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[The Children, Young People and Education
Committee](#)

4/11/2015

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[Committee Transcripts](#)



Cynnwys Contents

- 3 Cyflwyniadau, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions
- 4 Craffu ar Adroddiad Blynyddol y Comisiynydd Plant
Scrutiny of the Children's Commissioners Annual Report
- 42 Papurau i'w Nodi
Papers to Note
- 42 Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o
Weddill y Cyfarfod hwn ac o'r Cyfarfod yn ei Gyfanrwydd ar 12
Tachwedd
Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public
from the Remainder of this Meeting and the Whole of the Meeting on
12 November

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

The proceedings are recorded 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 Cymru Welsh Conservatives
Keith Davies	Llafur Labour
Suzy Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymru Welsh Conservatives
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

Hywel Dafydd	Swyddog Materion Cyhoeddus, Swyddfa Comisiynydd Plant Cymru Public Affairs Officer, Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales
Dr Sally Holland	Comisiynydd Plant Cymru Children's Commissioner for Wales
Eleri Thomas	Prif Weithredwr, Swyddfa Comisiynydd Plant Cymru Chief Executive, Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales

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

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Stephen Davies	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Marc Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk
Siân Thomas	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:34.
The meeting began at 09:34.*

Cyflwyniadau, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **David Rees:** Good morning. Can I welcome Members and the public to this morning's session of the Children, Young People and Education Committee? Before we go on to the business of the morning, can I do some housekeeping? Can I remind Members, please, to ensure that your mobile phones are off or on silent, and any other electronic equipment that may interfere with the broadcasting equipment? Can I also remind you that there's no scheduled fire alarm this morning, so, if one does occur, please follow the directions of the ushers. The meeting is bilingual, so if you need the translation from Welsh to English, there is simultaneous translation available on the headphones on channel 1. If you need amplification, that's also available, but that's on channel 2. We've received apologies from Ann Jones, John Griffiths and Bethan Jenkins, and we've not been informed of any substitutes. So, we'll now go on to the business of the day.

Craffu ar Adroddiad Blynyddol y Comisiynydd Plant Scrutiny of the Children's Commissioners Annual Report

[2] **David Rees:** Can I welcome the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Sally Holland? Can you introduce your colleagues?

[3] **Dr Holland:** Yes. On my right, I've got Eleri Thomas, who's the deputy Children's Commissioner for Wales, and Hywel Dafydd, who's my public affairs officer.

[4] **David Rees:** Thank you. You've obviously published your report this morning, and we very much appreciate having sight of that—it gave us an opportunity to prepare for today. So, thank you for that. We're going to give you a couple of minutes to introduce the issues you may wish to raise, and then we'll go into questions, if that's okay with yourself.

[5] **Dr Holland:** Diolch yn fawr. **Dr Holland:** Thank you very much. Bore da, bawb. Rwy'n falch iawn i Good morning, everyone. I'm very gael bod yma gyda chi i gyd y bore pleased to be here with you all this

yma.

morning.

[6] Good morning, everyone. I'm very pleased to be with you all today. I'm presenting to you my annual report, which, of course, sets out the final year of my predecessor, Keith Towler. As you'll be aware, it provides information about the everyday core work of my organisation—the case work, the policy work, and our range of participation programmes, as well as our more thematic work: our reports on wheelchair access, short breaks, Operation Pallial, et cetera. I think this work illustrates the range of work of my office, which is a challenge, but also a necessity if I'm going to fulfil my remit as commissioner for all children and young people in Wales. I do look forward to discussing this report with you this morning, but I thought it would be helpful to start with a few—and I promise, just a few—opening remarks about how I've approached my role as commissioner, so far, six months into the role, and my response to the independent review of my office by Dr Shooter.

[7] In my first six months, I've been working hard to build the foundations for a productive seven-year term. An important element of that has been to develop an evidence base on key rights issues in Wales for children and young people that I can build my programme for the next seven years on. So, along with the other UK commissioners, I presented a report to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in July about the current state of children's rights in the UK and devolved nations. I expect the committee's concluding observations—and we saw they sent a list of issues last week to the UK Government and the devolved Governments—to form an important baseline, which will aid me in holding to account Welsh Government and, along with the other commissioners, the UK Government.

[8] I've also been building an evidence base on what children and young people, and the adults around them, think are the most important issues that I should be concentrating on, as well as how I should carry out my work, and I've been doing that through my 'Beth Nesa'/'What Next?' consultation. So far, we've engaged over 8,000 children and young people, and adults who care for or about them in Wales, and we've got some returns still coming in. I'll be publishing the results of that in January, along with my three-year strategic priorities.

[9] I've been making plans for developing the organisation itself to deliver that strategic plan effectively and efficiently. So, in doing so, I won't only be responding to my 'What Next?' consultation, but also to the independent

review of the office, which was led by Dr Shooter last year, and, of course, you're well versed in that. I found this review report to be a really helpful analysis, which, along with my own observations, and my discussions with my staff and outside stakeholders—including children—has helped me to put in place plans for the remainder of my seven-year term.

[10] I think the organisation as it stands has got many strengths, including the breadth of its work, and its high number of outputs and activities, and the knowledge and dedication of its staff. And I want to build on those foundations to develop our work to be more evidence based in its approach, to measure the impact of its work, where possible, and to strengthen the evidential links between the different spheres of activity—for example, to use more systematically the data from our individual casework to inform our policy responses, and to work on a strategic plan that's comprehensive enough to respond to our broad remit, but focused enough to, hopefully, make a difference to the lives of children, and children's rights in Wales.

[11] In terms of organisational efficiency, I'm currently consulting within my team on changes that intend to clarify management roles and lines of accountability. I'm delivering an enhanced governance structure, which will put a more central role for children and young people in advising my work, plus a broader expert advisory group. I'm considering how to use the resources at my disposal most efficiently and effectively as well. And I'm working with the other Welsh commissioners and ombudsmen to identify and deliver shared procurement and delivery of services, where this would be beneficial.

[12] So, overall, I hope to build an effective and efficient organisation, which is evidence based in its approach, and clear about its purpose. And, of course, along with my external engagement work and internal organisational development, I've been heavily engaged in a wide range of policy issues, and I look forward to discussing those in the session as well.

[13] **David Rees:** Thank you for those introductory remarks. We also appreciate, of course, the annual report covers the period when you weren't in post. But, of course, the work you've done since then is important, and the work you'll be doing in the future, and Mike Shooter's review, and the response to that, is all part and parcel of the issues we want to raise with you today. So, we'll go straight into there now. We have three themes, and the first actually is about, basically, the response to the review. I'll start with Simon.

[14] **Simon Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr, Gadeirydd, a diolch yn fawr am yr amlinelliad yna. Fel y mae'r Cadeirydd newydd gyfeirio ato, mae'r adroddiad yn ymwneud â dim ond eich rhagflaenydd. Rwyf jest eisiau deall, ar ddechrau'r sesiwn yma: pe byddem ni'n cael adroddiad blynyddol mewn blwyddyn sydd yn olrhain y gwaith rŷch chi wedi bod yn ei wneud, a ydych chi'n gallu rhoi rhyw ragflas i ni o le y byddai pethau yn wahanol, lle y byddech chi'n teimlo eich bod chi'n barod i gamu mewn i gyfeiriad gwahanol, am ba bynnag reswm, ac i ba raddau y mae'r cyfnod newydd o saith mlynedd fel comisiynydd yn llechen lân, ac i ba raddau y mae'n barhad o beth oedd yn cael ei gynnal gan y cyn-gomisiynydd?

Simon Thomas: Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you for the outline you've given us. As the Chair has just said, the report, of course, refers to your predecessor. I'd just like to understand at the beginning of the session today: if we had an annual report in a year's time that outlined the work that you've been doing, could you give us an idea of where things would be different, where you think you would be prepared to step in a different direction, possibly, for whatever reason, and to what extent the new period of seven years as a commissioner is a clean slate for you, and to what extent there is continuation of what happened previously under the previous commissioner?

[15] **Dr Holland:** Diolch yn fawr. It's an important question. I suppose in my introductory remarks I was trying to explain, really, how I will be building on what I think is a very strong organisation that's done a lot of important work over the last 14 years. But, obviously, as a new commissioner—as the third commissioner—I think, you know, Wales has changed a lot in 14 years as well. We have a much more advanced and developed and rapidly changing devolution settlement and more advanced civic society as well, and the way that we all communicate with each other, whether we're children or adults, has changed a lot. So, the commissioner, too, has to change with the times. That's very much why I've been saying, 'Beth Nesa?'/ 'What next?' for the children's commissioner? What is the proper role of a children's commissioner in 2015 and onwards?

[16] As I said in my introductory remarks, I think, I want to build on the work that's already been done by my predecessors by really emphasising the need to focus enough that I can have an impact on specific areas that are priorities for children's rights. So, there are some areas that affect all children and young people in Wales that I will want to press Government and

others on, but there are also many groups of children that have real difficulties in achieving their rights. You know the groups I'm talking about, the more vulnerable groups—looked-after children, children with disabilities and children living in poverty as well, which is a very big group, of course, in Wales—who will need extra attention in terms of reaching their rights.

[17] It would be unwise of me to try to tackle every issue that comes into my office every day, and one of the key reasons for doing the 'Beth Nesa'?' consultation is to help me prioritise. That doesn't mean that I'll do my work according to popular vote, because, actually, some of the most important rights issues are only known about a very small number of children and young people—perhaps issues affecting transgender young people, for example. But it will help me to work out, really, where we can best have impact. I'm really determined that work we do has a strong evidence base, and that evidence base will come from a number of sources. It will come from our casework, it will come from research that other people have done that we systematically gather in and sometimes it will come from our own thematic reviews. For example, you asked where we'll be in a year's time: we're just embarking on a thematic review of residential care, which, again, affects a small number of children and young people—only 5 per cent of looked-after children, who are 1 per cent of our child population—but they're a really vulnerable group, and a really important group for us to look at.

[18] So, I hope, in a year's time—to get back to the question—I will have a three-year strategic plan in place and a really strong evidence base for where that comes from and where it's going, and we will also have done lots of important work this year. We've already launched our 'My Planner' app for smartphones, for care leavers. We'll have done a media guide for lesbian and gay young people on how to challenge discrimination in the media. We'll have the very widespread evidence from the 'Beth Nesa'?' consultation and we'll have a thematic review on children in residential care, and that's just some of the work that we're doing this year.

09:45

[19] **Simon Thomas:** Diolch am hynny. Mae'n amlwg wrth wneud y gwaith yma rŷch chi'n gomisiynydd, rŷch chi'n gyfrifol am edrych ar maes gwaith a chraffu ar yr hyn y

Simon Thomas: Thank you for that. It's clear in doing this work that you're a commissioner, you're responsible for looking at this area of work, for scrutinising what other

mae pobl eraill yn ei wneud, ac rŷch chi'n dal pobl i gyfrif, ond nid ydych yn darparu gwasanaethau. Y Llywodraeth neu'r awdurdodau lleol, neu bwy bynnag, sy'n darparu'r gwasanaethau. Beth yw eich argraff chi, chwe mis i mewn i'r swydd, o'r berthynas allweddol yna, yn enwedig gyda'r Llywodraeth, ond, os yn briodol, hefyd gyda'r awdurdodau allweddol eraill? A ydych chi'n gysurus bod y berthynas honno'n un briodol, ym mhob ystyr y gair? Hynny yw, eich bod yn gallu herio'r Llywodraeth, ond eu bod nhw hefyd yn parchu beth y mae'r comisiynydd yn ei wneud a bod y gweithdrefnau yn eu lle i gynnal y berthynas honno mewn ffordd gadarnhaol.

people are doing and holding people to account, but you are not a provider of services. The Government or the local authorities, or whoever, provide the services. What is your impression, six months into the post, of those key relationships, especially with the Government, but, if appropriate, also with other key authorities? Are you comfortable that that relationship is an appropriate one, in every sense of the word? That is, that you are able to challenge the Government, but that they also respect what the commissioner is doing and that the procedures are in place to maintain that relationship in a positive way.

[20] **Dr Holland:** There are two things there: there is one about how the relationship is working at the moment, and there's the whole issue of my accountability and perceptions of my independence, et cetera. So, I'll talk about one and then the other. I think I've had a really positive start in my relationship with the Government and with local authorities and other providers, like the NHS, in that I've had, I think, really constructive but robust conversations with Ministers, including two meetings with the First Minister in my first six months, and lots of engagement with senior people and front-line practitioners and people receiving services out in local authorities. I think that I have been able to have really constructive conversations about where we need to go and my analysis of where we're at with children's rights in Wales is that we actually have some really quite strong underpinning legislation and policy. We're not there with all of it yet, because there are still legislative changes that I would like to see, but we do have some strong underpinning legislation and policy. A lot of the issues are around the implementation of it, and funding for the implementation of it, which is a central Government issue, often, but also making sure that there's even implementation of it across Wales. So, quite a lot of our casework that comes in—quite often, from AMs themselves contacting us—is about where children have rights in law or in guidance or policy, but they feel that at a local level it's not being implemented. So, actually quite a lot of our direction as an

office, I think, will have to be about making sure that the rights that children actually have securely in our law are actually being properly fulfilled.

[21] **David Rees:** I know you mentioned independence then, I think Suzy has a question on that.

[22] **Dr Holland:** Would you like me to move on to talk about—

[23] **David Rees:** Just to—

[24] **Suzy Davies:** [Inaudible.] It's fine.

[25] **Simon Thomas:** We will discuss independence a little more, but just on this, on meetings with Ministers and so forth, you said that you'd had a meeting—two, I think you said—with the First Minister, which is positive, I think. Do you attend Cabinet at all?

[26] **Dr Holland:** I haven't been invited to attend Cabinet. I don't know whether that's ever happened in the past.

[27] **Ms Thomas:** Previously, the commissioner used to attend the Cabinet sub-committee on children, when the committee was in existence, but hasn't attended Cabinet more recently.

[28] **Dr Holland:** One issue I've raised consistently with Government at all levels is the difficulty in identifying where children's issues are fully co-ordinated across Government. It's an issue that I have raised consistently. Although I report to the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, and obviously within her remit she covers some very important issues concerning children and young people in tackling poverty and housing, to name but two, there is no co-ordinating high-level committee across Government, but centrally—

[29] **Simon Thomas:** Well, there is and it's called the Cabinet.

[30] **Dr Holland:** Yes, and there's no specific children's Minister.

[31] **Simon Thomas:** No. Just to finish that on the Government's response, the report that you mentioned in your opening remarks made some key recommendations and we may discuss some of them this morning, but, overall, the response of the Government that I saw back in the summer

seemed to be a quite loose, generalist response rather than a very specific kind of one. Are you still engaged in trying to get more out of the Government in terms of responding to those individual—

[32] **Dr Holland:** Sorry; is this to the Mike Shooter report?

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

[34] **Dr Holland:** Okay. Yes. Obviously, the report was published at the end of last year. I think the Government obviously waited for me to come into post. Then, I met with the Minister early on in my appointment, really for an introductory meeting, but we did discuss the timetable for responding to the report, and we indicated to each other that it would be a staged response, because there were some things I could respond to immediately but some things I would need time to consider and to consult on. Similarly, I was informed that the Government would need to take time to consider some of the recommendations. If—

[35] **Simon Thomas:** Do you have a firm timetable of when they will come back, though?

[36] **Dr Holland:** I was given a timetable for when they would come back with a partial response, which we had—I think you were referring to that—at the beginning of the summer, wasn't it? But, now that I have published a full response to the review I would hope to get a full response back. I've only had one introductory meeting so far with the Minister, but I do have a full meeting with her on the twenty-fifth of this month, so I would expect that to be high up on the agenda.

[37] **Simon Thomas:** Okay. Diolch.

[38] **David Rees:** Okay. Suzy.

[39] **Suzy Davies:** Just to go back to the more general point about meeting with Ministers and so forth, I was looking at the report itself, which I appreciate relates to your predecessor, and in the section called 'Influencing', your predecessor does talk about speaking to Ministers and that. There is very little in the report about actually speaking to Assembly Members, and I wondered, in your sort of future look, whether you've got plans for more consistent and regular meetings with Assembly Members—or key Assembly Members, anyway.

[40] **Dr Holland:** Yes. I mean, obviously, we have a lot of contact with Assembly Members, especially through our casework, but I agree with you that it is a very constructive process to talk to Assembly Members, who've actually got a really good sense, as I do—. Simon mentioned earlier about not being a provider in one area and having an overview. In a way, Assembly Members also see a whole range of issues and, like me, you can see the gaps as well as the join-ups in terms of policies and where it's working well and where, perhaps, it isn't. Because we have the elections coming up in May, as you are aware, I've been meeting with all of the parties to talk about children's rights issues that I would like to see appearing in future programmes for government, and I found that to be a really constructive process to engage with Assembly Members from right across all of the parties. It's been a really constructive process and I certainly would like to consider carrying on in that vein, not just at election time.

[41] **Suzy Davies:** Well, I'm pleased to hear that because I know at least one of the other commissioners has quarterly meetings with at least the spokespeople, and that's a really good way of helping that individual commissioner take issues to the Government as well, so, it's you know—

[42] **Dr Holland:** I think that's a really helpful suggestion.

[43] **Suzy Davies:** —an arrow in the quiver, if you like. I just want to move on then to that question of independence. You've made your views fairly clear in your response to the Mike Shooter report on to whom you think your office should be accountable. Can you give us some indication of the conversations you've had with Ministers and perhaps with the Presiding Officer as well to see why there, perhaps, might be a difference of opinion there?

[44] **Dr Holland:** Okay. I think the Government itself has made it clear that their view is that it's worked well and that they're not minded to change the arrangements. You will be aware of my view on that. Although I have been clear that, in practice, my office hasn't felt interfered with by Government, it is a question of perception, which I think is quite important. The Government is really the main body that I'll be holding to account as commissioner, so there is a perception that the body that appoints me and funds me—that it would be difficult for me to hold them to account. I don't think that's been the case in practice, but I think perception is really important. In fact, in the general public, people often assume I'm part of Government as well, rather

than independent.

[45] **Suzy Davies:** Can I ask you specifically how, in that conversation with the Minister, she responded to the observation that there's an overwhelming majority who support your position on this? It's kind of uncomfortable for us to hear, 'Oh well, the Minister just didn't think that was important'. So, I presume there was a level of discussion about why the Minister didn't agree with the majority.

[46] **Dr Holland:** Yes, I mean, to be honest, as I say, I've only had one introductory meeting so far with the Minister, and I would expect us to be covering some of these details in more depth in our meeting on the twenty-fifth of this month, but we will be having six-monthly meetings throughout my term, although I have, obviously, also discussed it with some of her senior officials. I think the Government's view is that it's worked okay so far, so why change it? But as I say, my view is that it's important for perceptions, perceptions of transparency and also for my accountability as well. If I was appointed by the Assembly, I could be held more formally to account by the Assembly as well. At the moment, it is by arrangement rather than by any rule that we do this session every year, for example. I think that we could have more formal arrangements, and I think it would be perfectly possible. Of course, the United Nations itself and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in line with the Paris principles, would say that all children's commissioners should be appointed by the legislature rather than the executive. We know how we came to this because, at the beginning, with the first commissioner, there wasn't a separation of powers. So, it's a historic legacy, I suspect, rather than design, but I think it should be moved over. The UN committee thinks it should be moved over. In the list of issues that they sent to Government last week, after our private hearing in Geneva with commissioners and with children last month, they say to the UK Government, 'Will all commissioners be appointed by the legislatures?'

[47] **Suzy Davies:** Oh, right, so it's in the forefront of their minds as well. That's good. What about the Presiding Officer? Have you had an opportunity to discuss this particular point with her?

[48] **Dr Holland:** Yes, I've had a very constructive meeting with the Presiding Officer, at which we covered a great number of issues, as you can imagine, including this issue. My understanding is that she's in support of my office's position: that the appointments should be from the Assembly.

[49] **Suzy Davies:** Okay. That's great. Thank you. I've got one—

[50] **David Rees:** Can I ask one question before you go on?

[51] **Suzy Davies:** Oh, yes, of course.

[52] **David Rees:** You've indicated that you also had two meetings with the First Minister. Was this topic raised with the First Minister as well?

[53] **Dr Holland:** I'm just trying to recall exactly. I don't want to give the wrong impression. I think we touched on it in the very first meeting when we talked about Shooter review in general. That was when I was a week or two into the appointment, and he said that the Government would be responding. So, I haven't talked about it with him in any detail.

[54] **David Rees:** That's fine. Sorry, Suzy.

[55] **Suzy Davies:** Okay. Just to finish off on the Shooter report, really, I can see from the response that you gave to the report that you agree that the office shouldn't have any sanctioning powers in the future. In your response, though, it was literally just a line saying, 'I agree with what Mike Shooter said'. Can you give us some insight into why you don't think your office should be given more clout?

[56] **Dr Holland:** Well, there's a difference between clout, I suppose, and sanctioning powers. I would like the legislation surrounding my powers to be changed: I would like it to be tidied up. It's complex at the moment and in three different pieces of legislation. I would like it to be extended so that I clearly have responsibility for the rights of all children and young people in Wales on all matters. I think that's the most important legislative change I'd be looking for. At the moment, the sanctions that my office has, and that I have, are to name and shame, really. Actually, I think that can be a really effective sanction. I'm not sure that a sanction to fine, for example, in the current situation with budgets, et cetera, would be a very constructive way for me to work forward with local authorities, for example, or health boards or anyone else delivering public services to children and young people. I'm not sure that that would be a helpful way forward. We have the ombudsmen with those powers on specific individual cases.

[57] **Suzy Davies:** Well, can I ask you this, then? Because, actually I'm not clear on what your powers are on proactively going into, say, a local

authority—or it could be a health board—because you think, ‘Well, actually, we haven’t looked at these people and I’ve had some casework on this; I would really like to go in myself and do a root-and-branch review of a particular service’. You do have powers for that, I think. But if your findings were that or were dreadful, the naming and shaming thing, what sort of difference would that make?

10:00

[58] **Dr Holland:** Well, it would depend what kind of ‘dreadful’ we were talking about. If it was uncovering child protection issues, then there are, obviously, child protection routes that can be taken. I could certainly ask Government to step in if it was a local government issue, and would do so. We’ve worked with local authorities in the past where there seem to have been systemic issues and have created change at that level. Often, it’s better to do that not in a great wave of publicity, but to work constructively with them to make sure that all of the procedures are in place to make sure children are safe and have their rights fulfilled in that local authority. It’s the outcome for children that’s most important for my office.

[59] **Ms Thomas:** When you publish recommendations, local authorities have to provide a response to those recommendations—so, reports that are published, we would follow up those recommendations. We’ve done so with the ‘Lost After Care’ report, and, on an annual basis, authorities have to report back to us how they are progressing with developing their leaving care services. So, it’s a healthy tension of publishing clear recommendations that we expect to be acted on and then making sure that we follow those up. I, certainly, have had heads of children’s services saying to me, ‘We are continuing with our progress and efforts, and we know we will have to report that progress back to you’. So, I think there is a healthy tension and it’s a continued one in order to try and drive that change.

[60] **Suzy Davies:** Okay, thank you. Just to finish—it’s exactly on this point—how often do you get asked for advice by local authorities on how to ensure that children are, say, adequately consulted in whatever plan they’re thinking of at the time? We can do a note on this, if you like, because I don’t expect you to know off the top of your head.

[61] **Dr Holland:** Yes. I couldn’t tell you accurately how often, but it does occasionally happen. Certainly, more recently, many local authorities are thinking about how they may implement the UNCRC more effectively right

across their local authority. We've been involved in working with local authorities on that, helping them develop their schemes locally. Also, I have had leaders in local authorities come up to me and ask, 'What do you think is the most effective way forward on that?'. There are some really interesting examples—I saw Angela nodding there—and Pembrokeshire developed a really interesting model recently on how to implement the UNCRC in their area.

[62] **Suzy Davies:** Okay. Just a short answer was fine; thank you.

[63] **David Rees:** You've actually spurred some questions now. I've got Simon with a very short question, Aled with a very short question—*[Laughter.]*—then Lynne and then Keith.

[64] **Simon Thomas:** It is a short question, and specifically arises from what Suzy Davies was asking you about sanctions or further powers, because it strikes me that every organisation that you may be scrutinising or reporting on has a regulatory body, or some sanctioning body responsible for that organisation, anyway. So, are there any gaps that you've identified so far or— . By naming and shaming, you're drawing attention of the regulator to a failure by a public body—is that always the case, or are there missing bits?

[65] **Dr Holland:** I can't think of an example absolutely off the top of my head and I think that's really what my 'Beth Nesa'?' consultation is about, because it's with children and young people and with parents and with professionals. We've got a wealth of information coming from that, which we are just starting to sift through, but I think we will probably identify some gaps there for sure. Certainly, in terms of specific policy areas, we are seeing some gaps and I will be putting those into my plan for areas we want to work in over the next three years.

[66] **David Rees:** Aled.

[67] **Aled Roberts:** Rydych chi'n **Aled Roberts:** You refer to systemic cyfeirio at wendidau systemig o fewn rhai awdurdodau lle gofynnwyd i chi fynd i mewn. Yn yr achosion hynny, a ydych chi'n mynnu bod unrhyw adroddiad yn mynd yn ôl i'r aelodau etholedig, neu oes yna berig—? Rwy'n derbyn beth rydych chi'n ei

Aled Roberts: You refer to systemic weaknesses within some authorities that you've been required to go into. In those cases, do you insist that any report goes back to the elected members, or is there a risk—? I accept what you say, that you don't want publicity, but how do you

ddweud ynglŷn â nad ydych chi eisiau guarantee that the elected members
cyhoedduswydd, ond sut ydych chi'n are aware of the systemic
gwarantu bod yr aelodau etholedig weaknesses?
yn ymwybodol o'r gwendidau
systemig yna?

[68] **Dr Holland:** Okay. I'm going to just consult with my colleagues, because I haven't done any work with one particular authority since I took office.

[69] **Ms Thomas:** I think the point is well made and I think that, historically, some of the critical issues are when they're raising that dialogue with members. So, very much, in the past, the organisation has worked with both officers and members to highlight issues, and we would want to continue in that vein. Certainly, that has been the case in a number of authorities where members may not be aware. So, that certainly is how we would take that forward, Aled.

[70] **Aled Roberts:** Okay.

[71] **David Rees:** Lynne.

[72] **Lynne Neagle:** Yes, it was just on the example that you gave of where you had done a report, and then local authorities were required to report back; with the older person's commissioner, when they've done statutory reviews, all that information, every report back, is on their website. Do you make it public when the local authorities report back?

[73] **Dr Holland:** We haven't on all reports, but we have published summary reports that indicate the progress that is being made. But that's certainly a really useful and interesting example that we can consider.

[74] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you.

[75] **David Rees:** Keith, and then we'll move on to Angela.

[76] **Keith Davies:** Gwnaf ddilyn **Keith Davies:** I'll follow up on that
hynny lan yn gyntaf, achos rwy'n first, because I think that on Monday
credu ddydd Llun yr wythnos hon of this week the public services
oedd adroddiad comisiynydd commissioner's report came out and
gwasanaethau'r cyhoedd wedi dod was sent to us, and it comes out

mas a'i gael ei anfon atom, ac mae'n every three months. It mentions dod mas bob tri mis. Mae'n sôn am every case and it's worth reading. I bob achos, ac mae'n werth ei think every commissioner should do ddarllen. Byddwn i'n credu y dylai the same thing. That's just a bob comisiynydd wneud yr un peth. comment.
Ond jest sylw yw hynny.

[77] Beth rwyf eisiau gofyn ichi— What I'd like to ask is—Shooter also roedd Shooter yn dweud hefyd y says that your remit should be wider dylai'ch cylch gwaith chi fod yn fwy, because we're looking at children achos rŷm ni'n edrych ar les plant a and young people's welfare in Wales, phobl ifanc yng Nghymru, ond, wrth but, of course, not everything has gwrs, nid yw popeth wedi cael ei been devolved, and Shooter says that ddatganoli, ac mae Shooter yn dweud you should be looking at everything y dylech chi fod yn edrych ar bopeth that relates to children and young sy'n ymwneud â phlant a phobl ifanc people in Wales. Do you think that yng Nghymru. A ŷch chi'n credu y the Minister should change the dylai'r Gweinidog newid pethau ac situation and let you have that eich gadael chi i gael y gyfrifoldeb responsibility?
yna?

[78] **Dr Holland:** Yes, thank you. I'm aware of the ombudsman's casebook. I read the last quarter's one, and this quarter's one is sitting in my inbox to be opened. Of course, his role is different, and it is all about individual casework; we try to give a flavour of our casework in our annual report. But yes, you're correct. There are some anomalies in the issues that, under the legislation, I'm able to cover. My role is to serve the interests of all children and young people in Wales, and to limit it to just devolved issues is a real anomaly in terms of trying to promote the interests of all children. There's no reason, really, why it should be linked just to devolution. Examples are, of course, children involved in the criminal justice system, where I can get involved in aspects of their lives like their health, their housing and their welfare, but not in the criminal justice issues, and, similarly, with young people seeking asylum and refugees, I can get involved in some aspects of their lives, but not all. I think that causes confusion. I think it's a much better message to children and young people that I'm here as commissioner for all children on all issues, so I think that's one of the things that needs tidying up in the legislation.

[79] **David Rees:** Thank you. Angela.

[80] **Angela Burns:** Thank you. What other aspects, Sally, of legislation would you like to see changed going forward? I know that Mike Shooter touched on a number of areas.

[81] **Dr Holland:** Do you mean just concerning my role?

[82] **Angela Burns:** Sorry, concerning your role. I beg your pardon.

[83] **Dr Holland:** I could give you a shopping list of all the things I'd like to change in Wales. [*Laughter.*] The key issue is about—well, there are two things. One is the accountability issue, which we've already talked about in some depth, and the other thing is tidying up my role, making the powers clearer. So, my strongest powers in terms of holding Ministers to account, for example, are in three areas, three specific named areas: whistleblowing—

[84] **Ms Thomas:** Advocacy.

[85] **Dr Holland:** Advocacy and complaints. I do know it. [*Laughter.*] Whistleblowing, advocacy and complaints, and that, of course, is a legacy of the Waterhouse inquiry, where those were key concerns in that inquiry, and that's where my post comes from. There's a lot about my legislative basis that's a legacy of the very early days, so I think it would make sense for me to have the same level of power to hold Ministers, and others exercising powers for children right across public services, to have the same level of power for all of them on every topic concerning children and young people.

[86] **Angela Burns:** Would you see it going as far as perhaps being involved in the scrutiny of CRIAs? Sorry, CRIAs, not the other kind of—

[87] **Dr Holland:** Children's rights impact assessments.

[88] **Angela Burns:** Yes, the impact assessments, because I know it's something, for example, Lynne and I have discussed in this committee many times, the fact that children's rights impact assessments are not necessarily carried out in the most effective way that they could be. Would you actually see yourself going as far as that? And if you do, do you think that you're going to have to make a material change in the way that your office is run to be able to undertake that amount of extra work?

[89] **Dr Holland:** Well, I think that scrutinising the CRIAs is something that already would fall within the remit of my work. We are awaiting an

independent evaluation, I think, of the first wave of CRIAs under the Measure. I haven't seen the results of that yet, but I would fully expect my officers to be analysing CRIAs, where we get to see them and where they're made fully available. I think that's an important part of our analysis already.

[90] **Angela Burns:** Sorry, can I just ask you—and I do appreciate that you are new in to this role, but are you saying that that's the first time that CRIAs will have been looked at in some depth since we passed the 2011 legislation, and given that we now sit in 2015—?

[91] **Dr Holland:** I think it's the first evaluation—the first independent evaluation is to be reported on this autumn. That's my understanding.

[92] **Angela Burns:** Can you confirm whether or not your office have actually done work in this area? I appreciate that you've got an evaluation going, but—

[93] **Dr Holland:** With every piece of legislation that comes out, where there's a CRIA available, we would be scrutinising that and would be asking for it.

[94] **Angela Burns:** You are.

[95] **Dr Holland:** Oh, absolutely, as part—. I thought you were talking about systematic analysis of the quality right across them. We'll look at the independent evaluation when it comes out, but that may well be a piece of work that we need to carry forward in the future.

[96] **Angela Burns:** May I just touch on one other bit of potential legislative change? The Shooter review was quite open about the fact that you may want to consider the notion of looking at young people's issues up to the age of 25. It is a recommendation that you were fairly emphatically against, and I wonder if you would perhaps explain that a little bit further to us.

[97] **Dr Holland:** Absolutely. Of course, my remit does now cover young people who have been looked after up to 21, and, in fact, up to 25, if they remain in education, but, for the majority of children and young people in Wales, my remit covers them up to 18. That's because the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the main framework for my role and it clearly covers children and young people up to 18. I think that there are other levers for young adults to have their rights fulfilled through the Human

Rights Act 1998, for example, and through bodies like the Equality and Human Rights Commission. I must say that in my ‘Beth Nesa?’ consultation up until now, issues of transition to adulthood—and this will be familiar to lots of you from your own constituency casework—for young people who need some kind of continued help or care after they’re 18, whether that’s because of health needs or care needs, is a really key issue. It’s something that I’ve already raised with appropriate Ministers as a concern, the sort of cliff edge that many young people face at 18, and I would see that scrutiny of transition arrangements to adulthood as being fully within my remit. It’s been such a strong part, so far, of my consultation that I would expect it to feature in my programme of work in the future.

[98] **David Rees:** I know that Lynne wants to raise some questions on that process afterwards. We’ll come back to that.

[99] **Angela Burns:** I appreciate the logic behind your response. I think I would counter slightly with a concern I have that much of our legislative framework that we are putting into place is to deal with individuals up to 25, whether it’s the proposed Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill, whether it’s the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill—you know, the whole issue when we talk about looked-after children, we talk about all of the vulnerable groups, if you like, within our society. I did press the Minister on this a little and she did say that she would consider looking at specific groups and perhaps adding them into the mix. I wondered what your view was on that.

10:15

[100] I think I would also like to make a comment that Wales has generally been—you know, we’ve been very good at leading the field in so many ways and, without dissing the UNCRC, I wouldn’t like their limit to be our limitation. I fail to see why we can’t take it and go one better. Again, I’d just like your view on that.

[101] **Dr Holland:** Well, I do agree with you that there are some real vulnerabilities for many young adults but also, obviously, for many adults beyond 25 as well. In a lot of our legislative basis, which covers England and Wales, actually, such as the child protection legislation also, again there’s a specific cut-off at 18. I think a key part of my role, really, is to promote knowledge and awareness of children’s rights to children and young people, and I will need to be careful not to confuse the key message that children

and young people up to the age of 18 have specific international rights that must be upheld and that young people up to 18 do have some specific vulnerabilities as well that we need to take into account.

[102] **Angela Burns:** Finally, I suppose, I'd just like to pick up on a point you've just made and ask if you could perhaps expand a little bit on it. You were talking about the fact that you felt that your reach is to the pre-18 young people mostly. One of the recommendations was about having more of a national awareness campaign. Of course, the previous commissioner, to be fair, was out an awful lot actually promoting that with young people and organisations throughout Wales. What else do you think we could bring to that to really ensure that all young people pre-18 are really aware of the children's commissioner? I have to tell you that my just-turned 11-year-old has flung the fact that there's a Children's Commissioner for Wales into my face on one occasion when I reprimanded her for something, so she certainly knew her rights. [*Laughter.*]

[103] **Dr Holland:** I'm so pleased to hear that. [*Laughter.*] I'm not sure I really want my name taken in vain like that as a threat, but I'm so glad she knew that she had rights—

[104] **Angela Burns:** She certainly did—

[105] **Dr Holland:** —and that there was a commissioner.

[106] **Angela Burns:** She knew she had rights.

[107] **Dr Holland:** Actually, I think we're doing quite well in primary schools. There are a number of bodies that have a responsibility for this. I have a responsibility for making sure that children and young people know about their rights, so do many parts of the voluntary sector, and Children in Wales have some specific funding around that. But the Welsh Government, of course, has a strong responsibility to promote children's rights under the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011. And, in fact, my office, Children in Wales and the appropriate Government officials have been doing some planning around how we can best co-ordinate our work and make sure we're not overlapping or making the same efforts etc. But, really, I think the Government has the main drivers for promoting this. Although I and my office do an enormous amount of work—we've got super ambassadors who promote my office and children's rights in over 200 primary schools, for example, and we're expanding that into secondary

schools, I've got community ambassadors with all sorts of specialist groups, and we work really hard on all of this—I think the Government's got the main drivers and that's got to be through the curriculum and making it a really strong part of the curriculum.

[108] We've got a great opportunity now with the Donaldson review—which puts wellbeing and rights at the heart of the curriculum, to my great delight, I have to say—for schools to be much more systematically talking about rights, so not just one personal and social education lesson where they say, 'You've got 42 rights and this is what they are' but to actually understand what that means for your everyday life. That's something that can be built in right through and across the curriculum, so not just one specialist area. I've seen some schools do that so well. We've got links with some really fantastic schools that have built in an understanding of rights and what that would mean in all aspects of the curriculum, and you see that working really well. So, that's what I'd like to see.

[109] I've had lots of conversations with young people, let's say perhaps coming towards the end of their school years or at FE colleges, who say, 'We wish we'd known about all this earlier'. Some of them will say, 'We had one lesson about rights, but I didn't really understand what it meant. It was just a lesson.' They've been quite strong—when they've understood what rights mean and how it actually underpins all sorts of other aspects of their lives, they can be really passionate about how they wish they'd known more about it earlier. So, I think I have a responsibility but so, certainly, does Government, to make sure that it really underpins how we bring up our children and that they understand that it's there.

[110] **David Rees:** We need to move on, but I'm going to give Aled one small last question before we move on.

[111] **Aled Roberts:** O ran deddfu, **Aled Roberts:** In terms of legislating, mae Llywodraeth Prydain wastad the UK Government has always wedi gwrthwynebu'r hyn a rejected what Keith said in terms of ddywedodd Keith ynghylch ymestyn extending your responsibilities to eich cyfrifoldebau chi i feysydd nad non-devolved areas, by saying that ydynt wedi'u datganoli, gan ddweud that would undo the Government of y byddai hynny'n dadwneud Deddf Wales Act. Have there been any Llywodraeth Cymru. A oes unrhyw discussions with the Welsh drafodaethau wedi cymryd lle gyda Government or with the Secretary of Llywodraeth Cymru neu gyda'r State in terms of including some

Ysgrifennydd Gwladol ynglŷn â changes within the draft Wales Bill?
chynnwys rhai newidiadau o fewn y
Bil Cymru drafft?

[112] **Dr Holland:** Well, of course, I'm not party to any discussions, if there have been any specifically about the children's commissioners role—

[113] **Aled Roberts:** You've not been approached, though.

[114] **Dr Holland:** No, I haven't. I am aware that the children's commissioner is mentioned in the Wales Bill and we have sought legal advice, actually, on the request of this committee itself, on our role.

[115] **Mr Dafydd:** And we'll be following up with a note on that in due course this week.

[116] **Aled Roberts:** Right. Okay.

[117] **David Rees:** We are anticipating the response before the next meeting.

[118] **Dr Holland:** Yes. We've just received advice on that. My understanding is that, at the moment, under the current settlement, the Welsh Assembly would be able to legislate on that. That's the legal advice that we have. But the Wales Bill, as it stands—and, of course, we know it could well change in many ways—I think, could make it more complicated rather than easier to legislate. That is my quick answer on that.

[119] **David Rees:** Okay. Thank you for that. I want to move on now to the next two areas. Lynne, you ask your questions on casework, and then if you want to move on to policy areas as well.

[120] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Thank you. Yes, with casework, one of the things that Mike Shooter highlighted was that there needed to be clear criteria for which cases were taken up by your office. I know that I'm not the only member of this committee that has had a variable response when I've contacted your office—not you personally, obviously. With casework, there are some things we've had absolutely loads of help with; with other things we've hit a brick wall. So, I just wanted to ask you, really, how you see that aspect of the work being taken forward.

[121] **Dr Holland:** Yes, we do have—and I've, in fact, recently reviewed it—

clear operational guidance on this. We have recently reviewed it as well. I suppose that the most important reason why we would take a case on or not is whether it's within our remit. We've already discussed this morning that there are some restrictions on our remit. Our office often will be trying to reach the quickest resolution of any issue for children and young people. So, often, it was more appropriate for something to be dealt with at a lower level more quickly. That's another reason why we might signpost people on to somewhere else. We will take on cases where they will have possibly wider significance—and we've a good opportunity, because we have cases from all around Wales, to see the connection, sometimes, between cases—and where a child or young person has sort of reached the end of the line in terms of complaints processes or just trying to get a service.

[122] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. In terms of following up the cases, what evidence do you have that where you are intervening you are delivering positive outcomes for children?

[123] **Dr Holland:** Okay. So, already, when I started, our investigation advice service had just developed a new system for systematically recording and logging. Of course, they were already logged, but it's been reviewed and changed a little to make sure that we can do that. I'm very keen to systematise and fully analyse the very rich material that actually comes in through our case material—the casework—to make sure that we both see whether individually we've been able to help that child or young person, first of all, but also whether it has implications for wider policy issues and whether we should follow and can follow through on that. It's going to be an important part of my plan going forward that we are recording and analysing our impact.

[124] **Ms Thomas:** I think it's worth just adding that we have introduced a system of, when cases are concluded, actually doing a synopsis and making sure that we've got the analysis at that point. I think that the points made in committee this morning about casebooks, and also regular opportunities to meet with Assembly Members to discuss the case material, are really important. I think that we would illustrate some of the systemic ways of working through some of the work that we've worked on—individual cases with children and young people in the looked-after system that helped us give our evidence on the scrutiny of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Bill. Within that process, we did publish a casebook for that very reason. Equally, we've had a number of cases this year in relation to safe routes to

school, and that equally has helped us to influence the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. But, we need to make sure that we are consistently feeding that back to you.

[125] **Dr Holland:** In terms of the individual cases, we're bringing in a system where we will regularly carry out evaluations with children and young people, and the people who care about them, who have contacted the service. So, we've already started doing a regular call-back to people to see whether they were satisfied with the service and whether their issue was resolved et cetera.

[126] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you.

[127] **David Rees:** Just before Lynne goes on to the next question, the balance of those referrals was highlighted by Mike Shooter, and I think it was 501 to about 39 from adults and children. Have you analysed those figures to understand where the issues are arising and why they're arising from adults more than children? Is that the type of balance you would expect to have for referrals?

[128] **Dr Holland:** So, you're talking about the balance of adults contacting us.

[129] **David Rees:** Of the referrals, yes.

[130] **Dr Holland:** I think that we've had a fairly consistent level of children and adults referring cases to us over the years and it's always been a minority of cases where children have contacted us directly. I have to say that I think that that's to be expected, and, in fact, I feel heartened by the fact that there are adults there who are concerned enough—and it's usually parents, often parents, but not just parents—and feel able to contact us on their behalf. The situation of the children and young people who need our help is often that they're very vulnerable; they're often disabled et cetera. It's quite a big barrier for them to contact us directly, although some do. One of the first things we do when a caller contacts us is to check that the child or young person is aware of the call and that they're happy with us proceeding, and as we proceed, we will always try and make sure that we're aware of the child or young person's views and speak to them directly if we can.

[131] **David Rees:** So, the balance of roughly 10:1, which is near enough to what it is, is an expected type of balance, effectively.

[132] **Dr Holland:** My view is that that should be expected because of the nature of the calls that we take. Having said that, we do, and will continue, to promote our services directly to children and young people. Whenever I go out and talk to children and young people, I tell them about the service and tell them that they can phone it directly. I'll continue to keep an eye on that and monitor it.

[133] **David Rees:** Okay. Lynne?

[134] **Lynne Neagle:** Do you want me to go on to child and adolescent mental health services now?

[135] **David Rees:** Go on to the policy issues, yes.

[136] **Lynne Neagle:** Ok; thank you. On CAHMS, you've said in your report that it is extremely concerning that it is again necessary for the office to highlight CAHMS as an area in need of significant attention, in both policy and service development. Well, amen to that, because CAHMS has been in every single commissioner's report that I've ever seen, and I've been here a long time now. I just wanted to ask a couple of questions, really. The Welsh Government is looking at this whole area. To what extent are you involved in the work that the Welsh Government is doing, and what kind of outcomes do you want to see?

[137] **Dr Holland:** It's a really important issue for me, and as you indicate, has been for many years for my office. The reason it's appeared every year is because it hasn't been sorted out yet, and it's really been important to keep highlighting it; I know it's been a really important theme for this committee over the last couple of years. Ever since I started, really, from day one, from before I started even, people have been contacting me and talking to me about child and adolescent mental health and wellbeing more generally. And, I think one of the complex issues here is that it is more than just the clinical needs, isn't it? There's a wider issue of prevention and early intervention as well.

[138] The Together for Children and Young People programme that's been announced, I do have some involvement in. I'm an independent member of the expert advisory group for Professor Dame Sue Bailey, and I'm really keen, as part of that role, to make sure that children and young people's experiences and perspectives play a central role in any reforms that come

forward, firstly, and secondly that we actually see some change and some better outcomes for children and young people. I do think it's a complex issue; it's not something for which we have any quick fix.

10:30

[139] I support the approach of the Together for Children and Young People programme, because I like the fact that it's tackling things on a range of issues—it's looking at early intervention and prevention, as well as the acute clinical needs, and all of these are really important.

[140] We must address the waiting lists, for example, and we must address access-to-clinical issues, but, if we just try and address that, we won't actually address the wider issue, and the reason why all these referrals are coming in, which is because there's not enough early intervention. There's not enough, first of all, prevention—making sure that we're helping children and young people to feel robust and resilient in coping with the stresses and strains of everyday life. Secondly, there's not enough primary care where children and young people need it—which isn't in clinics—until they become very ill; it's out in the community, doing early intervention work and help, perhaps when they're starting to feel a bit distressed, or having early difficulties. And then, we also need to get the clinical services right as well. I think you're very well versed on these issues as a committee.

[141] We know there's no quick fix, but we also know that we need to see change—we cannot keep going with this sort of systemic anxiety about CAMHS for more and more years. And, in my 'Beth Nesa?' consultation, it's been a really, really strong theme coming to me from children and young people. So, I've talked to children and young people in schools and colleges, for example, who say they would like more knowledge about mental health issues, and more help early on when they're perhaps feeling anxious about exams, or about family issues, or relationships. I've also visited young people in both of the NHS in-patient units—the one in the south, and the one in the north—since I started, and had really useful conversations with young people there about what might have helped them, what might have helped them earlier.

[142] In fact, on my visit a couple of weeks ago to the north Wales unit, I spoke to some very interesting and articulate young people, who said—I thought, when I asked them what might have helped earlier, they might have talked specifically about clinical issues, and psychiatry, and that kind of

thing, but they said, 'We wish there was more in school early on; we wish there'd been more early support for our health, more people to look out for us when we were just starting to have problems with eating', or whatever the issue was for them. So, I thought that was very wise of them to see it as an early preventative issue. So, I don't think there's a quick fix. I'm keeping a close eye on it, I'm having lots of conversations about it, at all levels of Government, and I'll be watching—as you will, I know—the outcomes of Together for Children and Young People very, very carefully.

[143] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. You referred in your answer to waiting times, which are a major concern. I've got several cases at the moment of young people who are waiting on a neuro-developmental waiting list for autistic spectrum diagnosis, and the waiting time is 18 months, which is a huge chunk of a child's life at a time when, you know, they're doing their GCSEs—things like that. Have you got any comments on what you'd like to see in terms of more appropriate waiting times for children and young people?

[144] **Dr Holland:** I think 18 months is completely unacceptable, and I've heard that as well, on many occasions. I think, as children's commissioner, a big concern for me is actually the imbalance between children and adults on this issue. Actually, I take this statistic from your own report, but we know that the vast majority—I think over 90 per cent—of those waiting more than 18 months for mental health services are children and young people. That, to me, feels like a basic inequality that isn't right. It's something that was in our report to the UNCRC, it's something that's come back in the list of issues, because it's not, of course, just a Wales issue—it's a whole UK issue, and the issues are very similar, right across the UK, and it's come back to the UK and the devolved Governments, to answer to the specific issue of waiting lists. It is waiting lists, isn't it, that I mentioned specifically in the list of issues? I think it's a huge concern.

[145] But, as I say, we can't just fix that, we need to fix things earlier down the line as well. And there are issues in neuro-developmental disorder as well. I'm really aware that children and young people often need to wait for a diagnosis to open up access to other services. But, often, once they have the diagnosis, there can be a wait then for those, like speech and language therapy, et cetera. I am constantly raising it. I will be keeping a close eye on the statistics on this, and we all must see change. I do feel it's unacceptable.

[146] **Ms Thomas:** I think it's worth just adding that we were fortunate to have a member of the UN committee visit Wales in September, and one of the

groups of children and young people she met were young people who were able to talk about their experiences of mental health services. Both Sally and the UN committee member were challenged very strongly by one young man at the end of the session, who said, 'Are you going to be like everyone else? We've seen you, and you're going to go away and we're not going to see anything from you again'. The committee member said very strongly, actually, 'I will be examining the UK state party and governments in May/June next year, and I will be asking why they think it's acceptable for young people in the UK to be waiting 18 months to have mental health services'. So, it's a very strong message from all quarters that change is needed.

[147] **Lynne Neagle:** So, are you confident that this latest initiative, then, is going to be the one that means we're not going to have CAMHS in your report next year, and the year after, and the year after that?

[148] **Dr Holland:** It certainly will be in my report next year, but I hope we'll be reporting some progress. I'm really keen—I've made this clear to the Minister, and I think, to be fair, this is his wish as well—that the current initiative is not just another restatement of the problems. It has to be solution-focused and it has to have outcomes. There is some new money that has gone into services, which is, of course, welcome, Whether it can deliver the kind of change that we need, I think the jury's open on that, at the moment.

[149] **David Rees:** Okay. Simon, you also wanted to mention this.

[150] **Simon Thomas:** Ie, jest ar y pwynt yna, rŷch chi wedi cyffwrdd ar hwn eisoes, ond roeddwn i eisiau gofyn ychydig bach yn fwy. Mae'n amlwg nad yw hwn yn faes sydd wedi'i gyfyngu i Gymru; mae hwn yn faes dros Brydain gyfan, fel rŷch chi newydd gyfeirio ato, ac yn faes, efallai, i'r gorllewin, a dweud y gwir. Mae'r ffaith ein bod ni'n cydnabod anghenion iechedd meddwl ymysg pobl ifanc ac yn paratoi ar gyfer cwrdd â'r gofynion yna—chi'n gwytbod, mae yna fwlch sylweddol rhwng y cydnabod a'r paratoi, ac yn

Simon Thomas: Just on this point, you have mentioned this already, but I wanted to expand on it. It's clear that this is an area that is not limited to Wales; it's a UK-wide issue, as you've just said, and perhaps, specifically, for the west. The fact that we acknowledge the needs of young people with mental health issues, and are preparing to meet those needs—clearly there's a large gap there between recognising a problem and preparing to deal with it, especially regarding early intervention. Are you holding

enwedig o ran ymyrraeth gynnar, fel rŷch chi'n ei ddweud. A ydych chi'n cynnal trafodaethau, felly, gyda chomisiynwyr plant eraill yn y Deyrnas Gyfunol ynglŷn â'r materion hyn, ac a oes yna unrhyw waith yn cael ei gydlynu, gan taw'r Deyrnas Gyfunol yw'r wladwriaeth sy'n atebol o ran yr hawliau, a pha fath o gamau sy'n cael eu gwneud, felly, i ddod â hwn yn fwy o fater trafod cyhoeddus? Achos, yn y pen draw, oni bai bod yna drafod cyhoeddus am y materion hyn, nid oes adnoddau'n cael eu rhoi i'r broblem, ac nid yw'r gefnogaeth yn cael ei doddi yn ei lle.

discussions with other children's commissioners in the United Kingdom about this issue? Is there any other work being co-ordinated, given that the United Kingdom is the accountable area in relation to rights, and what sort of steps are being taken to make this an issue for public discussion? Ultimately, without discussion in the public arena about this, no resources will be put into the issue and no support will be provided either.

[151] **Dr Holland:** Yes, I worked straight away, as soon as I came into office, with the other UK commissioners, obviously, on a whole range of issues to do with the UNCRC report on mental health. Actually, when we came to report to the UNCRC, we split up the issues that we were going to discuss, and mental health was one of the ones that I offered to present on, so I genned up on issues on mental health right across the UK, and that's why I can confidently say that many of the challenges are very similar across the UK. There are some different approaches in terms of responding to that, but they're very similar.

[152] In terms of public discussion, I know the UK Youth Parliament has recently done their own inquiry into it. It's a very live issue for young people. They discuss it very openly and it's a key concern for young people. Very many of them have either experienced some kind of mental health problem themselves or they know someone who has, so it is a key issue for them. In terms of learning across the UK, I think we should be learning across the UK and we should be looking wider than that at international evidence on how we can best help children and young people. There is evidence that there are some programmes, group therapies, individual therapies et cetera, which do make a difference and do help, and we can learn from international reviews of evidence on that, and we must.

[153] I think we must be careful not to just grasp at any potential solution, 'Oh, this looks like an interesting programme, let's implement this in all our

schools'. I'm very keen that we work from a strong evidence base. In fact, you can do more harm than good if you try and implement a group programme on self-harm, for example, if you're not doing it in the right way. There are programmes that we know help with self-harm and suicide, for example, but we also know there are some that seem to make the situation worse, so I think we need to learn from across the UK and internationally on how best to tackle this. It's not just a Wales issue.

[154] **David Rees:** We'll move on, then, to Keith.

[155] **Keith Davies:** Wrth symud ymlaen, os yw CAMHS wedi bod yn broblem i chi—ac rwy'n edrych ar eich adroddiad chi—yr achosion mwyaf rŷch chi wedi eu cael yw anghenion addysgol arbennig. Mae'r broblem honno wedi bod yn mynd am flynyddoedd maith; yn sicr, yn fy amser i yn y byd addysg, roedd e'n broblem enfawr. Rŷm ni'n mynd nawr i ddiwygio beth sydd gyda ni'n barod. Roeddwn i'n darllen—eich adroddiad chi oedd e, rwy'n credu—lle roedd newid enw, mor belled ag oedd un plentyn yn y cwestiwn, yn dweud, 'Wel, nid yw newid enw yn mynd i wneud dim. Beth yw'r gefnogaeth rŷm ni'n mynd i'w chael?'. A ydy beth rŷm ni'n mynd i'w drafod dros y misoedd i ddod yn ddigonol o ran edrych ar ofynion plentyn? A ydy e'n mynd i effeithio ar hawliau plant? A ydych chi wedi bod yn edrych ar hyn ar barod? Rŷm ni, fel pwyllgor, yn sicr yn edrych arno.

Keith Davies: Moving on, if CAMHS has been a problem for you—and I look at your report—the largest cases you've had is SEN cases, and that problem has been going on for many years; certainly, when I was in the field of education, that was a major problem. We're going to reform what we have already, and I was reading—I don't know if it was your report—that there was a change of name, as far as one child was concerned. Well, that change of name is not going to make any difference. What's the support that they're going to have? Is what we're going to discuss over the coming months going to be adequate in terms of looking at children's requirements? Is it going to affect the rights of children? Have you been looking at this already? We as a committee are certainly looking at this issue.

[156] **Dr Holland:** Absolutely, I agree it's a really important concern, and again, another issue that's been a very strong feature of my consultation, and obviously of my office's policy work, because there's a lot of policy activity, as you indicated, around special educational needs, which are going to be termed 'additional learning needs'. Young people are our best cynics,

often, in saying, ‘What difference will that make?’, and it is a good point, although actually I do agree that it is a better term, ‘additional learning needs’. But that young person was quite right to say there’s got to be a bit more substance than that.

[157] I do support the general thrust of where we’re going with additional learning needs. I hope we will move forward swiftly in the new Government to bring forward new legislation. It’s certainly needed, and I’m pleased that there’s cross-party support on that, because it would be good for that to happen, whatever the shape of the new Government in May. There are some areas that we’d like to see strengthened in terms of the additional learning needs proposals at the moment. We’d like to see the UNCRC due-regard duty being there for all people exercising functions under the Act, to make sure that children’s views and children’s voices are absolutely central. I’d like to see a strengthening, really, of duties for agencies to work together for disabled children and those with additional learning needs, and this will be an issue again that the committee’s quite familiar with. I’ve met with many disabled children and young people and their parents and carers and professionals working with them since I started in post, and, of course, one of their key frustrations might be that lots of people agree with what the child needs, what care they need and what their educational needs are, but actually there’s a whole big other step to be done to make sure that everyone agrees who’s going to provide it, who’s going to pay for it, and when it’s going to come.

[158] So, I would like to see that there’s guidance about how agencies should work together in the proposals for the ALN Bill, but I’d like to see particularly a strengthening of duties about health services to make sure that there’s statutory guidance requiring them to work with social services and education services, to make sure that children don’t get lost between these big institutions—that there’s a proper joined-up service. Where it works well, we can see that it can work very well, but, of course, we want every disabled child across Wales to have the same level of service.

[159] **Mr Dafydd:** Mae’n werth nodi hefyd y byddwn ni’n rhannu’n hymateb i’r ddeddfwriaeth, wrth iddi ddatblygu, â’r pwyllgor, ac yn cadw mewn cysylltiad. **Mr Dafydd:** It’s also worth noting that we’ll share our response to the legislation, as it develops, with the committee, and we’ll be keeping in contact on this issue.

[160] **Keith Davies:** Mae’n bwysig **Keith Davies:** It’s very important,

iawn, achos un o'r pethau yn fy mhrofiad i yw, ambell waith, os rŷm ni'n mynd i ateb i ofynion y plentyn, mae'n rhaid i'r plentyn symud 100 milltir neu fwy, ac wedyn, mor belled ag y mae'r teulu yn y cwestiwn, mae'n gwneud pethau'n anodd iawn.

because one of the things in my experience is that, sometimes, if we're going to respond to the needs of the child, the child has to move 100 miles or more, and as far as the family's concerned, that makes things very difficult.

[161] **David Rees:** Okay, thank you. We move on now to Lynne—do you want to ask a question on the 'When I'm Ready' scheme?

[162] **Lynne Neagle:** Yes, specifically on housing, you've been talking on the radio this morning, and you made reference to the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for 16 and 17-year-olds, and you're probably aware that it's an issue I've highlighted recently for a group of homelessness charities. The Government has said that they're looking at it, but clearly there needs to be a strong move now from Welsh Government to prevent local authorities using B&B accommodation. We know that the use is very variable: in some local authorities, it's not being used at all, and in others, the use is very high. I just wanted you to comment on that and on whether that's something that you would look to be taking forward with Welsh Government.

10:45

[163] **Dr Holland:** I certainly don't think that bed-and-breakfast accommodation is a suitable place for 16 and 17-year-olds. Whether they're care leavers or not, if they need bed-and-breakfast accommodation, they're vulnerable and it's certainly not appropriate. Of course, young people will say, 'And it's not even bed and breakfast; they don't even give you any breakfast.' I've heard young people saying that they're really dirty, insecure places, where they have to be out for many hours in the day and they wander around—these are vulnerable young people—and there are no cooking facilities and they're in poverty. I think we're all in agreement that that's not a suitable situation for children and young people.

[164] What we need is a really comprehensive housing plan for vulnerable young people, including care leavers. Young people will have really varied needs: some will have high support needs and some will just need somewhere secure to live. So, we need local planning to make sure that there's a suitable range of accommodation for children and young people. Obviously, sometimes, you have emergencies, but there are some really good

examples, for example, of night-stop accommodation with vetted families, for exactly those kind of emergencies, which we'd like to see widespread right across Wales. I met people providing it in Ynys Môn recently and there are good examples there and in Gwynedd and elsewhere. There are good alternatives that we should be developing and I just think that, as a society, we should be saying that this is not acceptable for our most vulnerable children and young people.

[165] **David Rees:** Aled, you wanted to come in on this section.

[166] **Aled Roberts:** Cawsom gyfarfod yr wythnos diwethaf efo'r elusennau ac i ddweud y gwir roedd yn frawychus bod yna ferch—rwy'n meddwl ei bod hi wedi dweud ei bod yn 15 oed pan gafodd ei rhoi mewn llety gwely a brecwast—yn dweud ei bod hi wedi cael ei rhoi mewn llety lle'r oedd yna bobl efo problemau alcohol a phroblemau cyffuriau, ac roedd yn ymddangos nad oedd unrhyw fath o brawf wedi'i wneud ynglŷn â diogelwch y plentyn cyn iddi gael ei rhoi yn y sefyllfa yna. Wrth gofio beth ddywedodd Lynne, sef bod rhai cynghorau lle nad oes un plentyn wedi cael ei rhoi yn y fath sefyllfa, eto rwy'n meddwl fod Cyngor Sir Bwrdeistref Merthyr Tydfil, fel enghraifft, wedi rhoi dros 60 y cant o bobl ifanc ynddi.

Aled Roberts: We had a meeting last week with the charities and to tell the truth it was frightening that a girl—I think she said she was 15 years old when she was placed into bed-and-breakfast accommodation—was saying that she had been placed in accommodation where there were people with alcohol problems and drug problems, and it appeared that no kind of test was done regarding her safety before she was put in that position. Remembering what Lynne said, namely that there are some authorities, where no children have been put in that position, yet I think that Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, as an example, has put over 60 per cent of young people into it.

[167] Felly, rwy'n tybio bod yna ffaeledau systemig yn rhai o'r adrannau tai yma ac, i ddweud y gwir, o fewn rhai o'r adrannau gwasanaethau cymdeithasol yn yr awdurdodau yna. Felly, a fydech yn barod i edrych ar y ffigurau lle mae yna orddefnydd yn cael ei wneud o lety gwely a brecwast? Nid wyf yn

So, I assume that there are systemic failures in some of these housing departments and, to tell you the truth, within some of the social services departments in those authorities. So, would you be prepared to look at those figures, where too much use is made of bed-and-breakfast accommodation? I

meddwl bod hynny'n dderbyniol, hyd don't think that that's acceptable, yn oed ar gyfer pobl ifanc sy'n 16 even for young people who are 16 or neu 17. Ond i feddwl bod yna blant 17 years old. But to think that 14–14 oed yn cael eu rhoi yn y fath year-olds are being put in that sefyllfa—rwy'n meddwl fod hynny'n situation—I think that's definitely a achos pryder i ni fel Aelodau matter of concern for us as Assembly Cynulliad. Members.

[168] **Dr Holland:** Absolutely. That is a concern in the report. I've not had any cases of children under the age of 16 being brought to my attention.

[169] **Aled Roberts:** This was a young girl from Denbighshire who stood up in a meeting.

[170] **Dr Holland:** Okay. I have certainly heard many young people talking about how frightened they felt about other adults in the accommodation that they've been in.

[171] There was a really useful report published this week by the Public Policy Institute for Wales. It was actually about care leavers, but their suggestion for how we move forward in terms of having a comprehensive plan for housing for vulnerable young people, I think, is a useful one. Those reports by the institute are commissioned by the Government, so I hope the Government will be looking at the recommendations there. I think there's a real opportunity for the third sector, for housing associations and for housing departments to work closely with children's services to make sure that they plan adequately for the needs of the local population. If some local authorities are having to use bed and breakfast so regularly and so systematically, then they should be able to anticipate that, and they should be able to provide alternatives. We do have good examples from other local authorities. I think an important part of my role is to ensure that children and young people have a consistent service across Wales. We don't just want pockets of good practice. We need to have children and young people having the same rights and entitlements wherever they live in Wales.

[172] **Aled Roberts:** A gaf i jest **Aled Roberts:** Can I just move to one symud at un maes arall, sef tloidi other area, namely child poverty? You plant? Roeddech yn cyfeirio yn referred earlier that this is a matter gynharach bod hwn yn achos o of concern for us, and I am sure that bryder i ni, ac rwy'n siŵr bod pob all Members here share that concern. Aelod yma yn rhannu'r pryder I accept that you have had only one

hwnnw. Rwy'n derbyn mai dim ond un cyfarfod yr ydych wedi ei gael hyd yma efo'r Gweinidog penodol sydd yn gyfrifol am dlodi plant, ond a ydych yn meddwl bod gennych ddigon o gyfle i gynnal trafodaeth efo'r Gweinidog ynglŷn â'r cynnydd y mae angen ei wneud? Mae yna sôn am gael cynllun gweithredol penodol ar gyfer tlodi plant yn y dyfodol. A ydych chi'n fodlon erbyn hyn bod yna ddigon o egni yn cael ei roi i mewn i'r broses honno, ac a ydych yn meddwl bod gennych ran allweddol i'w chwarae wrth ddatblygu'r cynllun gweithredol penodol?

meeting thus far with the specific Minister responsible for child poverty, but do you think that you have sufficient opportunity to have discussions with the Minister in relation to the progress that needs to be made? There is talk of a specific action plan for child poverty in the future. Are you now satisfied that sufficient energy is being put into that process, and do you think that you will have a key part to play in developing that particular plan?

[173] **Dr Holland:** Certainly, child poverty and the Government's response to it is on the agenda for our meeting on the twenty-fifth, and I'm looking forward to having quite an in-depth conversation with the Minister about the issues. Obviously, there are lots of levels where child poverty is tackled, and lots of different levers. So, obviously, I've publicly, with the other children's commissioners, expressed concern about some of the UK developments in terms of child tax credit and changes to how child poverty will be measured; but the Welsh Government itself has levers for tackling child poverty and they are the ones that I'll be particularly talking to the Minister about. There are the specific programmes, which I want to discuss with her, particularly Flying Start and its coverage, and other anti-poverty programmes, but I would also like to see a more specific plan on child poverty, with more specific goals and outcomes for children from the Government.

[174] **Aled Roberts:** Can I raise one other issue? The Public Accounts Committee has been looking at welfare reform in general and some of the issues that you raise. I think one of the major concerns currently is the changes, basically, to housing benefit for 16 and 17-year-olds. There was concern that neither the Welsh Government nor local authorities had any understanding, really, of the scale of the potential impact of those changes. Are you content yourself that there's sufficient data held because, obviously, all we can do is respond to the changes that are implemented at a UK level, but without knowing what the impact, or the potential impact, of those changes are, it's quite difficult to plan.

[175] **Dr Holland:** You're right. That's a really important analysis that must be done. I can't say off the top of my head whether I'm satisfied. I would have to look at those data. But I will raise that issue with the Minister when I meet her in three weeks' time.

[176] **David Rees:** Do any other Members have questions? Simon.

[177] **Simon Thomas:** Rydym yn sgubo lan ychydig fân bethau, efallai, nawr, ond pethau sydd yn dal i fod yn bwysig, ac y maent wedi'u nodi yn eich adroddiad. Mewn ateb gynnu i mi ynglŷn ag iechyd meddwl, roeddech yn sôn am waith Senedd leuencid y Deyrnas Gyfunol. Mae'n amlwg bod y penderfyniad i dynnu'r gefnogaeth ar gyfer senedd i bobl ifanc yng Nghymru, yn benodol, a doddi yn ei lle gynllun cyfranogiad—fel mae'n cael ei alw, rwy'n credu—i gael ei wneud gan blant yng Nghymru. Mae'r adroddiad blynyddol yn nodi pryder ynglŷn â'r datblygiad yna. Ers hynny, a ydych chi wedi cynnal trafodaethau ar y cynllun newydd, ac a ydych chi o'r farn bod y cynllun hwn yn mynd i roi llais i bobl ifanc yn y broses ddemocrataidd ac mewn ffordd sy'n ystyrlon iddynt hwy, nid yn unig fel bod eich swydd chi yn ymateb i broblemau neu fethiannau yn y system, ond fel bod llais pobl ifanc yn cael ei gynnwys yn y ffordd y mae penderfyniadau yn cael eu gwneud ar draws cymunedau cyfan lle maent yn byw?

Simon Thomas: We are sweeping up on some of minor issues now, perhaps, but important issues no less, and they have been noted in your report. In an earlier response to me about mental health, you were talking about the work of the UK Youth Parliament. It's evident that the decision to withdraw support for a youth parliament in Wales, in particular, and put in its place a participation scheme—as it's called, I think—to be done by children in Wales. The annual report notes concern about that development. Since then, have you held discussions on the new scheme, and are you of the opinion that this scheme is going to give young people a voice in the democratic process and in a way that's meaningful to them, not only so that your office responds to problems or failings in the system, but so that the voice of young people is included in the way in which decisions are made across whole communities where these young people live?

[178] **Dr Holland:** Yes, it's another important issue I've had lots of discussions with young people about since I took up office. I think it's important—. You referred to the funding of Young Wales, which I think is a

really useful initiative, but I think we need to understand—. I think it's too new to say what impact it's going to have yet, but I think it's important to understand what it is and what it isn't. I mean, it is—

[179] **Simon Thomas:** I hope you know that because I don't have a clue what it is. [*Laughter.*]

[180] **Dr Holland:** My understanding is that it's a mechanism for children and young people to be involved in the programme for government. It's a chance for Government to be able to consult with children and young people, including those who have some particular expertise in some areas, due to their life experiences. I think, of course, that's very welcome. It's of course different from having a representative platform for children and young people to particularly bring up their own issues that are important—

[181] **Simon Thomas:** Where they set the agenda themselves.

[182] **Dr Holland:** Absolutely—what's important to them. I think, when we're thinking about that, we need to think about it at all levels. You refer to local democratic structures as well, and I think that we can only get it right at a national level if we also get it right at a local level—and not even just at a local authority level, but at what I'd call a hyperlocal level. On some housing estates, for example, we've got some really good examples of youth work done, perhaps not in very formal ways, but where young people are given a voice and are expressing it very clearly. I can think of an example on the Gurnos estate, for example, where young people are expressing a view very clearly.

[183] We need to get participation right in schools. There are some really excellent examples around Wales of school councils working well and young people getting really good experience of participating through school councils, but that is patchy—that's what children and young people are telling me and what I'm observing. We then need to get it right at local authority level, because all of these feed into—. We'll only get good local authority representation if children and young people have had good experience at a very local level, perhaps in schools, and, again, there are some very strong local authorities—youth councils, for example—but it would be good to see that systematically strong right across Wales.

[184] We can build a strong national platform for children and young people if we have it right locally. An issue for young people in local authority-level

participation structures is that there are some issues that their local authority can't deal with because they're issues that should be dealt with nationally. So, they've got nowhere to take them if they don't have a national platform. So, I would be in support of us developing a national platform for children and young people. And it's a logical conclusion of those participation structures.

[185] **Simon Thomas:** Indeed, and for young people to be able to set their own agenda. I can't even remember the name—what's the new programme called again?

[186] **Dr Holland:** Young Wales.

[187] **Simon Thomas:** Young Wales. The Government should be consulting with young people about its programme for government anyway. Using third sector money to get engagement to do that, I think, is a little bit of a deception, shall we say? That's my view. But what we're missing now is that formal structure, which also engages with Assembly Members directly and not just Government.

[188] **Dr Holland:** Absolutely. And to engage—

[189] **Simon Thomas:** Is that something to be reflected—? Do you think that's coming up in your consultation already? That's what I wanted to ask. Is that something that—*[Inaudible.]*

[190] **Dr Holland:** I ask about it in the consultation. I can't tell you the survey results yet, but it's certainly something that has come up in the qualitative phase, where I did talk to a thousand children and young people, so it was quite a big qualitative phase, and it certainly did come up and some young people are really very vocal about it. Some others are fairly uninterested—a bit like the general population, really, in terms of how interested people are in politics or issues in general. But unless children and young people have a good experience of participation, then they're not going to demand more. I do think it's necessary.

[191] I think the Assembly itself has done some really good work in engaging children and young people. The Vote@16 programme was a really good example of young people being involved in the Assembly, and I've had constructive discussions with the Presiding Officer about moving forward to developing a stronger platform from that work, really, and I think the

Assembly would be a good place to house a young people's assembly, a young people's parliament, for Wales. It would be a place for the Assembly to be held to account, as well as the Government, and, indeed, for myself to be, because it would be a national platform to hold me to account as well. I would look forward to, but with some trepidation, having to stand in front of them.

[192] **David Rees:** Okay. Time is almost upon us. Lynne's got the last question.

11:00

[193] **Lynne Neagle:** Yes, it was just on social services, which you've highlighted in your report. Your predecessor had a lot of misgivings about the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, and the people-centred nature of that Act, which I'd quite a lot of sympathy for, actually. Now that we're taking forward the implementation—I know that your office is involved in the implementation—are you reassured that these concerns are going to be addressed?

[194] **Dr Holland:** So, the Act will be implemented, obviously, from April, and I know local authorities are busily working on their plans. I'm trying to keep a strong message going that children must stay central to social services plans and that we need to see clear, specific plans for children and young people, and it's something that I will continue to monitor as we move towards implementation. I have good links with children and young people's groups who use services and their carers, so I think we will be getting some strong feedback on how that's going, and also, of course, with providers, and I've had constructive discussions with the Minister about it. One of the issues that I've discussed with him and with many other providers of social services is whether one opportunity offered by the Act, which is to improve the transition from child to adult services, which we've been talking about already—not to have this big divide, in a way, between child and adult services—whether that's one advantage that we might see from the Act. So, I'll be monitoring very closely whether children and young people are expected to go through a whole new assessment, a whole new threshold again, when they reach adult services, which they shouldn't, in theory, now under the Act. So, I will be monitoring that very closely. That could be one advantage of the people model of the social services Act. I do support a lot of the principles behind the social services Act, but I share my predecessor's concern that there's a risk that children's specific needs might get swamped

by the really overwhelming needs of the adult social care population.

[195] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you.

[196] **David Rees:** Thank you very much. We've come now to the end of our time allocation, so can I thank you very much for your time this morning and for the evidence you provided to the committee? It's been very helpful for us to explore those avenues. Thank you once again. You will receive a transcript of the meeting, and, if there are any factual inaccuracies, please let us know as soon as possible.

[197] **Dr Holland:** Okay.

[198] **David Rees:** Thank you very much.

[199] **Dr Holland:** Diolch yn fawr iawn—thank you very much.

11:02

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[200] **David Rees:** The committee will now move on to item 3, which are papers to note. We have three papers to note. The additional information from the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service following its meeting with the committee on 16 September—happy to note that? The additional information from Education through Regional Working following its meeting with the committee on 24 September—happy to note that? And the letter from the Minister for Education and Skills following his meeting with the committee on 30 September, discussing the regional education consortia—are you happy to note that? Thank you very much.

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o Weddill y Cyfarfod hwn ac o'r Cyfarfod yn ei Gyfanrwydd ar 12 Tachwedd

**Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public
from the Remainder of this Meeting and the Whole of the Meeting on
12 November**

Cynnig:

Motion:

bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu that the committee resolves to gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y exclude the public from the cyfarfod, a'r cyfarfod ar 12 remainder of the meeting, and the Tachwedd, yn unol â Rheolau meeting on 12 November, in Sefydlog 17.42(vi) a (ix). accordance with Standing Orders 17.42(vi) and (ix).

*Cynigiwyd y cynnig.
Motion moved.*

[201] **David Rees:** We move on now to item 4, a motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting and from the whole of the meeting on 12 November. Are Members content? Then we'll move into private session. Thank you.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11:03.
The public part of the meeting ended at 11:03.*