris:** Yes, but they do not realise the expense.

[103] **Simon Thomas:** —but, in fact, it is very difficult, then, for families to cope with it.

[104] **Ms Morris:** It is. My son has had four exams in the last few years, and the costs of those would feed my family for six months. That is just for those few exams.

[105] On the Communities First question, I would like to address a little bit of that, because I am chair of the steering group for the Pontypridd cluster, and a director for Glyncoch Community Regeneration that hosts Communities First in Glyncoch. I can categorically say that we do not let many people fall through the cracks. Everybody works together as a team. As a parent, if you worked within our community, you could not tell which staff work for the People and Work Unit and which work for Communities First. I was involved for two years before I realised it myself. They work very closely in partnership. Education is extremely important, even adult-level education. I have done a lot of courses myself and actually started my own business through the education system in Glyncoch. Nothing is just left to fall

through the cracks; there is always somebody there to catch it.

[106] **Ann Jones:** I have Rebecca on this point, and then Aled, who asked me ages ago if he could come in. I know that we are running out of time, but we will just have another five minutes to wrap this up.

[107] **Rebecca Evans:** I just have a small question. Rachel, you mentioned the great number of school trips that your children go on, or that are put on by the school. Does the school always make it clear to you that you should not have to pay for school trips that take place during the school day and that the payment is actually voluntary? Is that always made clear to you?

[108] **Ms Morris:** Never. Never ever. My son has stayed home from school, particularly at primary school level, because there was a trip every other week. It has never been made clear that it is voluntary and my son has been excluded from a trip if his money has not been in.

[109] **Ann Jones:** That is something that we need to look at, is it not?

[110] **Ms Williams:** May I just add to that? We were talking about this yesterday and my personal experience of having my own daughter in secondary school is that they did make it clear. We used to have the letter home saying that the trip is £20, but that that is voluntary. I said to you, Rachel, did I not, that I know parents who will not send their child, because they will not be known—or have their child known—as the ones who will not or who cannot pay? It is about understanding how that works for people, is it not?

[111] **Mr Hall:** I think that there is a question to be asked about this, which is: if you are providing resources to do GCSE and A-level mathematics, why are you not providing resources to do GCSE catering? Why are you not providing resources for what are deemed educationally appropriate trips? It is a major resource issue, even for those of us who get good money and who have children. I resent paying taxes and then being asked to pay tax again.

[112] **Ann Jones:** Yes. It is a big issue. We have had some focus groups, and we have been out, and that has been the issue that people have mentioned. It is that hidden cost, almost. It is not just those parents—you have openly said this, Rachel—but families where both parents are working and finding it difficult to sustain. So, it is a hidden cost.

[113] **Simon Thomas:** The point is education-related trips, in particular. That is the issue. When you have a trip to the mosque in Cardiff, or something like that, it is clearly related to the educational experience and it is quite a substantial sum of money, and if it happens two or three times a term then it builds up, does it not?

[114] **Ann Jones:** Yes, and that is times however many children there are within the family unit. It starts to add up.

[115] **Aled Roberts:** I think it is a very patchy arrangement, though, it is not? I am chair of governors for a school that has 360 children at primary level. Our headteacher, four years ago, introduced a no charging policy, en bloc, which we thought was revolutionary. We thought that we would be bankrupt within 12 months, but, actually, there have been few or no problems. The only things that our parents pay for are the Christmas concerts and photos.

[116] **Ms Williams:** Education should be free.

[117] **Aled Roberts:** Yes. Could I just ask what discussions you have had with the school regarding the use of the pupil deprivation grant?

[118] **Mr Hall:** We have been intimately involved in discussions for our Communities First colleagues, because they have modelled some of their workers who are now employed by both Communities First and the school on the work that we have done thus far. So, one of the current workers is funded 50% by the school's PDG and 50% by Communities First, with the specific aim of helping young people to attain better grades at GCSE, as well as having a number of workers who are more family and community focused within the school. Every Thursday morning, so this time tomorrow, we would normally be in a meeting where all those agencies, including ourselves, meet at the school and collaborate on particular issues, pupils and concerns across the piece on attainment, attendance, family involvement and learning and behaviour. The police are there, the attendance and wellbeing officers are there, and there is a very strong sense of collaborative work.

[119] **Aled Roberts:** Away from Glyncoch, because one of the themes that we hear here constantly is the failure to share good practice, what discussions are there within RCT regarding lessons learned at Glyncoch that are then applied more widely across other areas in RCT?

[120] **Mr Hall:** We have been involved in a lot of that over the last five years, first through the match-funded project, which is all written up and has been delivered. I have had a lot of direct contact with Chris Bradshaw, the director of education in RCT, and with other schools. We have had contact with four or five other secondary schools and a whole bunch of other primary schools directly with the project work over the last five or six years. We have also been involved in presenting to the local service board and have presented to a gathering of county councils on some of our learning over the last few years, as well as having written to, and involved, our local Assembly Member, Christine Chapman, and others as well.

[121] **Ann Jones:** Have we finished? We have run out of time. I always dangerously ask whether Members have any other questions at this point and hope that they say 'no'.

[122] **Simon Thomas:** Aled says 'no'.

[123] **Ann Jones:** Aled says 'no', so we are fine then. The computer says 'no', so we are fine. All right, then. Thank you. We found that quite interesting and it is good to hear how it all works, so thanks very much for that. We will send you a copy of the transcript for you to check for accuracy, just in case we have put something in there that you did not say—but, if you have said it, you cannot take it out, unfortunately; you can just look at it and think, 'Oh'. Thank you all very much for sharing your time with us today to help us move forward. We will certainly take your point about educational resources, that is, if we fund for a particular subject, then we should fund for all subjects. Thank you all very much; we found it very interesting. If the committee is agreeable, we will break until 10.30 a.m.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:22 a 10:36.  
The meeting adjourned between 10:22 and 10:36.*

**Ymchwiliad i Ganlyniadau Addysgol Plant o Gartrefi Incwm Isel—Sesiwn  
Dystiolaeth 7  
Inquiry into Educational Outcomes for Children from Low Income  
Households—Evidence Session 7**

[124] **Ann Jones:** If you turned your phone on during that short break, will you just make sure that it is switched off again? A second set of people has come in to talk to us today as part of our inquiry. I will let you introduce yourselves for the Record; that might be the easiest thing. We have a set of questions, but they are not harsh questions—it is not like sitting an examination, so do not panic. We just want to gain information from you, so that we



can see whether we can make things better or even just talk to the relevant people about changing stuff. Please do not feel that you are under massive scrutiny. Perhaps you would start, Kath.

[125] **Ms Bevan:** I am Kath Bevan, headteacher at Pillgwenlly Primary School in Newport. We have 680 pupils. We are a multifaith school, and 90% of the pupils have English as an additional language and are black and minority ethnic. It is a very deprived area of Newport and we run nurture groups, through which we have engaged with a lot of our families.

[126] **Ms Phillips:** I am Bev Phillips, headteacher at Blaen-y-Maes Primary School in Swansea. We are No. 1 in our core data group—I got very excited when that happened and then realised that it might not be the best thing. We are 190 full-time equivalent, but we have provision for 108 Flying Start two-year-olds, which has turned into the first class in our school. We are very proud and privileged to have that facility, because we can engage with parents from a very early age.

[127] **Ms Broadway:** I am Ann Broadway, education family support officer for Goetre Primary School on the Gurnos estate in Merthyr.

[128] **Ann Jones:** Thank you very much. We have some questions, but they are not hard and you will not be judged on them or given a mark. I mark the committee members on their behaviour, but not witnesses.

[129] We are going to look at work in your schools, and then we have some questions around the cost of education, the funding of education and the Welsh Government's strategy, if we get that far. Invariably, we run out of time. I do not know who wants to start on the work in your schools and the projects. David, do you want to start and we will see how far we get?

[130] **David Rees:** Good morning. Clearly, one of the issues that we are talking about is engagement with families and the aspirations of families. I want to work out for each of you how you have approached that. Do you have Communities First support for your school to go along with the family support? What actions have you taken, as a school, to encourage families—perhaps single parents; fathers, perhaps—to get involved in the development, attainment and aspirations of their children? Go from left to right. It is easier.

[131] **Ms Bevan:** We do engage with Communities First; actually, we work in partnership with it. Alongside our pupil deprivation grant, we have match funded a lot of family learning workshops that we run within the school. We also have a family learning nurture room, and we have used that as a useful tool. The children access it, but it has given us an arm, really, into their home. The parents will come in to sit and learn alongside their children during the afternoons, and then also attend sub-groups where they focus specifically on developing their literacy or numeracy skills. We have also offered English as a second language for some of our parents, so that they can learn to speak and read alongside their children. We also engage with the early years family learning programme, where we run all of the language and play and number and play programmes through our school.

[132] **Ms Phillips:** We run a variety of different groups. Strengthening Families is one arm. Men behaving dadly is another group that we run; it is simply called that because the male role model in a family may not be the dad. That has been very successful, and it has run alongside a Communities First project at which, on a Monday evening, we were able to put a body and mind sort of programme in place, where the Ospreys were involved. That was funded partly from Communities First. As I say, we run a plethora of groups, but it is important that we have a multi-agency approach, because funding is vital to making things successful. It is all very well having PDG money in school, which we use to support our

family inclusion worker and our emotional wellbeing officer, but I have to be as proactive as I possibly can be to get out there to access grants and other agencies and signpost my parents to other agencies that can help and support them. The school cannot do it by itself, so we have to have an open-door policy whereby we can be actively involved, and know about other things that go on in the community and act as one community service, if you like, for the families. That is very important.

[133] You talked about aspirations. We have done questionnaires among parents about aspirations. My parents do not have any different aspirations for their children in the east side of Swansea to parents in the west side of Swansea. They want their children to access good education, and they want them to be happy and successful. It is the barriers to those parents providing those opportunities for the children that are very different. So, as a school, we have to make sure that we provide those opportunities for the children. If we do not put it in for a certain percentage of our children, they will not get those experiences. This is why we invest our PDG money, and any other grants that we can get hold of, really, to give them that twenty-first century education, which may well be iPads or IT, but getting the parents in at the same time to experience those things with the children.

[134] As I say, we do work with Communities First and many of the other agencies. We use our Flying Start very much because that is the beginning, if you like, of the multi-agency approach. We have health visitors on board. We have speech and language people on site that I can access for that expertise. I cannot do it all by myself, but I can access expertise and share that expertise with everyone, and put that network of support around each child, to ensure that they get the very best out of their experience in Blaen-y-Maes. I will shut up now.

[135] **Ann Jones:** Do you have anything to add, Ann?

[136] **Ms Broadway:** Yes. My role is completely different, obviously. I am an education family support officer for Goetre Primary School. My role evolved from the school amalgamating. We have 498 pupils. We have five learning resource bases in a class for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. On the day that I started, I think that I was at an advantage because, in a past role, I was a drugs officer in Merthyr Tydfil. When I first came into post, parents thought that I was going to open a drugs drop-in at the school and they were queuing at the gate. I was quite lucky that these parents knew me and that I had a relationship with them.

10:45

[137] One of the things that I did when I first came into post was to send a letter to these parents, asking them exactly what they expected of me and what they wanted out of my role within the school. My job description went from three lines long to four pages long within the first year of me being at Goetre. I offered parents what they wanted; I did not tell them what I expected of them, and I think that that is where my relationship began with them, and it has grown and grown. I have put a number of parents back into education. I have put a number of parents back into training. The universities gave me free tutors to use in the school. I earned the trust of parents, and getting that trust is paramount: since that has grown, I am engaging with roughly 296 parents on a regular basis. They enjoy coming into school, which is something that they did not do before. As I say, they do not see me as an educator; they see me as someone who is there to help and support them with whatever they need.

[138] **David Rees:** One of the questions raised before was about the consistency of these approaches, and the funding aspect is part of that consistency and sustainability. What are your concerns in that case? Are you concerned about the possibility of funding coming to an end, and that the good work that you have been doing is not going to be sustainable?

[139] **Ms Broadway:** There was a meeting at Links advisory service last night; I am paid through PDG money, and the Minister had said that staffing could not be paid out of PDG grant money, until the meeting last night. My role is about obtaining that support for disadvantaged areas and closing the poverty gap, and I am meeting all those needs. However, this is only another year's funding. I worry, if we lose that funding, where these parents and children will go. I am a qualified counsellor as well, and I do the counselling for the children and child protection in the school. I run Meic and the social and emotional aspects for these children, so it worries me, if this funding was to go, what service would be put in for these children then.

[140] **Ms Phillips:** It is huge. My school could not be without the family inclusion worker. We are offering that buffer zone with some of the agencies that parents are not happy to engage with, such as social services or maybe housing. We are capitalising on the fact that they have to bring their children to school, so we get hold of these parents three or four times a day when they are in the school, so we are able to help and support. My governors are very supportive, and that is vital in my type of school. We look every year to see how much we can put aside to ensure that this role is in place.

[141] It is worrying if the Minister says that the PDG money cannot be spent specifically on staffing, but you have to be quite creative when you put your bid in place and make it fit-for-purpose.

[142] **Ms Bevan:** A lot of our interventions started as a result of RAISE funding. We were able to lengthen the life of a lot of the projects as a result of PDG funding. It is then about spending a lot of valuable time exploring avenues, such as offering to match fund projects as a result of Communities First and applications to Children in Need. We seem to be spending a significant amount of our time completing grant applications and coping with the knockback when you are not allowed funding. It is a worry if funding is cut from some schools in Wales that are particularly challenging given their levels of deprivation. A change in the demographic population of some areas of Wales, in particular with new arrivals from countries joining the EU, means that schools are facing very challenging times. We heavily rely on grants to lengthen the life of a lot of our projects. In my school in particular, Nurture would be the very last intervention programme that our school would be able to lose, because it has had such a significant impact on raising pupil standards, but also in engaging with some of our harder-to-reach parents.

[143] **Ann Jones:** David, I will come back to you, but I have Simon and then Aled, and we will see where we go from there.

[144] **Simon Thomas:** I am sure that we will explore some of the funding and sustainability issues during this meeting. Before we move on to that, I want to ask a couple of questions, particularly to Kath Bevan and Ann Broadway, about two slightly different approaches to parental engagement—they are obviously suited to your local environment, but it is about how they work in practice. So, to start with the Nurture groups, I was very struck by the length of time you had parents in the school actually learning side by side—literally side by side, I take it.

[145] **Ms Bevan:** Yes.

[146] **Simon Thomas:** Okay. So, they are learning side by side with their children. That is quite a lot of time, actually—you said up to 55%, I think, or something like that.

[147] **Ms Bevan:** Yes, we start them off on 20%, and we then gradually increase it.

[148] **Simon Thomas:** How long have you been running groups like that? I think that you

said that there was a significant change in about 2010, with the income from children coming in. Have you been able to do any kind of evaluation of the effect on the children, and on their learning, of having these nurture groups? Clearly, you feel that they are beneficial, in the whole sense of the word, but could you talk specifically about the learning that children undertake? How do you fund that? You are doing something that is way beyond the traditional sense of funding a school, so could you say a little about how you fund that? If I may, Chair, I will also ask some questions to Ann Broadway as well.

[149] **Ms Bevan:** We started nurture groups in 2004, when we started a very classic nurture group, and we used it as an early intervention programme. Therefore, some of the really vulnerable children went into that group, and we gradually started having sessions called ‘stay to play’, where people could come and help their child to read. That was to allow those parents to come into school in a non-threatening environment. We have done a lot of research on the initial groups, because, obviously, they have gone through their key stage 2 assessments and into high school. One of the significant measures is that, since 2004, there has only ever been one child referral to a pupil referral unit from our school, which is significantly different from historical evidence. Also, the number of fixed-term exclusions has dropped to zero, and the children, generally, reach level 4 at the end of key stage 2. We have found that, as a result of nurture, if children are not actually reaching level 4, it is because, underneath those social, emotional and deprivation coping strategies, there is actually a specific learning problem.

[150] Then, in 2010, when there was a huge arrival of families from the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as well as Roma Slovaks, literally, during the summer holiday, we went in, and we were faced with 14 families who turned up on our doorstep. We are still experiencing that level of arrivals, and one of the most saddening factors is that a significant number of those children have never put foot in an educational establishment. Therefore, we are bringing in children of 10 and 11 years of age who have not had any actual experiences of being in a school—whether it was in their home country or in this country. There was this expectation that, all of a sudden, they had to go in, access the curriculum and fit in, and they obviously were not, because they have needs that need to be addressed. Therefore, the family learning nurture room has really hit upon those needs. They get used to coming into a school and to the expectations of school life, and they then learn the language to access their basic skills. Obviously, while they are in the family nurture room, it is the total reliance on developing their literacy and numeracy skills, as well as their socialisation skills, alongside their parents, that we are focused on.

[151] As I said, originally, we funded it through RAISE. Historically, we did have a percentage funding from Communities First, but, in the rewrite of its grant plan three years ago, we were excluded from that, although we are now being included again. It has realised now that we do make an impact, so Communities First has sort of re-engaged with us. The pupil deprivation grant has been superb, because that totally allows for nurture provision, and it is right. It is funding those families that are really hit with all the areas of deprivation and the inexperienced-in-education symptoms that they have.

[152] Regarding where we will go next, as I said earlier, it is about writing to Children in Need, and so on. Given that we run two nurture groups, I always ring-fence £55,000 in my budget to carry over every year, because the year that we are not able to provide nurture would be a very struggling year for our school.

[153] **Simon Thomas:** It is for staff costs mainly, presumably.

[154] **Ms Bevan:** It is totally for staffing costs, because, once you have set it up, that is an initial outlay. Our classic group is run with a full-time class teacher and a level-2 assistant, and our family nurture group is one that I run with two level-2 assistants, who are able to

speak in the home language and in English.

[155] **Simon Thomas:** Okay, thank you. I was going to ask you a question, if I might, Ms Broadway. You have a slightly different approach, but you have just mentioned—and you also mention in your evidence—how you have taken parents and given them training opportunities as well. I wonder how that links in with supporting the learning of their children back in school. Is there a specific link, or is it more about helping those parents to fulfil their delayed ambitions, perhaps, so that they then change their ethos in relation to the way in which they work with their own children?

[156] **Ms Broadway:** A number of parents came to me who were school-phobic themselves but wanted to learn. So, I was lucky that I could bring in a basic skills team to work with them on a Wednesday morning.

[157] **Simon Thomas:** In the school.

[158] **Ms Broadway:** Yes, in the school. Everything is done in the school; nothing is done outside the school. They drop their children off and then they stay. I have done two rooms out: one is called the Narnia room and the other is called the Alice in Wonderland room. The parents go up there, and that is where the tutors go to teach them. With regard to working with their children, I run three after-school clubs, which look at literacy and mathematics. I look at year 3 pupils who are not achieving the required level. I bring their parents in, and the parents learn exactly how the children are learning in the classroom. So, they work together on homework. I also run a separate homework club for parents who are struggling themselves. For that, I work in conjunction with 3Gs Development Trust, which has a Communities First building in Gurnos and Galon Uchaf. It gives me two workers and I use two learning support assistants from the school, whom 3Gs pays to do the evening work. So, we work together as a school and a community to raise parents' aspirations as well, through learning.

[159] **Simon Thomas:** Does the funding for that come from the PDG, or do the other workers come in through Communities First funding?

[160] **Ms Broadway:** Communities First money is used for those clubs. PDG money funds me and then it funds LSAs who are looking at raising literacy standards throughout the school. However, I have also just run a 'bring a male to school day'. We could not say 'dad' because, when I went into the assembly, some children raised their hands and said, 'I've got four dads'. So, we changed the name for it. However, for that, 169 fathers turned up at the school and wanted to learn with their children. I did an exercise with them, which was to make a tent out of newspaper for their children to sleep in. Some of those fathers came to me after the event and said to me, 'Do you know what, Ann, that is the first time I have ever played with my son?' We are talking about eight-year-olds, but one father said that he did not know how to do it, because his father had never played with him. He asked me to teach him how to play with them. From there, I have gone with the dads and the kids and taken them to football practice, so that these dads know that they have the confidence to do that. However, obviously, that was set out from the PDG grant money, because it was in the school for me to use. I then took, I think, 26 dads, last summer to West Midlands Safari Park with their children. Some of them had never previously left Merthyr. On the bus, we got to Ponty and some of them were asking me, 'Are we there yet?' These were grown adults, and I said, 'No, we're only in Ponty; we've got a bit further to go', and they were asking, 'How much longer do we have to stay on this bus with these kids?' However, when we got to the west midlands park, it was amazing. Out of the PDG grant money, I take all of the year 6 children, every year, to London as an experience that they would never have if we did not have that funding. So, because parents do not have the money to give me, I use that money to take those year 6 children to London.

[161] **Ann Jones:** I think Lynne has some questions on PDG.

[162] **Lynne Neagle:** I am a bit puzzled about this business of the Welsh Government saying that it cannot be spent on staff costs. You have mentioned the trips, but I would have thought that the staff costs would be one of the main things it would fund. So, can you tell us a bit more about what the thinking was behind that, if you know?

[163] **Ms Bevan:** We have to prove that we would not be in a redundancy situation if we lost the grant. So, it is all about the sustainability of the personnel you are employing. That is what we are challenged on in Newport authority, if we use it for staffing.

[164] **Simon Thomas:** It is particularly the case in relation to extra resources, is it not?

[165] **Ms Bevan:** Yes.

[166] **Ms Broadway:** Another thing in relation to the grant money was that local government, or the Government, felt that the money was not being spent. As PDG grant money was given to close the gap, it felt that it was not being used appropriately for children who were receiving free school meals; it was being used as a whole. So, it wanted to see that the money that it was putting in was making a difference to these children.

[167] **Aled Roberts:** May I challenge you on that? You said that all year 6 children go on a trip that is paid for by PDG funding.

[168] **Ms Broadway:** Yes.

[169] **Aled Roberts:** You have 60.9% of children on free school meals, so, technically, 40% of those children are not on free school meals.

11:00

[170] **Ms Broadway:** No, they do not get on the trip for free, these children. What we do is put a letter out to all the parents and we ask for a nominal fee to come in to the school for us to be able to take these children. We will have the money from the parents who have that money. They will give us the £20 deposit. With the children who are on free school meals, more than likely we will not have that £20, but those children will not be penalised, and will still be allowed to go on that trip, whether or not that nominal fee comes in.

[171] **Aled Roberts:** To develop Lynne's point, I think the Government was challenging school leaders in particular regarding the Sutton toolkit, and whether headteachers have actually considered the relative impacts of interventions. The point being made was that it was not there to cover generic classroom assistance. I do not think there is a bar on staffing; it is a sustainability issue. What process did you go through in relation to the Sutton toolkit, or what is your view of the Sutton toolkit, if that is being suggested as the measure?

[172] **Ms Phillips:** The Sutton toolkit is very good, because it gives you a strong base, if you like. Obviously, there is research, and you can look at what is working, but you have to be careful as to where that research has come from. You have got to read your own school as well. That is very important. You have to know your own school and what the needs of your school are. We used our PDG money to raise standards in literacy and numeracy. We were fortunate enough to get £40,000, which is a hefty sum of money, but, on top of that, as I received the £40,000, the local authority withdrew my nurture money, and took my £40,000 of nurture money away. So, I was able to stand still, but I still had to prove that the PDG money was making a difference in poverty. So, you have to look at it holistically. You cannot

just look at things in isolation. Every school is different, and every school has its own needs. You use your money to make the best for every child. Again, maybe I am fortunate that I have a high percentage of free school meals, so nobody really is left out of anything, but you would not do that anyway.

[173] **Aled Roberts:** What process do the two of you, as headteachers—I mean, the Estyn annual report that we debated yesterday was suggesting that there were some schools where, basically, just the school leader took the decision regarding PDG, and there was a real issue as to the whole staff understanding what the impact of PDG should be on raising attainment for our most deprived children.

[174] **Ms Phillips:** I cannot really comment on the Estyn paper, but it certainly did not happen that way in my school. Things do not happen that way because I have a very strong senior management team where we discuss things. Again, we are not a huge school, so we are very good with communication, and everybody has a chance to have their say, from the dinner ladies through to the governors. We came to a school decision. Again, if you have an ethos where you work with each other, and you have high control and high support, then that is going to naturally come through and everybody sings from the same hymn sheet then, and knows that we are there to ensure that every child reaches his or her full potential. They understand that there are things going on in the school and they are paid for through the PDG. It is very exciting—you have to make it exciting, do you not?

[175] **Ms Bevan:** Every year group through our school accesses intervention programmes that are funded through the PDG. So, it is not just the nurture group. There are also literacy and numeracy-specific programmes, so all the teachers actually see the benefit. I know that, perhaps in conflict with the Sutton report, for some children, a month's development on their reading age means that they can access the curriculum within a base classroom, which is significant for my school. For me, it is good value for money. All the teachers respect the intervention programmes. They see the benefit for the children, they see them progressing and accessing the learning alongside their peers in the classroom. Every term, all our intervention programmes are measured, and we have a referral system for those who may have dropped and who need picking up. They are all referred by every member of staff within our school. So, there is whole-school involvement in the children accessing the intervention programmes, and the nurture provision, as a result of PDG.

[176] **Aled Roberts:** May I just pick up on something that Bev said? On the fact that your £40,000 was withdrawn, looking forward to next year, there have been instances where we know that there are some authorities suggesting that cuts in education budgets can be supplemented by replacement of PDG moneys. Is that happening anyway? In reality, if that happens, the whole purpose of PDG is undermined.

[177] **Ms Phillips:** As far as I am aware, that will not happen with us. 'I don't know' is what I am saying to you. I hope that it does not happen, because my school needs its PDG money; it needs its family inclusion worker and it needs its emotional wellbeing officer. We have to get the wellbeing of the children and their families right before we can put a pen in their hands, really.

[178] **Aled Roberts:** You will have had next year's budget; you have not been asked to—

[179] **Ms Phillips:** No. Sorry. No, we have not.

[180] **Ann Jones:** I want to go back to something that Ann said about trips, because we have had evidence from parents—I am sorry, Aled, I know that you have not finished—saying that their children will stay away from school when a trip has been mentioned, because of the voluntary cost. We have even heard from parents that schools are not telling parents

that if it is an educational trip and they cannot afford to pay, that should not be a barrier. There are these huge barriers for parents—out of embarrassment—who cannot afford to pay for a trip and the children themselves realising, when they get to an age, that they cannot go and ask their parents to fund these trips. I notice that you are looking at me quite strangely there, so it obviously does not happen in your school. However, that has been identified by a group of parents across a wide range of settings as being a huge barrier. How do we overcome that?

[181] **Ms Broadway:** I can give you a prime example. On Monday this week, a little girl came to me because there were three children who had said, 'We don't want to come on the London trip'. I said, 'Why don't you want to come? We're going on the London Eye and we're going down the River Thames on a boat and whatever. Look, don't talk to me now; if you want me, you know where I am and you can come and see me'. So, there was a knock on my door five minutes later and I said, 'Come in', and she came in, so I asked what the matter was. She said, 'We've had our money cut and I know mami haven't got no money and I don't want to go home and ask mami for the deposit'. So, I said, 'That's fine; you don't have to go home and ask mami'. She said, 'Will you ask mami?' and I said, 'Oh no, I'm not going to ask mami; what if mami shouts at me?' and we had a bit of a joke and a laugh about it. But, I will ring those parents, because I am lucky enough to have that really good relationship with them. So, I gave mam a ring and I said, 'She hasn't brought a deposit'—I will say that she is not a free school meal child—'for the London trip. Is everything all right with it?' She said, 'I'll be down now'—because that is the way that they are—'I'll come down and see you'. So, she came down and said to me, 'Look, my money has been cut'. So, I said, 'Look, don't worry about it', and I went to the headteacher and said, 'Look, they haven't got money to pay for so-and-so to come on the trip. Can we do it?' I am lucky because Denise will say, 'Yes, go on, we'll sort it out' and that kid leaves my room happy. However, I think, because I am there and I have this relationship with the parents, even if they do not have the money, they will come to me and tell me.

[182] **Ann Jones:** So, that is the beauty of you being there, acting like that, breaking that barrier down. So, if you and several like you were not in those positions, those children would have no-one, because they would not want to go and tell their teacher that they were not going to go home and ask—

[183] **Ms Broadway:** They would not tell the teacher.

[184] **Ann Jones:** You were looking at me as if you were horrified that we thought that children would be excluded—

[185] **Ms Phillips:** It is about knowing your school and your families. You know who has the money and who does not have the money. You know how to approach one family, which will be very different to another family. That is the beauty of having someone like Ann in a school. It does break down those barriers and it is important. You work hard to build that trust with the families; they have confidence in the school and they know that they can come and speak to you. We were talking earlier about having this open-door policy. It does make the school very vulnerable—you are opening yourselves up to a lot—but the benefits of it are absolutely fantastic. You have these parents who will come in and we do not have those issues with children saying that they do not have this or that, because they know that this network of support is around them and we are able to see. We know when uniforms are becoming threadbare on children. You intervene. We have those children in our care and it is our job to make sure that they feel good about themselves.

[186] **Ann Jones:** Kath, is it different, because you have a really multicultural and multifaith cohort of children? Do you find it more difficult? Are the barriers there the cultural barriers and do you find it more difficult to break those down?



[187] **Ms Bevan:** No. Our priority is face-to-face contact. So, again, appointment systems do not work, so it is through call-in and home-language support that we will address their concern. I am lucky that if parents could not afford a trip, then they would come in and say, 'Look, we're having trouble', and then we provide them with opportunities of paying in instalments, or we hold a little deprivation pot within our school fund. We will have a 'Come as you please day' in your home clothes and that money will go into a desperate need pot. So, for those priority families, we will say, 'Look, pay £1 and we'll cover the rest'. We also cap the cost of our trips. We are very aware of that, because the one challenge that we are faced with is that we have a significantly large number of children in each family. We have some families with six or seven siblings and we have to take that into account on all out-of-school trips.

[188] We have also changed the focus of the school trips because of the language and the development of oracy through our school. The trip happens at the start of a theme, so all our children are learning through first-hand experience. So, if their theme was animals, they would go out and have that opportunity of touching them and exploring them, so they are developing all the vocabulary that they need in order to aid their learning back in the classroom. However, we are very lucky that, when I appoint staff, I am cautious that I have the balance right and I try to employ some members of staff who speak other languages. We have a GEMS team within our school, although it has had its grant significantly cut.

[189] **Ann Jones:** What is GEMS?

[190] **Ms Bevan:** That is the Gwent ethnic minority support services. I can access some language support with those. However, the ethos is very much that all our link workers go out on the playground at the end of the day and everything is done through face-to-face contact.

[191] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thanks. I am conscious that we are still on David's questions. Are you—

[192] **David Rees:** Yes, I have some slightly different questions.

[193] **Ann Jones:** Carry on, if you have some, and I know that Angela has a couple that she wants to ask as well.

[194] **David Rees:** You talk about your schools and we are clearly talking about the development of young children being ready to ensure that they can enjoy education and enthuse in it. What are your linkages with the comprehensives? It is about the transition of those pupils to comprehensives. Are we seeing the ethos continuing as they move on to comprehensives?

[195] **Ms Bevan:** For us, one of the significant parts is the discussion and the discussion will take place in the spring term on individual children. We are very clear that part of that discussion is about the level of intervention made and the programmes that those children have accessed through our provision plan, and whether they are an ex-nurture or a current nurture pupil. As a result of that, the main school for which we are a feeder school, Dyffryn High School, has provided a safe base room for those children to access at some of their needy times—their changeover times in lessons et cetera. So, our children know that they have that support; they can go to that room and an adult there will help them or assist them with whatever they have to do next. That is a result of the nurture group provision within our school.

[196] **Ms Phillips:** It is a little different for me because they closed our local comprehensive about three years ago now, if not four, and my children now become very

fragmented at the end of their primary school and end up going to five or six different comprehensives. It is a worry because they are very big fish in a little pond in Blaen-y-Maes. They are paid; they are all ambassadors for different areas in the school and they use their money in the school shop. They leave then and go to different schools. We are also a rights-respecting school and the comprehensives that they go to may not follow that or give a child a voice. We are sending some very confident year 6 pupils to schools who will turn around and say, ‘Well, I don’t actually agree with that’, because that is the way that we have nurtured them and I know sometimes that they can come across a little full of themselves, maybe, when they go to the comprehensives.

[197] We are also a restorative practice school and some of the comprehensives have not taken on that approach either yet. Some have, but the main issue is that they do not go to one place. They go to five or six different comprehensives and that makes it difficult at the end of their school year because the transitional weeks are different in every comprehensive. So, the last half term for them can become strange because some of them are out and some are not; some of them are doing a week and some are doing two days and that type of thing. So, it is quite fragmented really for our children.

[198] **Ms Broadway:** For me, I go with them. I sit in on school inclusion meetings and I attend the three comprehensive schools for which Goetre is a feeder school. It should be Pen-y-Dre High School, but some children go to the Catholic school and some go to Cyfarthfa High School.

11:15

[199] I actually sit on what is called a school inclusion policy meeting and if there are children with specific issues, I make sure that all the staff know what those issues are, and that there is a nurturing plan in place for these children when they reach whichever comp they go to. I still attend the comp, right up until year 7 comes to an end, so they know that if they see me in school, I am still there if they have got any issues and they can come to me. That is part of my role as well.

[200] **Ann Jones:** Okay, that is helpful. Nobody wants to go further on that, so I call on Angela.

[201] **Angela Burns:** I just wanted to ask you some questions about those who receive free school meals and those who do not. If I may ask one quick question of you, Kath—because I think that I know the answer—I just wanted to check why or how your free school meals pupils are doing a little bit better than those who—

[202] **Ms Bevan:** I know. [*Laughter.*]

[203] **Ann Jones:** Well done.

[204] **Angela Burns:** It beats every trend everywhere.

[205] **Ms Bevan:** It makes PDG a bit complicated for us, actually. We have an ethnic group of people who are very proud and they will not access free school meals, even though they are entitled to them, and that is one of our challenges as a school. Therefore, they will not apply.

[206] **Angela Burns:** No, I think that you can have—

[207] **Ann Jones:** Yes, I think that we have got our answer.

[208] **Angela Burns:** Thank you. I was also quite interested, Ann, in your school, where

the number of non-free school meals pupils is quite low compared with the average, but, again, your free school meals pupils are doing well compared with the average. I just wanted to have a view of the children who are on the shoulders, who are not receiving free school meals, but are not a way away from needing free school meals and what impact you think that that has. It is all well and good if we give all this attention to children who receive free school meals, because that is the measure of deprivation, but then we have this little cohort who surround them who are not accessing the successes that they could or should have. Again, you see that around some Flying Start areas as well, do you not? So, I just wanted to have your view about what we might be able to do to pick them up as well.

[209] **Ms Broadway:** I think that I am lucky in so much as we use a tool. We have a mapping tool by which we map every child who is in the school. We ask questions of them and the answers go into a data analyser and then it comes out with the figures. That is for every child throughout the school. So, if a child, for instance, is not achieving emotionally at home or does not have good views about school, they will come to me. I run something called a Really Cool Club. That applies whether the child receives free school meals or not. I have 69 children in my Really Cool Club, which looks at their social and emotional needs, and I do a bit of counselling and a bit of work with them on raising their aspirations, self-esteem and confidence. Those children are not free school meals children, but they have come out in these mapping data as thinking quite lowly of themselves, home or things like that. So, I am lucky that I am there, really, and I go through all these data—

[210] **Angela Burns:** It is emotional poverty, is it not?

[211] **Ms Broadway:** Yes. I find those children, but they still come and work with me. It might be something like this: one child came to me this week who was struggling in the classroom, but did not want to say. So, then I am that voice to go in to say, ‘Look, this is the reason why he’s struggling’. We look at every child as a whole.

[212] **Angela Burns:** Do you have a view on this, Bev?

[213] **Ms Phillips:** We sit down as a staff and go through every child in the school. The free school meals thing is really just the way that we get the money into the school—sorry. We just go through every child and, again, we put this network of support around each child. Everybody gets to input into it and, again, it is mirroring the good practice that is in Flying Start, because it goes through every child and makes sure that the health visitors are visiting and everybody is supporting that child. Again, it goes back to the fact that it does not really matter whether you receive free school meals or not; it is to do with having a package of support that goes around each child. It may well be that one child has self-esteem issues and needs to access our So To Do group. It may well be that you know that another family has had housing issues. You may feel that another child has a huge package of support around them, because social services are involved and they may be a looked-after child, but it does not matter. Every child is treated as an individual and is looked at as such, and we try to do our best for each child with this network of support around each one.

[214] **Angela Burns:** May I ask where children with special educational needs might fit into all of this? For you, obviously, it is very clear that you have this—because we were talking only yesterday in the Assembly about being able to pick up and monitor each individual child.

[215] **Ms Phillips:** We track; you track everybody. We cannot cohort track, because we are so transient, you see, so it is very difficult for us. We never start and finish with the same group of children—it can be anywhere between 20% and 30% transient. The bedroom tax does not help, because of people moving in and out and all sorts of things. We have just had a massive explosion of Polish people who have arrived on our doorstep. So, we have to look at

each child and develop some sort of package around that child to ensure that they move forward. In that package may well be the fact that they have speech and language issues, so that will be dealt with. It really is about taking the individual and getting your expertise around you, which is where Ann comes into it. It is about knowing where to signpost these families, knowing where to signpost staff—we have quite a transparent staff, so we can sit down and say, ‘I’ve got a child who can’t do this. Can you help me?’ We did that last night and people asked, ‘Have you tried this? Have you tried that?’ It really is about being quite open and looking for the best for every individual.

[216] **Ann Jones:** Aled, you have some points on that.

[217] **Aled Roberts:** Yes. Our inquiry is into improving attainment for children from poorer backgrounds. What contact has there been with the consortia as to challenging the school on the impact that these different strategies have?

[218] **Ms Bevan:** We have to submit all our plans for approval through our consortium. At the moment, they are sitting with it because the closing date for the submission of plans is Friday of this week. You are then notified whether they are approved; otherwise you will be challenged if it feels that funds are not being spent appropriately to meet the needs of the criteria of the grants.

[219] **Aled Roberts:** What is your view on that and what is the balance between challenge and support as far as the strategies are concerned?

[220] **Ms Bevan:** Well—

[221] **Ann Jones:** You do not have to answer that if you do not want to. [*Laughter.*]

[222] **Ms Bevan:** In fairness, I—

[223] **Aled Roberts:** We will protect you. [*Laughter.*]

[224] **Ann Jones:** Just be careful, it is being recorded.

[225] **Ms Bevan:** You are rightfully challenged. Some schools are having significant amounts of money—mine is one. It has a right to challenge to make sure that I am spending that appropriately and that I have a measured outcome as a result of it. I also think that it does accept that headteachers know their schools and that we are spending that money in the direct areas that we deem appropriate. We are met every term, and on a termly basis you review those plans to see where you are, the progress being made and whether any alterations are made. If we then hit a hurdle mid-financial year, we would have to submit a new plan. So, if we had a sudden intake with another need, I would have to submit a new plan to address that need and that can delay some provision.

[226] **Aled Roberts:** Could we cut down on the bureaucracy? This sounds very bureaucratic.

[227] **Ms Bevan:** It can be, but we are in a world where we have to justify everything that we do. It is a very heavy paper load exercise at the moment, and it is back and fore, but—

[228] **Simon Thomas:** Is it every year?

[229] **Ms Bevan:** Yes.

[230] **Simon Thomas:** So, there is no forward planning in terms of ‘Well, this is a three-

year plan' or something.

[231] **Ms Bevan:** No, we have all had to submit annual plans. On your planning proforma you have to talk about sustainability and exit strategies, if there can be some, from where you are spending your money.

[232] **Simon Thomas:** If I may just ask a question to Bev Phillips as well, how much do these plans actually look at process and how much are they looking at outcomes? Is the balance right?

[233] **Ms Bevan:** For us, actually, we have to narrow it right down to individual pupil numbers.

[234] **Simon Thomas:** Is your perspective different from that of the consortium?

[235] **Ms Phillips:** We have a similar process. We have the regional support, challenge and intervention framework in Education through Regional Working and we have to fill it in and make sure that we talk about things such as sustainability, and you have to be quite specific with targets and groups of children and how you want to move them on in terms of attainment. For me, it can be a little difficult, given the transient nature of the beast I serve. Whereas my results last year at the end of the foundation phase looked absolutely stunning, the children who achieved outcome 6 left. So, the target setting for that particular group at the end of key stage 2 should show that I had a fabulous 30% at level 5, and that would be absolutely stunning, but none of those children exist anymore. So, we have to put a plan in at the beginning of the year, which is the regional support, challenge and intervention framework, and then every term there is a focus for somebody to come out to the school to challenge and support. I would say that there are issues with timing and getting things in place, and maybe a need for a little more information on change and things such as this.

[236] **Simon Thomas:** Are the people who challenge and support individuals or professionals with enough experience in this field to be able to offer that challenge and support?

[237] **Ms Phillips:** I can only speak from my experience. The gentleman who came to challenge and support me was an ex-headteacher and a primary school teacher. So, I was quite confident that he would come in and be able to do both things for me.

[238] **Ann Jones:** Does anybody else have any more questions?

[239] **Simon Thomas:** I have one other question on a separate issue.

[240] **Ann Jones:** Okay. I will take David's question and then I will come back to you.

[241] **David Rees:** We have talked very much this morning about good practices and what you have been able to do with some of the initiatives that are going on. Are there any Government initiatives that you feel are barriers to progressing and closing that gap?

[242] **Ms Phillips:** We do not get involved in those. [*Laughter.*]

[243] **Ann Jones:** That is a fair answer. Does anybody else have anything to offer?

[244] **Lynne Neagle:** May I just ask a question? The other side to that is: is there anything that you think that the Government should be doing that would help you that it is not doing at the moment?

[245] **Ms Bevan:** I think, potentially, giving a bit more of a long-term view of funding would be helpful so that we know whether these intervention provisions will be there, say, for the next five years. We could plan a bit longer term than as well. We knew we had a bit of security for the PDG for the three years, but it is that, ‘Okay, what next? What are we going to do next?’ In my case, in particular, if we are not going to have that, I have to look now at submitting further grant applications, because some of those can take several months before you know the outcome of them.

[246] **Ms Broadway:** That would apply to me as well. I have been chosen because there is only me in Merthyr doing this role. I was up in Manchester during half term, delivering to schools in Manchester, telling them about my role and good practice and how they should have education and family support workers in the school. It was very difficult, because I was doing that not knowing whether the PDG was going to fund me until 31 March. It is very difficult then to stand there and sell yourself and give all these tools and interventions that people can use when you do not know whether you will be using them yourself on 1 April.

[247] **Ms Phillips:** I think that the structure of the school is different now, and what we are offering to our communities is different. We are not a headteacher, a deputy, teachers and nursery nurses anymore; the actual look of the school is very different, and it would be lovely if the Government took that on board and that when you structure your schools that family inclusion worker would be a natural part of the school and that the funding for it would just be there.

[248] **Ann Jones:** Aled has one very small point on this.

[249] **Aled Roberts:** I am not picking on you, but you said that you were the only one in Merthyr that is doing it and you have been to Manchester. Have you been to anywhere else in Merthyr to see what—

[250] **Ms Broadway:** Yes.

[251] **Aled Roberts:** So, why have they not—

[252] **Ms Broadway:** Bids went in for Communities First money, and it was then match-funded through PDG money. However, what headteachers found—obviously, I am in Goetre, and I am there five days a week, full time—is that they would have a watered-down project. Say, for instance, there were five feeder schools, one of the people with my role would go in once in the morning and maybe one then in another school in an afternoon. You cannot make a difference like that; you have to have somebody there who is able to do this role and see these parents and children. So, I do not really know what happened, and I would not like to say. I know that job adverts went out but then the appointments, through headteachers saying, ‘Look, it is not going to work’, so far have not been fulfilled.

[253] **Ann Jones:** We will have your last point, Simon.

[254] **Simon Thomas:** This is a completely separate point. We have not touched on one issue that has come up in other parts of our inquiry, and that is the barriers around technology. I think you mentioned iPads in your nursery groups, for example, and a lot of learning is technology-based now, as is learning at home. We have heard of very simple things from parents about the need to print off work in the house, for example, and how expensive that can be. All of those issues—

11:30

[255] **Ms Bevan:** The launch of the new hub, as well, for some families.

[256] **Simon Thomas:** Yes. Within that context, then, what sort of experience do you have of those barriers, and how are you using your resources now to try to overcome them? If I can just add to that, again, to wrap up everything, with regard to technology in terms of connecting with parents, are you using texts, Facebook or whatever to keep your parents involved and engaged?

[257] **Ms Broadway:** Not Facebook in Gurnos.

[258] **Simon Thomas:** Yes, Facebook is a—

[259] **Ms Broadway:** In terms of Facebook, we spend our day dealing in the morning with what has gone on Facebook in the night.

[260] **Simon Thomas:** You deal with the problems that arise on Facebook.

[261] **Ms Broadway:** I run a reading cafe twice a week, using Jayne Powney; it is like the basic skills team. That is in Merthyr. We joined up with the Workers' Educational Association. So, what we do is that the children will re-write their stories with their parents present, putting pen to paper, and then we bring in technology using the WEA and a computer literacy class. They also come into school to teach the parents how to use this technology. They then upload all of these digital stories. We also use Merthyr library. These stories are all visualised throughout Merthyr then on computer screens. So, we offer that to every parent in the school: to come in to work with their children. Yesterday, we had 29 parents engage. We have another 25 on a waiting list now to come in to learn how to use them.

[262] I do use text messaging, and I do use the telephone, but I like to go and knock on a door and see a parent face to face.

[263] **Ms Phillips:** First, with some of the systems changing, where you can only apply for places online, we also offer that out for parents. If they want to come in, we will help and support them. In terms of children, where homework is concerned, we link with Communities First. The local after-school recreation club runs a homework club, which is a drop-in centre.

[264] **Simon Thomas:** So, it is computers and equipment.

[265] **Ms Phillips:** It has computers and equipment. We also have the LIFE programme in Swansea, and we have managed to become part of that. We are fortunate in Blaen-y-Maes that my years 5 and 6 pupils each have iPads. Again, however, it is very much along the lines that, if we do not put it in, they will not get it. I am almost glad for things like Sugar Crush and Facebook, because it means that the parents will have some access to something that the children can use. However, accessing computers at home is still limited, I feel. Again, we run morning computer clubs and after-school computer clubs, and we link with another school, where the iPads are concerned. So, we try to give as broad an experience for the children and the families as possible.

[266] **Ms Bevan:** A significant number of families do not have ICT hardware at all at home, so, a lot of the skills are developed and brought in through the school. That challenges us then with homework. The local library has three computers; they can book a homework slot there. We run the parenting classes, and our fathers actually come into the computing classes as well. Obviously, we touch upon e-safety in those classes, but also what useful learning tools there are. The hub will be amazing, but the concern is that it will eliminate a lot of the children being able to access some of the challenges that are set by the class teachers through it.

[267] **Simon Thomas:** Could you just say a little bit more about that? It will be a responsibility on parents to support the children outside the school to try to access that. Is that the concern, that the emphasis is changing in that way?

[268] **Ms Bevan:** It is a fantastic tool. So, for example, our year 6 teacher uploaded a story opener, and then the first person who clicks on it can write the next section of that story, and it can flow through. Well, only the children who actually have access at home will ever be able to access that level of learning, which is really exciting, and that is a shame.

[269] **Simon Thomas:** So, there is the potential of exclusion.

[270] **Ms Bevan:** Yes, totally. It is a shame that there is not a pocket or a grant body to which some of the deprived families can make applications to help them fund a laptop, for example, in their home so that the families can learn alongside. We cannot find anything to support our families to apply for that.

[271] **Ann Jones:** I think that part of the problem as well with a laptop is not necessarily buying the laptop—it is the price of the contract for downloading. Once a child sees a computer, they want to download virtually every piece of downloadable information there is. If you are trying to do it on a very limited budget, you will hit your limits. We have seen stories of that happening where children have been playing on an iPad or a game and they have not realised that, by clicking on something else, they are buying something, and running up huge bills. That is another barrier for parents and they will not even put that contract in for fear that that is going to happen. So, there is a lot there that we have to look at.

[272] **Ms Bevan:** It is one of those areas where if you do not keep up to date, you are at that thin edge of the wedge, and you are playing catch-up, which will never get you to where everyone else is in terms of the ICT learning world. That is a fear that I have for some of our families.

[273] **Ann Jones:** Thank you all for coming. We have found it all very interesting—we jumped in and jumped around, which is great. You will get a copy of the transcript of this session to check for accuracy, in case we have put something in that you have not said. However, unfortunately, you cannot take anything out. Thank you for your written evidence as well, which we found very useful. Thank you.

11:36

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r  
Cyfarfod**

**Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the  
Meeting**

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

*the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi) and 17.42(ix).*

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

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.  
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11:36.*



*The public part of the meeting ended at 11:36.*