

Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

[Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#)

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

21/01/2016

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Public from the Remainder of the Meeting

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
Suzy Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymru Welsh Conservatives
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Chair of the Committee)
Lynne Neagle	Llafur Labour
David Rees	Llafur Labour
Aled Roberts	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Simon Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Ann Bell	Rheolwr Datblygu yng Nghymru, Adoption UK Development Manager Wales, Adoption UK
Alyson Francis	Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government
Eileen Griffiths	Cadeirydd Grŵp Cyngori, Adoption UK Cymru Chair of Adoption UK Wales's Advisory Group
Lesley Griffiths	Aelod Cynulliad (Llafur), y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi Assembly Member (Labour), Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty
Owain Lloyd	Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government
Dr Katherine Shelton	Uwch-ddarlithydd, Yr Ysgol Seicoleg, Prifysgol Caerdydd Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology, Cardiff University

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

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Steve Davies	Ymgynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Marc Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk
Annette Millett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Gareth Rogers	Ail Glerc Second Clerk
Sian Thomas	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:20.
The meeting began at 09:20.*

Cyflwyniadau, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the Children, Young People and Education Committee. Can I start by saying that we've had apologies from John Griffiths and from Keith Davies again this morning? There are no substitutes and I believe that other Members will be joining us later.

Ymchwiliad Dilynol i Wasanaethau Mabwysiadu yng Nghymru— Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 1 Follow-up Inquiry into Adoption Services in Wales—Evidence Session 1

[2] **Ann Jones:** We're going to move on to the substantive item on our agenda today, which is to do a follow-up inquiry as part of our legacy work as this committee into the adoption services in Wales. Members who were on the committee at the time will know that this was a big piece of work that was done. It was, I think, a very well-received report and so we're looking to do some follow-up work to see what the report said or did and whether there's been any real difference made. So, this is the first evidence session and we're delighted to have with us Adoption UK. So, you're both very welcome. I wondered whether you would introduce yourselves for the record and then we'll move into some questions, if that's okay.

[3] **Ms Bell:** I'm Ann Bell. I'm director of Adoption UK in Wales.

[4] **Ann Jones:** Okay.

[5] **Ms Griffiths:** My name is Eileen Griffiths. I'm an adoptive mother of three children who are now 19, 17 and 15. I'm a local support group co-ordinator for Adoption UK, so I have access to what's actually going on for local adoptive families in the region where I live. I'm chair of the advisory panel for Adoption UK and, by professional background, I'm a retired clinical psychologist. So, I bring that perspective to our dealings as well.

[6] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thanks very much for that and thank you for agreeing to come and talk to us this morning. We've got four areas that we want to try and tease out in the time we've got: they're around the National Adoption Service, around post-adoption support and then life story work, and then progress on any of the other committee recommendations around the recruitment of adopters, matching, the closure of the British Association of Adoption and Fostering, concurrent planning and the social care workforce. So, we'll see how we go with time, but we've got about an hour, so, hopefully, we'll get through those questions. Aled, you're going to take the first set on the National Adoption Service.

[7] **Aled Roberts:** Diolch yn fawr. **Aled Roberts:** Thank you very much. Diolch am eich tystiolaeth. Mae'ch Thank you for your evidence. Your tystiolaeth chi yn dweud bod y evidence does say that the progress cynnydd o ran y gwasanaeth made in terms of the national cenedlaethol newydd yn dda, ond adoption service is positive, but I just rwyf jest eisiau deall ar ba sail y mae wanted to understand on what basis hynny. Rydych chi wedi dweud eich that is. You say that you're a local bod yn gydlynedd lleol, felly, rwy'n co-ordinator, so, I take it that you cymryd eich bod chi'n weithredol are active in some way with the mewn rhyw fodd efo'r gwasanaeth ac national adoption service and I just rwyf jest eisiau deall yn union ar ba wanted to understand on what basis sail rydych chi'n dweud bod y you say that the progress has been cynnydd wedi bod yn dda, achos good, because your evidence does mae'ch tystiolaeth chi'n cydnabod recognise that the model proposed bod y model a gynigiwyd gan y by the Minister is a little different to Gweinidog braidd yn wahanol i'r un a the one that the committee itself oedd yn cael ffafriaeth gan y pwyllgor favoured. ei hun.

[8] **Ms Bell:** I think the new model for adoption services in Wales makes a lot more sense because it's scaled up, because the local authorities have come together into the regional teams. We've got a scaling up of expertise, of resources and also a great focus on recruitment, assessment and how long those processes are taking. So, we're getting a lot less phone calls to our office. In the past, we had a lot of phone calls saying, 'I want to adopt, I've approached this local authority, but they don't seem very interested'. In fact, some of them would have been told to go away and go somewhere else. The process itself was taking a very long time. We're not getting those phone calls anymore. I think what we're hearing is that the process from an expression of interest to adopt, the recruitment, to the assessment—all of that—is moving much more smoothly in a much more timely fashion, and with improvements about the preparation of those adoptive parents and the speed with which children are placed. I think all of the data that we've been gathering confirm that that whole part is working much, much better now than it was before.

[9] **Ms Griffiths:** Sitting sort of locally, my feeling is that we're seeing families—prospective families, husbands and wives—come to the group waiting for placements and the notion is that the beginning end, the starting end, seems to be happening more fluidly. My personal feeling is that the easier bits are happening better, but I don't really see any significant change to the harder bits of the equation, which is what actually happens once it's all in touch and the whole thing is rolling forward. I don't really see any difference. I think we're still left with two very difficult questions—two hard questions: what do we do with the more difficult-to-place children? Because the people coming to our group are still infertile couples wanting a baby; they're wanting a family. That still seems to be the sort of philosophy that they're coming with, so their expectations of what they want and what they're going to get, I think, are still mismatched. And I don't see people coming, necessarily, saying that there's great post-adoption support. We're still sitting there talking to people about difficulties with family and difficulties with education. So, there doesn't seem to me to be a huge change at that end. So, although things are happening more—. I think the easy bits are going better, but the hard bits are still tricky.

[10] **Aled Roberts:** Roeddech chi'n cyfeirio at y meysydd, hwyrach, sydd yn fwy anodd, ac fe wnaethoch chi sylw ar addysg yn benodol. **Aled Roberts:** You made reference to those more difficult areas, and you did refer specifically to education. Do you have any experience of the way

gennyh chi unrhyw brofiad o'r in which these regional boards work?
ffordd y mae'r byrddau rhanbarthol Are you represented on any
hyn yn gweithio? A ydych chi'n cael committees within those boards? We
eich cynrychioli ar unrhyw bwyllgorau have received some evidence that
o fewn y byrddau? Rydym ni wedi there are some stakeholders who
derbyn tystiolaeth bod yna rai aren't involved, or even present on
rhanddeiliaid sydd ddim yn weithgar, some of the regional boards. So, I
neu hyd yn oed yn bresennol, ar rai just wanted to know what your
o'r byrddau rhanbarthol hyn. Rwyf i experience was of that.
jest eisiau gweld beth ydy eich
profiad chi o hynny.

[11] **Ms Bell:** I sit on the regional board for the western bay area, so I regularly attend those meetings and it's true that we've only just identified the education representative and the health representative for those boards, and they're certainly not regularly coming yet. They don't understand yet exactly what's going on.

[12] I would say that, within education, I think there have been developments, but they've gone on a separate track. So, we've got developments in education; they've recognised that adopted children need some support. There is some money, now, that can be used for adopted children, but there's not a joining together, yet, at a strategic level, between the education part and the adoption part, I think, certainly not right across all the regions.

[13] **Ms Griffiths:** When you said 'regional boards', did you mean the educational regional boards or did you mean the national adoption boards?

[14] **Aled Roberts:** The national adoption.

[15] **Ms Griffiths:** In our local group—and again, I think we're talking from different perspectives here. Ann is talking more from the strategic point of view, whereas I'm just talking from our local experience. When we were informed about the local consortia and that we had a local consortia now, we met a group of prospective mums and dads and said, 'Well, okay, why don't we write to them and ask them to come and have a cup of tea with us?' We meet formally once every two months in a church hall, we have a cup of tea and biscuits and chat, and we'd be able to put a face to a name. It wouldn't be about any particular child, or any particular difficulty, it would be just, 'Hello, how are you?' One of our members, who was in contact with her social

worker still, discussed it with him and he said, 'Yes, fine. I'll go up to my management', but he came back and said that he was not allowed, not formally. His manager said, 'No, you are not allowed to go and meet the local group'. The reason why: 'Because we're going to do our own roadshow'. So, there was an opportunity to just say, 'Here we are, a nice bunch of people, have a cup of tea with us, let's put faces to names, let's begin right at the ground floor to make some connections', and that was very quickly prevented. It just seems a ridiculously silly thing to not do, really. So, that's our experience that it didn't work.

[16] **Aled Roberts:** Rwy'n meddwl mai un peth a oedd yn ein poeni ni pan roeddem ni'n edrych ar hyn yn yr ymchwiliad gwreiddiol oedd agwedd rhai o'r cynghorau, a'r ffaith bod eu strwythurau nhw a'r ffordd roedden nhw'n gweithredu, hwyrach, yn bwysicach na'r allbwn o ran cael lle llwyddiannus i blentyn o ran mabwysiadu.

Aled Roberts: I think one thing that concerned us when we looked at this in the original inquiry was the attitude of some of the councils, and the fact that some of their structures and the way that they operated were, perhaps, seen as being more important than the outcome in terms of finding a successful placement for a child in terms of adoption.

09:30

[17] Fe wnaeth y Gweinidog benderfynu bod y gwasanaeth yn aros o fewn llywodraeth leol. Roedd yna resymeg ar y pryd bod y ffordd roedd awdurdodau'r gogledd wedi bod yn cydweithio yn ffordd ymlaen, ond er hynny mae'r data rydym ni wedi ei dderbyn o'r gwasanaeth cenedlaethol erbyn hyn yn dangos nad yw data'r gogledd mor dda â beth oedd yn cael ei awgrymu pan roeddem yn ymchwilio i'r sefyllfa yn y lle cyntaf. O ran eich profiad chi, ydych chi yn cael unrhyw fath o negeseuon o'r gogledd bod y sefyllfa wedi gwaethygu yn y gogledd, neu hwyrach bod y data ddim yn hollol ddibynadwy ar y pryd? A oes gennych

The Minister did decide that the service should remain within local government. There was some thinking at the time that the way in which north Wales authorities had been collaborating was perhaps a way forward, but despite that, the data that we've received from the national service now seem to show that the data for north Wales perhaps aren't as positive as was suggested when we first carried out our inquiry. In terms of your own experience, are you receiving any messages from north Wales that the situation has deteriorated there, or perhaps the data weren't entirely reliable at the time? Do you have any comment to

chi unrhyw fath o sylw ar pam fod y make on why the service in north
gwasanaeth yn y gogledd erbyn hyn, i Wales, for me to be parochial here,
mi fod yn blwyfol, yn waeth na'r has deteriorated in comparison with
sefyllfa ar draws Cymru gyfan? the rest of Wales?

[18] **Ms Bell:** My perception—and it is just a perception, I don't really have hard evidence—but what I think is happening is that the other regions have caught up with and gone past north Wales. So, I think the north Wales authorities came together, they had better co-operation across, they were placing children across the six authorities and that improved things, prior to the national adoption service being set up. Then we set up the other regional collaboratives. After a bit of norming and storming, things started to improve within those regions, and, actually, they've come together. Their collaborations have been even tighter—so stuff had been TUPE'd over and they had created single teams. So, I think the other four regions have gone as far as north Wales, and then beyond what north Wales has done, whereas north Wales has sort of thought, 'Oh well, we've done it; we don't need to do very much more'. That is what I think's happened.

[19] **Aled Roberts:** Rydych yn **Aled Roberts:** You state that the other
dweud mai'r byrddau eraill sydd wedi boards have improved and that they
gwella a'u bod nhw wedi mynd heibio have surpassed the service in north
gwasanaeth y gogledd erbyn hyn. Wales. But, we've received the first
Ond, rydym wedi derbyn yr annual report of the national
adroddiad blynyddol cyntaf gan y adoption service, and that
gwasanaeth cenedlaethol, ac mae demonstrates that 86 per cent of
hwnnw yn dangos bod 86 y cant o those people who had an initial visit
bobl a gafodd ymweliad cychwynnol in 2014–15 in the south–east had
yn 2014–15 yn y de-ddwyrain wedi made a bid to adopt within the
gwneud cais i fabwysiadu i'r agency within a year, but only 23 per
asiantaeth o fewn y flwyddyn, ond cent who's had their initial visit from
dim ond 23 y cant o'r rhai oedd wedi the north Wales service had actually
cael eu hymweliad cychwynnol gan proceeded, and the Welsh average
wasanaeth y gogledd oedd wedi was 68 per cent. Why is there so
gwneud cais, a chyfartaledd Cymru much regional variation? Do you have
oedd 68 y cant. Pam fod yna gymaint any explanation for that?
o amrywiaeth rhanbarthol? A oes
gennyh chi unrhyw esboniad am
hynny?

[20] **Ms Bell:** I think, living in north Wales, you would have some choices

about going over the border to adopt and to be assessed for adoption. So, it may be that people are looking at the north Wales consortium and the kind of deal and support as an adopter up there and then thinking 'Actually, we could do better by being assessed and getting children placed across the border in England'. That's one possibility, because there's no doubt that there is much more substantial support for adopters in England at the moment.

[21] **Aled Roberts:** Felly, nid yw'r **Aled Roberts:** Therefore, the service gwasanaeth yng Nghymru cystal â'r in Wales is not as good as the service gwasanaeth yn Lloegr. in England.

[22] **Ms Bell:** There's a lot more financial support for adopters in England; there's the adoption support fund and the pupil premium plus money going into school.

[23] **Aled Roberts:** Felly, lle mae'r **Aled Roberts:** So, where there is a dewis, rydych chi yn meddwl bod choice available, you think that that hynny yn ffactor, lle bod yna fwy o perhaps is a factor, where there are bosibiliadau yn y gogledd, hwyrach. more possibilities in north Wales, Rwy'n meddwl yn hanesyddol hefyd perhaps. I think historically also fod yna duedd yn y gogledd i there's been a trend in north Wales to fabwysiadu ar draws y ffin, ond mae adopt across the border, but you are hynny, rydych chi'n dweud, yn saying that that is a factor. ffactor.

[24] **Ms Bell:** I think so, yes. Anecdotally, I think that also happens in Powys with people who are living right on the border there.

[25] **Aled Roberts:** A gaf i jest **Aled Roberts:** If I could just ganolbwyntio ar un ffaith arall? concentrate on one other issue. Once Unwaith mae'r rhiant arfaethedig a prospective parent has made that wedi gwneud dewis i fynd ymlaen choice to proceed through the drwy gwasanaeth cenedlaethol Cymru national adoption service in Wales to i fabwysiadu, mae'r amrywiaeth adopt, the regional variation seems rhanbarthol yn ymddangos yn eithaf to be becoming more apparent again. clir eto. Yn y de-ddwyrain, byddwch In the south-east, you would wait yn aros rhyw saith mis rhwng yr around seven months between the ymholiad cyntaf a rhywun yn cael ei first inquiry and approval. In north gymeradwyo. Yn y gogledd eto, Wales, it's 13 months. So, it takes mae'n 13 mis. Felly, mae'n cymryd almost double the time in north

bron i ddwbl yr amser yn y gogledd rhwng yr ymholiad cyntaf a'r cymeradwyo, o'i gymharu efo'r deddwyrain. Sut, felly, os oes gennym wasanaeth cenedlaethol, mae yna gymaint o amrywiaeth? A ydym yn delio efo sefyllfa lle y cwbl sydd gyda ni ydy rhyw arwydd ar ryw ddrws y tu allan i adeilad, ond, a dweud y gwir, mae gennym wasanaethau rhanbarthol unigol sydd yn gweithredu mewn modd unigol, a lle mae'r gwasanaeth y mae rhieni arfaethedig yn ei dderbyn yn hollol wahanol o un rhanbarth i'r llall?

Wales between that first enquiry and approval, as compared to the south-east. So, if we do have a national service, why is there so much divergence and variation? Are we dealing here with a situation where all we have is a sign on the door, or outside the building, but in reality, we have individual, regional services in all but name, which operate individually, and where the service for proposed parents is entirely different from one region to another?

[26] **Ms Bell:** I think the process of local authorities coming together and then starting to perform as a single service is a complicated process, and it takes a long time before people really believe that they are something other than their local authority representative sitting on some kind of joint board. I think that, sometimes, there are historical things that make it happen more easily, or less easily. So, I think the south-east Wales adoption service, because it's the old Gwent authorities, they kind of already know each other, and they have a history of being able to work together, and they have some trust that's already been built up. So that's—in my perception—gone fairly smoothly, whereas some of the other areas haven't had that history of working together, and so it's been harder to come together and it's taking longer, and there's still quite a lot of, you know, 'What are we going to get for our money that we're putting in as a local authority? Are we going to get back what we've put in to this consortium collaboration?' I think these things are difficult, and they take time.

[27] **Aled Roberts:** A gaf i eich herio chi ar hynny? Achos y rheswm y dewisodd y Gweinidog y patrwm yma o fewn llywodraeth leol, roeddwn i'n deall, oedd achos bod y cydweithio yn y gogledd mor ardderchog, a bod hynny wedi bod yn digwydd am gynifer o flynyddoedd, a dyna pam y dewisodd hi'r patrwm yma ar draws

Aled Roberts: May I challenge you on that? Because the reason the Minister chose this particular approach within local government, as I understood it, was that collaboration in north Wales was so excellent, and that had been in place for a number of years. That is why she actually chose this approach across the whole of Wales.

Cymru gyfan.

[28] **Ms Bell:** I think there was some merit in the decision to keep it with the local authorities and not to have it as something completely separate. That's not really about whether they're going to perform better as regions or any of that. It was about, for me—these are the same children that were in the fostering system, the looked-after system, and you need to have a really good link across to the local authorities' childcare teams, children and families teams, and the intake teams. You've got to have those links being really strong. So, I think there were real dangers in the idea of having something that was completely separate from the local authorities.

[29] **Aled Roberts:** Un pwynt olaf— **Aled Roberts:** One final point—as fel arfer. Mae Cymdeithas Plant Dewi usual. The St David's Children Society Sant yn dweud nad yw'r trefniadau says that the tangible partnership partneriaeth diriaethol ar lefel arrangements on an operational level weithredol gyda'r trydydd sector yn with the third sector aren't effective. dda. A oes gennych unrhyw sylw ar Do you have any comment on that? hynny?

[30] **Ms Bell:** Yes, I think there's a lot of truth in that. I think, as the voluntary sector, we've been very well involved in the governance structures for the organisation. I've spent many hours sitting in various committees, and my voice is listened to as a representative of adoptive parents, and all that bit's been good. But there is virtually no commissioning of any services from the voluntary sector, and actually, without some commissioning to underpin our work, we can't continue. That's what we rely on. Okay, we can raise some money by running marathons and getting grants, but we can probably only ever raise about 10 or 20 per cent of our income from that. So, we have to have some business arrangements with the statutory sector if we're going to be able to survive, and that isn't happening. In fact, it's almost the opposite. It's almost like, 'Well, we can do fine there. We don't really need the voluntary sector to deliver services for us because we've got better resources and that's not necessary'. So, I think there is a real danger of that.

[31] **Aled Roberts:** So that's changed, has it, since the creation of the national service?

[32] **Ms Bell:** I would say it has got worse, yes.

[33] **Ms Griffiths:** Could I—?

[34] **Ann Jones:** Yes, certainly.

[35] **Ms Griffiths:** Just on the links between the statutory service and the voluntary service, I am aware that, in the local support groups, you have an enormous resource. You've got families who've had their children for a very long time together with families who are still waiting for children, and at no point have we been asked to contribute to any assessment or preparation process. I think there must be some parents who do contribute to the preparation process, but I don't know who they are; they're certainly not from our local groups.

[36] **Ann Jones:** Okay?

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

[38] **Ann Jones:** We move on to post-adoption support then. Angela, please.

[39] **Angela Burns:** Thank you very much indeed, Chair. Good morning and thank you for, you know, all your contributions in the past to the report that we put together. One of the big areas that came across in our previous evidence sessions was the lack of post-adoption support, and I noted with interest, Ann, the comments you've just made to Aled about why you felt that the adoption service needed to be within the social services because of the linkage. Yet, time and time again, we took evidence that basically said, once you adopted your kid, that was it; you were on your own. And it is something that is reflected very much in my constituents. As a matter of interest, I asked a member of my staff just to look at my current live constituency adoption-problem-needing-support case file, because I've had a lot of people over the years I've been an Assembly Member. I've got nine cases and I've also had, in the last year, two spectacular adoption failures, because, in my view, of a complete and utter abandonment of these parents by social services and educational support. So, I'd really like to try and drill down into where you think the Wales-wide picture is in terms of adoption support to parents for children.

[40] **Ms Bell:** I think we've still got a very, very long way to go. And I think some of that is that there's still not an agreed understanding of what kind of difficulties these children have had in their lives, and what the impact of

those difficulties will be on them as they grow up. Hopefully, the university's cohort study, which is looking at a whole year's worth of placements of adopted children, their case files, and all the details about them, will give us much, much better evidence and a better shared understanding. But I think there's still a very big gap between what the children actually bring with them, and the kind of difficulties that they have, moving forward: so their vulnerability to mental health difficulties, for example, the levels of anxiety that they bring with them, which are sustained, and the likelihood that they will have things like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autistic spectrum disorder—a very complex mixture of difficulties that their parents will have to cope with. So, I think there's still a real gap between what they've actually got and what the services, the parents, and the whole system think that they have. And, until we can sort that one out, we're never going to have the right resources there, at the right time, for those families.

[41] **Angela Burns:** One of the things that came out in the inquiry was that, even for parents who adopted very young children, who, at the time, had no discernible requirement for additional help, there was this sort of notion that, as they grow up, around about nine, 10, 11, any issues start to kick in. So, do you think there should be a presumption that post-adoption support should be constantly available to an adoptive parent, no matter what? At the moment, it appears to be on request, and then you have to fight for it, much the same as a parent with a natural-born child—you know, a birth child—might have to fight for, say, an autism service or for a dyslexia service. Adoptive parents are just then put into that and told, 'Well, it's the same as, and you go through the same processes.'

[42] **Ms Griffiths:** Can I add something? Yes, I think that a large part of post-adoption support that's missing is pre-adoption preparation. I still don't think that the philosophy is right. I think that there isn't really an understanding of what you're actually asking people to do. You know, when you're preparing a family to adopt a child, you're preparing them to offer a profound social service for nothing, for life. Many people are prepared to do that, but, sometimes, they're not necessarily aware that that's what they're doing right at the very start.

09:45

[43] They can sign up and say, 'Yes, I'm prepared to do that, if that's what turns out', and we know from the evidence that a third do okay, a third have some moderate level of difficulty, and a third have an extreme level of

difficulty. But you can't tell, can you, in the first six months of life or whatever? So, I think that there should be an open-door policy that starts in everybody understanding what the nature of the task is, and I don't think that's there yet. I don't think that that is coming out—a good, philosophical understanding of what adoption is.

[44] I've had my children for nearly 20 years now, and the social worker we had, who's long since retired—a very good salt-of-the-earth person who'd come up through residential social work and so on—her comment to us, which we didn't really understand at the time, 20 years ago, was, 'Well, all little babies are pretty much alike, you know, but the children will grow into their genes.' Now, I didn't really understand what she meant then, but I think anybody who's got children or knows other people who've got children—. It's very true. No child is a blank slate. You can love them and deal with them as an individual, but they do bring their own genetic intergenerational history and it's a nonsense to think that they don't because, like every child, they do. So, I think there is a greater likelihood of people struggling.

[45] Now, what I would like to see is—. So often, in the local support groups, I've seen them go from bright-eyed and bushy-tailed would-be adopters, who are so excited that they've been approved and are just waiting for a match—. I have seen them, over the years now, be destroyed—destroyed as people. They're still in there because they're good people with a really good sense of duty, but they are destroyed by difficult children and a lack of support from education. There are professional women who are no longer able to work because their children are being excluded right, left and centre at the age of seven. So, I think there should be an open-door policy.

[46] I want to move from the situation where I so often find myself in the support group thinking that these poor parents are like King Canute. They are trying to solve something that is not within their power to solve. They're trying to make this child fit better into a sort of middle-class educational scenario, and that child is just not going to, no matter what they do. They could stand on their head and recite the Bible backwards, they could do whatever they like: it's not going to happen. It's about how you hold the hands of those parents all the way through to say, 'Don't get so stressed. You're doing a good job. You do love that child. It will be all right in the end. It won't be the future that you anticipated or you wanted, but, actually, it'll be an awful lot better than the future that child would have had otherwise, despite the difficulties that they're throwing up in the interim.' Getting that philosophy, I don't feel is still—that needs to be there right from the very

start, and I don't think it's there.

[47] **Angela Burns:** I think that's very powerful evidence, and I'm very grateful that you've given it. It does reflect on—. You know, if I look across my nine cases, for one of them, I actually went out to see the parents who sat and sobbed because they were scared of the two children whom they had adopted—they were, to be frank, quite terrifying individuals—and they had absolutely no back-up.

[48] The other thing about post-adoption support I'd like to ask is: is there still an element—? Again, thinking of my cases, one of them was very much parents who'd never had any children who then took on a much older child. The child was nine or 10 and, three or four years down the line, that adoption has now fallen apart because there was a sense—and I've quizzed and quizzed and quizzed the county council on this—that I picked up on of, 'Oh God, we've got an older child off our books', and then they just shoved them and left them to it. Of course, at that age, that child needs all the support.

[49] Would you say that, actually, the county councils, the adoption service and social workers are becoming a little bit more switched on and this was just an aberration about the fact that older children—? Whilst a young child might grow into difficulties, if they're not obvious to begin with, an older child usually arrives on the doorstep with a suitcase and the difficulties.

[50] **Ms Bell:** I think there's a better understanding, and I think there's a better acceptance that it's quite likely that a lot of families will have some difficulties. What's still missing is any clarity about who is responsible for supporting them, who is going to provide the money to pay for the post-adoption support, and there's still a lot of, 'It's the local authority' and 'No, no, it's the regional team', and batting it backwards and forwards, and there is a lack of services in child and adolescent mental health services to address those needs.

[51] **Angela Burns:** Quite a few, again, of the parents whom we saw had adopted sibling groups, which I think—to go from no child to three all at once must be a shock anyway. But they'd adopted sibling groups, quite a lot of whom had presenting issues: learning difficulties, global developmental delay, all this kind of thing. So, is there a sense that the help that they would require needs to come from the medical side of public services, or do you think—? Because we need to route it somewhere; we need to ask somebody

somewhere to take the driving force behind it. So, should it be through the medical side or do you think it should be driven via the educationists? I partly ask this question because we're looking at the additional learning needs Bill and, of course, one of the barriers to that, potentially, is the difficulty of engaging with health services because they're up to their eyeballs in all sorts of things. I just wondered if you had a view. So, if you have a child with global developmental delay, who do you think would be, in your experience, best placed to try and drive the acquisition of support for that individual?

[52] **Ms Griffiths:** My experience is that support comes in bits and bobs of separate packages. One of the problems is that the different agencies providing the support don't talk to each other, and I feel that that's a lack. I've had one child with very, very significant difficulties all the way through who is in receipt of offers of help from a number of different agencies, but at no point was there a—well, 'case conference' is the wrong term because, as soon as you ask for a case conference, the social workers think you mean something else; I mean a multidisciplinary meeting to try to bring together those different strands, and that never happened. So, that seems to me to be—. Inevitably, these children have a multiplicity of needs that will need support from a number of different organisations, but it all falls on the head of the adoptive parent to try to co-ordinate that and link that. So, you know, maybe some sort of key worker—. Of course, in those days, the social worker was still operating—I think that has changed now—'case open, case closed, case open, case closed' and that really wasn't very helpful either. I think that has actually changed, but—.

[53] **Ann Jones:** Suzy, you've got a point before Angela comes back.

[54] **Suzy Davies:** On this very specific point that you've given in your evidence about multidisciplinary teams and how they don't seem to exist, bearing in mind that we're talking from a social work perspective to start with, where is team around the family in all this? I'd have thought it was an obvious place for post-adoption support to be at least signposted from anyway. Are you saying that these multidisciplinary teams just don't exist across Wales, or is it just that a certain local authority might be lucky enough to have the team-around-the-family philosophy?

[55] **Ms Bell:** I think they probably do exist in most of the local authorities. Whether they have a link through to the adoption team or not, I think, varies quite a lot.

[56] **Suzy Davies:** Who's responsible for making that link, do you think?

[57] **Ms Bell:** I think the adoption teams need to go out and I think they need to be a lot more aware of what's in their area and how to tap into it. But, of course, because they're working across three, four or five local authorities, they may have different arrangements within each of those local authorities, but they have to get their heads around that and work out how to do it in each area.

[58] **Suzy Davies:** Thank you for that.

[59] **Ms Griffiths:** Could I—?

[60] **Ann Jones:** Sorry, yes.

[61] **Ms Griffiths:** One of the things that seems to be surfacing a little bit in the local groups is, and it relates to something that this gentleman said earlier, about who funds. This notion of three years—. What a small number of people have said is that they feel as if the placing authorities are delaying and delaying and delaying until three years is up and it's somebody else's job, and the families feel as if they are falling down a crack between this notion of somebody is responsible for three years, but, if they can delay things long enough, it'll be somebody else's job.

[62] I'm also hearing families saying they're thinking of—. And other people have said to them, 'Delay the formal adoption because you won't get any support afterwards, so, as far as you can, take the children, but delay the actual legal adoption because, whilst they're still looked after, they have a duty to support you, but delay, as long as possible, the formal, legal adoption.' So, that's not setting things up very good. It's lack of trust, you know, right from the start.

[63] **Ann Jones:** Angela, do you want to—?

[64] **Angela Burns:** Yes, I just wanted to finish off actually touching a little bit more on exploring the funding issues. I know that you mentioned it to Aled, about the levels of funding support in Wales. I wanted to ask you about your concerns about the difference between pupil premium plus in England and how the pupil deprivation grant is distributed here, and also your views on whether you felt an adoption support fund might be a way of perhaps freeing up some of these resources that children need, post adoption.

[65] **Ms Bell:** I'm less concerned about the difference between the pupil premium plus and the way that we're now doing it in Wales. I think there's a lot of merit in the way that Wales has chosen to do it. Even though the sums of money per head are smaller, I think it makes a lot of sense to bring that money together and then provide training for all the schools so that they all have a better understanding of early trauma and neglect and attachment difficulties and how to address those, because I think there are a lot of children who have those difficulties, including adopted children. So, there's no reason why we shouldn't be training teachers right across the board. I think there is quite a lot of money wasted in England where each child in each school, whether it needs it or not, has this sum of money that they feel has to be spent on that child, and it's not necessarily spent in a particularly sensible way. So, I'm not so concerned about that.

[66] I am concerned about the adoption support fund. There again, I wouldn't say England's got it right and we should follow that, because I think having those large sums of money available is certainly putting up the prices of therapeutic work in England. There's suddenly all sorts of people coming out of the woodwork offering therapeutic work—some of which is good, some of which is probably not very good—and the prices have shot up. So, I don't think that's been a great way of doing it. However, in Wales at the moment, there is no direct source of money, or no ring-fenced money, that is there for adoption support. There's no general understanding of who it is who should be supplying that or how it should be supplied. So, there's a real gap and we've got to find some way of sorting that out quickly. But I wouldn't just say, 'Well, we need an adoption support fund like England'.

[67] **Angela Burns:** Sorry, I've just thought of one more quick question, Chair. Because, talking about the therapeutic services that are emerging out of the woodwork and the fact that some of them are a bit woolly and others are very, very sound, one of the things I'm sure I recall us picking up in the adoption inquiry that we did was that there's a belated recognition of the importance of recognising attachment disorder and that perhaps it had been an unrecognised issue for a long, long time. I wanted to just have a quick update on whether you feel that attachment disorder and the work that you would need to try to ameliorate attachment disorder is now actually beginning to get some traction in post-adoption support. Because I understand that actually that is—and please correct me if I'm wrong; I'm sure you will, anyway. But I understand that that is actually one of the, if you like, overarching issues that an adoptive child might be trying to cope with,

whatever else they may also have to cope with.

[68] **Ms Bell:** I think there is a better understanding of it. We've now got National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines about it. So, NICE have done a whole piece of research and there's evidence-based interventions and definitions. So, all of that is—people are talking a lot more about attachment disorders and how you address them. So, I think, yes, the level of understanding across the board has improved quite significantly.

[69] **Ms Griffiths:** I'd just like to add a cautionary note. Attachment theory is valid and one way of looking at it, but it isn't the only factor that comes into play, and I would be cautious about seeing therapy as the only way forward, because I think sometimes you're dealing with characterological issues that aren't fixable by therapy, but are about support and containment and advice, rather than—. Because I think you can throw x amount of therapy at problem x, but actually it's not changeable. It's about how you—

[70] **Angela Burns:** Support someone.

[71] **Ms Griffiths:** —support and release them from the hook of feeling that they've got to change it, when actually it's not changeable.

[72] **Angela Burns:** Thank you.

[73] **Ann Jones:** We'll move on to life-story work, then. Rhodri.

[74] 10:00

[75] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr, Gadeirydd. Mae'r dystiolaeth a dderbyniodd y pwyllgor gan unigolion, asiantaethau a sefydliadau yn pwysleisio pa mor bwysig yw cofnodi profiadau bywyd. A allwch chi esbonio i ni pam bod y broses honno mor bwysig?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Thank you very much, Chair. The evidence that the committee received from individuals, agencies and organisations emphasised how important it is to record life stories. So, can you explain to us why that process is so important?

[76] **Ms Bell:** Well, if you think about a birth child and think about your own children, if you have them, and the kind of messages that you constantly give them about their life story—. So, we constantly refer back to our children: 'Oh, I remember when this happened. I remember when I brought you back

from the hospital. I remember when you were this age and you did your first roll-over.’ We are constantly giving them a picture of their whole lives, and a sort of consistency and narrative that helps them to understand who they are now and how they got to be that person. That’s really missing for adopted children because their adoptive parents don’t have all those memories in their head. They can’t just bring them out easily at the right moment. That, I think, has quite a profound effect on children and their sense of being rooted in a past, and therefore their sense of security in the world, and their ability then to look forward and feel safe to explore and move around. So, for me, that’s why life story work—. It’s not really about the big things. It’s a bit like history, isn’t it? We tend to mark history by these really huge events—battles and stuff—but, actually, history is far more than that; it’s all the little things as well. To me, life story work needs to somehow enable adoptive parents to have those same conversations to remind children about what happened at earlier stages in their lives, even if the adoptive parents weren’t actually in the room at that point.

[77] **Ms Griffiths:** I also think that, if you fast-forward then into teenage years, all teenagers—. Their job as a teenager, isn’t it, is to ask: ‘Who am I? Where am I going? Where have I come from?’ All teenagers are breaking away from their parents, but within the—. They sort of know from what stock they have come. I think that, for adoptive kids, it’s very hard. They are sitting in this family and they know they love their mum, but they look at her and they think, ‘My God, I’m nothing like her’, and, probably, ‘thank God’, but, you know—. And if they don’t have any information—. It’s a really difficult one, because, if they don’t have any information, it’s hard, but, if they do have the information, maybe it’s even harder. So, it’s a very difficult issue about what information is presented.

[78] I mean, I think it’s about—. These days they get given a book. I’m not sure it’s a question of that. I think it’s a question of the social services keeping excellent records and relevant information, documenting it well, and storing it well, so that, when the teenager comes back, there is a story to relate to them through a professional mode. I hope it’s better these days, but I know that, when my daughter was sort of 14, 15, she was in contact with the social services and they tried to do some life history work with her, and they couldn’t find her file. They had no information whatsoever because they had completely lost her file. Now, let’s hope that’s better now.

[79] I was thinking about this, and I was wondering—. You know, that information, it is important. At some stage, they will want that; they all will.

‘Who was my birth mother? Who was my birth father? Where have I come from?’ I was wondering about using the panels—the adoption panels, the linking panels—as a method of quality control to just say, ‘Right, we are linking this now, but do you have this information for 15 years’ time, when this person will be older and will come back? Have you got it all sorted?’ You know, it’s an opportunity. The linking panels are a range of very well-resourced, clever people, aren’t they? You’ve got the medic, the social workers and the legal representative. They could use that as a form of quality control to the placing authority: ‘Right, have you got that information tidy, and stored well, so that it’s there for the future?’

[80] **Ann Jones:** I think Suzy wants to come in before you come back in.

[81] **Suzy Davies:** Very briefly. I’m just curious: how much of the life story is given to an adoptive parent, and are they advised very carefully about how to use the amount that they do have?

[82] **Ms Bell:** I think it varies hugely. There’s a large variation in practice. It’s often the children and families teams—the children’s social worker—who are responsible for gathering the life story work. They probably don’t have a very good understanding of how that could be used in adoptive families because they don’t deal with an awful lot of adoptive families, so they have, I think, as I understand it, a bit of a checklist—‘I think we should do it this way or that way’—and it varies from one place to another and it’s often very poor quality, because they don’t really understand the importance.

[83] **Suzy Davies:** We’re back to post-adoptive support again, really, aren’t we? Sorry. Diolch, Rhodri.

[84] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Y Rhodri Glyn Thomas: The question cwestiwn sy’n dilyn, wrth gwrs, ydy that follows, of course, is, if, as os, fel rydych yn ei ddweud, ac fel you’re saying, and as the evidence mae’r dystiolaeth rydym ni wedi’i that we’ve received states, the dderbyn yn ei ddweud, yw’r patrwm pattern varies across Wales, then yn amrywio trwy Gymru, beth yw’r what is the answer? Is it to appoint ateb? Ai dynodi ryw asiantaeth, neu some agency, or a keyworker who ryw berson a ddylai fod yn gyfrifol should be responsible for doing this am hyn er mwyn sicrhau bod y to ensure that there’s more patrwm yn fwy cyson? consistency?

[85] **Ms Bell:** I think we need to develop a very clear set of guidelines about

what good practice looks like. We need to train staff up across the regional collaborations, so that they know how to do it well. The knowledge is there. People know what 'good' looks like; we just need to make sure that that's shared and agreed right across. It's on the list of things that the National Adoption Service know that they have to get to grips with, but we haven't got there yet.

[86] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Okay, so you don't have a preferred system.

[87] **Ms Bell:** Not one that's generally used everywhere. I think most people would agree what it should be like, but it's not happening.

[88] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch. **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you.

[89] **Ann Jones:** Simon, did you have a—?

[90] **Simon Thomas:** Ie, jest yn dilyn y cwestiwn yna. Nid wyf yn gwybod os ydych chi wedi gweld y stori hynod yn ddiweddar am ŵr y glo o sir Gâr oedd wedi ei fabwysiadu—*[Torri ar draws.]* Penygroes, ie—ac yn troi mas i fod yn fab i dywysog o Malaysia, ond ychydig iawn o blant sydd wedi'u mabwysiadu sydd â stori mor eithriadol o gryf. Ond dylai fod modd mynd yn ôl a chanfod hynny. A dyna beth rydym yn sôn amdano fan hyn. Fel arfer, wrth gwrs, nid plant tywysogion Malaysia sy'n cael eu mabwysiadu, ac mae'n anodd felly canfod eich stori, yn enwedig os yw ffeiliau yn mynd yn goll ac ati. Rwy'n siomedig nad oes yna, ar hyn o bryd, enghraifft yng Nghymru o arfer da y dylid ehangu yn syth bin, achos rwy'n meddwl bod hwn yn un o'r meysydd oedd wedi codi yn yr ymchwiliad gwreiddiol fel un o'r gwendidau yr oedd rhieni oedd yn mabwysiadu hefyd—roedden nhw'n teimlo wedi'u

Simon Thomas: Yes, just to follow up that question. I don't know whether you saw the extraordinary story recently about the coalman from Carmarthenshire who was adopted—*[Interruption.]* Penygroes, yes—and who turned out to be the son of a Malaysian prince, but very few adopted children have such an extremely strong story. But it should be possible to go back and find out about that. And that's what we're talking about here. Usually, of course, we're not talking about the children of Malaysian princes being adopted, and so it is difficult then to find out what your story is, particularly if files get lost and so forth. I am disappointed that, at present, there is no example in Wales of good practice that should be immediately rolled out, because I think this is one of the areas that did arise in the original inquiry as one of the weaknesses adoptive parents—they felt

tanseilio os nad oedden nhw'n gallu ateb cwestiynau eu plant yn eu harddegau yn arbennig, pan fônt yn dechrau holi'r cwestiynau hyn, wrth gwrs.

undermined if they weren't able to answer the questions of their children in their teenage years particularly, when they start to ask these questions, of course.

[91] A oes unrhyw enghraifft o gwbl, neu a oes unrhyw ystyriaeth o gwbl, i roi mwy o reolaeth i'r plentyn dros ei stori bywyd nhw? Mae gennym dechnoleg modern erbyn hyn, mae gyda ni'r *cloud*, mae gyda ni ffordd o roi mynediad i wybodaeth drwy gyfrinair i berson unigol. A ydyn ni'n canolbwyntio gormod ar yr asiantaethau, a ddim yn rhoi digon o rym i'r unigolyn feddu ar yr wybodaeth am eu bywydau eu hunan?

Is there any example of, or has there been any consideration at all to, giving the child more control over their life story? We have modern technology by now, we've got the cloud, we've got a way of allowing an individual to access information via a password. Are we concentrating too much on the agencies, and not giving enough power to the individual to access information about their own lives?

[92] **Ms Bell:** That's an interesting idea.

[93] **Ms Griffiths:** I just think it has to be handled so carefully. You've got these highly emotional teenagers, who haven't a clue where they belong, and that is acted out within the home and within the school. They don't fit, and they feel as if they don't fit. I think it would have to be very carefully managed. I think that what would happen is the child would then contact their birth family on Facebook, and they would be straight into it, and then straight into—

[94] **Simon Thomas:** Are you saying that doesn't happen now?

[95] **Ms Griffiths:** It does happen now. It does happen now, with dreadful consequences, as we well know. So, we wouldn't want to be seen to be actually saying, 'Here you are; off you go and do it.'

[96] **Simon Thomas:** No, but let's relax a little bit about 'the agency knows better than the child'. Other children who aren't adopted have that information.

[97] **Ms Griffiths:** Yes.

[98] **Simon Thomas:** You know, there are parts of my family that I haven't contacted for 40 years, and family feuds that go back years and years and years and we don't talk to each other, and this happens. I don't contact them on Facebook, but, you know, I haven't had that sort of experience. I understand the point you're making, but we are taking away from that individual, as they're going through a very emotional process, the information that a child in a different context would have—and would make mistakes, yes, but would have that information. To what level are we—? To be frank, if we're trusting the agencies and they're losing files, then, sorry, that is not acceptable in any way, shape or form. And if we're in the position where we're preaching to agencies, 'You must do better about keeping records' and we know that there's a tremendous churn of staff these days in social services, much more than there has been in the past, the move from paper files over the years to electronic files, and the different methods of electronic storage—. All these things mean that it's so easy to lose information, and if it's not the family or the individual who has some kind of preserved access in some modern form then we're just going to repeat these mistakes for the future.

[99] **Ms Bell:** I think there are two examples of quite good practice around this that I would like to see used routinely. One is appreciation days. So, sometimes just before a child is placed or just shortly after the child is placed, all the adults who had contact with that child—so, the foster carer, the social workers; anyone who's been in that child's life up to that point of adoption—come together in a room and share what they know about the child—little experiences, little anecdotes. They share those with the adoptive parents. I know people have found that very, very helpful. The adoptive parents are handed, both verbally and in writing, lots of information.

[100] So, those are appreciation days, and there was another one, which escapes me at the moment; I had it in my head a minute ago. Oh, yes, I know; it is meetings with birth parents. I think, increasingly, adoptive parents are being given an opportunity to meet with birth parents. I mean, obviously, that can be a very, very difficult and emotional meeting, but as long as both sides are well prepared and supported, it can be very, very helpful to actually physically chat to the birth parent of your child and find out all the little pieces of information that they probably wouldn't get otherwise. So, I think both of those are useful ways forward, where it's possible.

[101] **Ann Jones:** This last question session is on progress on other

committee recommendations. Suzy, you've got a couple on these that you wanted to ask.

[102] **Suzy Davies:** Yes. Obviously, there were many recommendations in our report, but I want to focus on one in particular. One of the reasons this committee suggested the model for a national service that we did is that the evidence we received from prospective adopters about their experiences of being selected and assessed and the advice they were given before adoption were very mixed and, in many cases, atrocious. That led us to the conclusion that, perhaps, local authorities weren't best placed to deal with the recruitment and assessment of adopters. Now, we've got this regional system now. Has that improved things significantly for prospective adopters in terms of numbers and the quality of information they get?

[103] **Ms Bell:** Yes, I think it has. I think there's no doubt about that. Some of that is the focus. Everybody has had their eyes on this new regional service and there's been a whole set of key performance indicators that they're responding on every quarter. So, that has helped to improve things. When you know that you're going to be measured on how long things are taking, I know people get on with it and do it quicker, don't they? One of the difficulties with the post-adoption support is that we don't have key performance indicators at the moment around post-adoption support. It's harder to measure it in numbers, but I think we really need to have some information that we're gathering regularly around post-adoption support. That will help to put a focus on that.

[104] **Suzy Davies:** Yes. Aled mentioned earlier, though, that there's still a great variation across the country in the length of time it takes between initial contact and an invitation to adopt, really. Have you got any explanation for why it's still so varied? You know, if you compare the figures for the South East Wales Adoption Service with those of the north, there's quite a difference between those two.

[105] **Ms Bell:** I don't have an explanation, I'm afraid, no.

[106] **Suzy Davies:** If you're talking in broad terms, perhaps the numbers of prospective adopters is now higher, but how have you been able to assess the quality of the assessment process? Have there been any major changes in that?

[107] **Ms Bell:** Not that I've heard, but I think it's more consistent, and I

think the panels are happening more regularly and the training courses are happening more regularly so people aren't having to wait so long to get on to the next preparation course. I don't know that there have been huge differences in the way the assessments are being done that I've heard of.

[108] **Suzy Davies:** You talked a little bit about pre-preparation as well and the kind of information that they have. I'm aware of time so I won't revisit that, but it strikes me that there are still some important gaps that need filling in in this, let alone with the post-adoption side of things.

[109] In terms of third sector support, you mentioned that Adoption UK, for example, has perhaps got less work from this system than perhaps it might have had before. But we've also lost the British Association for Adoption and Fostering in the meantime as well, and its responsibilities has been split between the service and Children in Wales. Is it too early to come to any conclusions about whether there have been any new gaps arising as a result of that, or whether the service available has declined slightly? It may even have improved—I couldn't say—but I wonder if you've got anything to add to that.

10:15

[110] **Ms Bell:** I think there will be elements of what BAAF provided that we are not going to be getting in the future—things like designing new forms and designing new guidance. BAAF did a really good job on those things, so a new Coram, or whatever it was, form—it would always be BAAF that designed that, and they would learn from examples in England and elsewhere, and we would have the benefit of that. There's nothing that's going to fill that gap at the moment, so I think we will, going forward, begin to realise that we've actually lost a key piece of the—

[111] **Suzy Davies:** Something very useful.

[112] **Ms Bell:** Yes, something very useful, and we haven't found another a way of filling the gap.

[113] **Suzy Davies:** The review mechanism, of course, has gone to Children in Wales. I don't know how long they've had that responsibility, but is there any evidence that you're able to give us about how that's working at the moment?

[114] **Ms Bell:** Nobody's said that it's not working, so I haven't heard anything negative. I assume it's just happening in the same way; it's the same people doing the same job, so I think that probably hasn't been impacted on very much.

[115] **Suzy Davies:** Thank you for that. That was my main question. Thank you, Chair.

[116] **Ann Jones:** If there was one thing that you could recommend that this committee did to make adoption easier, better, more seamless, whatever, what would that be? It goes you the opportunity for us to put that in the legacy so that we carry it on.

[117] **Ms Griffiths:** I think it's better clarification and information about what it actually is. You don't have, as far as I'm aware, the data on how children are doing in school, in relationships and in families. I think you started to collect those data, but I think putting that evidence back into the beginning so that people actually understand what it's all about would be helpful.

[118] **Ms Bell:** Yes, I agree. I think we understand much better the outcomes for adopted children, and we're not measuring them at the moment. We do need to.

[119] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thanks very much. Thank you both. I think we found that very interesting and very helpful for us doing our following-up work. We'll send you a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy so that you've got that. And then when we publish our follow-up report and our legacy report, you'll get a copy as well. So, thank you very much for coming; it's been very useful. Thank you.

[120] Shall we just have a quick five-minute break? So, if we're back here ready to start at 10.25 a.m.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:18 a 10:27.
The meeting adjourned between 10:18 and 10:27.*

**Ymchwiliad Dilynol i Wasanaethau Mabwysiadu yng Nghymru—Sesiwn
Dystiolaeth 2
Follow-up Inquiry into Adoption Services in Wales—Evidence Session 2**

[121] **Ann Jones:** We'll move on to item 3 on the agenda, then, which is to take the second evidence session on our follow-up work on the adoption report that the Children, Young People and Education Committee did earlier on in this Assembly session. We're delighted to have with us Katherine Shelton—yes, that's it, I just looked at that and I thought, 'I've read something different here'—who is senior lecturer at the School of Psychology at Cardiff University.

[122] **Dr Shelton:** That's correct.

[123] **Ann Jones:** Okay, that's great, so I don't have to ask you to introduce yourself for the record. Can I thank you for coming and thank you very much as well for your paper? If it's okay with you, we've got four areas of questioning that we want to look at and they are: the study itself, post-adoption support, a life-story work and then social care workforce skills. So, those are the four areas that Members are going to concentrate on, if that's okay. If it's all right, we'll go on to the first one, which is study, and, Angela, you're going to take those.

[124] **Angela Burns:** Yes, thank you very much indeed. It's nice to meet you and thank you very much for your paper. Actually, I can't ask a lot of the questions I'd like to ask, because everybody else has got them, so I'm just going to quickly ask you if you could just give us an overview of where the study is now, how much more you intend to add to it and at what point will you be publishing a paper?

[125] **Dr Shelton:** We're just over halfway through. So, we've had 95 questionnaires returned where families are approximately three to five months into a placement. We have also collected 376 child adoption records, which we're busy working with, and then we've completed about 30 of 35 interviews, where we've gone out across England and Wales to interview families for about two to three hours, and we're busy transcribing those.

[126] Now we've entered the final phase of the study, which is to follow families up 12 months into placement and see how things have changed and how their children are doing. Our funding runs out at the end of September. I

was funded by the National Institute for Social Care and Health Research and I'm not eligible to apply for additional funds, because they've changed the pot of money to being for early career and I'm not early career any more. [*Laughter.*] So, that has been disappointing and we have a huge amount of work to do, because—. I could just talk to you all day about how rich this narrative is from the families. So, that's where we are; we're just over halfway.

[127] **Angela Burns:** Can I ask you how you got your 95 families and all your cases—? I mean, how representative—? How did you make a balance between—? I don't know, I'm assuming there are successful and there are terrible stories and there's a gamut of differences in terms of everyone. How did you weight all of that and how representative will it all be?

10:30

[128] **Dr Shelton:** The family of every child placed between 1 June 2014 and July 2015 were invited to take part through the regions and their social workers. We also had support from Ann Bell and from Gerry Cooney at St David's Children Society. So, we tried to reach every family within that window of time and said, 'Would you like to take part?' Of those, 115 said, 'Yeah, we're up for that; we'd like our voice to be heard'. Ninety-five of those have replied. We're comparing those data to the whole country—the whole of Wales—to see whether the children in our study are different from the children from the child adoption records. They don't seem to be different. It may well be, and it's always the case with a study, that you get the people who are very motivated to respond and that will include people having good experiences and less good experiences. I feel that we're capturing a range of different voices in this study and a range of different children, so I'm reasonably confident that we can give you some good data in time to come.

[129] **Angela Burns:** Have you weighted it at all against—? Did I hear you mention earlier that you'd looked at England as well?

[130] **Dr Shelton:** No, we haven't, but I think we can because one of my colleagues on the study is Dr Heather Ottaway and she works at the University of Bristol now and works very closely with Professor Julie Selwyn, so I think, in due course, there could be that conversation to see whether it does look very different to the picture in England. That would be a different piece of work.

[131] **Angela Burns:** Okay. Is there any likelihood that the university might enable you to carry on with this as it would be, obviously, for Wales, a very important piece of work?

[132] **Dr Shelton:** Our job as researchers is to apply for external funding, so, no. That's where we are.

[133] **Angela Burns:** It would be a terrible shame if this can't carry on.

[134] **Dr Shelton:** It would be a crying shame. I've spent two years now trying to build up good working relationships with Ann and Gerry Cooney at St David's and with Suzanne Griffiths, who's been a great ally for us and has really championed this. I would be very sad to lose it at this point.

[135] **Angela Burns:** As a matter of interest, have you approached Welsh Government for any funding on this.

[136] **Dr Shelton:** My understanding was that it's NISCHR—

[137] **Angela Burns:** Oh, I see.

[138] **Dr Shelton:** —that the Welsh Government funds through NISCHR. So, no, I haven't.

[139] **Angela Burns:** All right. Well, we will bear your predicament in mind, I'm sure. Given that you have a rich narrative, it's probably best for me to be quiet and let my colleagues take over in exploring some of that narrative.

[140] **Ann Jones:** I'm sure you'll explore it when you get the chance—

[141] **Angela Burns:** You know I will, Ann. [*Laughter.*]

[142] **Ann Jones:** —if you smile sweetly at me. [*Laughter.*] Aled, do you want to start on the post-adoption support, and I'm sure others will want to come in?

[143] **Aled Roberts:** Byddaf yn gofyn **Aled Robert:** I will be asking my yn Gymraeg. Rwyf jest eisiau deall, question in Welsh. I just wanted to achos roeddwn i'n gofyn i Ann Bell yn understand, because I was asking gynharach pam fod cyn lleied o Ann Bell earlier why so few children—blant—. Rwy'n meddwl mai dim ond . I think only 23 per cent of children

23 y cant o blant yn y gogledd, ar ôl i'r rhieni wneud ymholiad yn y lle cyntaf, a aeth ymlaen i gael eu mabwysiadau. Roedd hi'n awgrymu bod canran o blant yn y gogledd, hwyrach, yn cael eu mabwysiadu o Loegr. Os ydych yn dweud eich bod wedi edrych ar bob plentyn o fewn ffenestr o ryw flwyddyn, a oes tystiolaeth bod yna blant yn y gogledd sy'n cael eu mabwysiadu o Loegr achos bod cymorth ar ôl mabwysiadu'n well yn Lloegr?

[144] **Dr Shelton:** They're all Welsh children, I'm sorry, so I can't answer that. We were specifically interested in Welsh children placed.

[145] **Aled Roberts:** So, they're placed in Wales.

[146] **Dr Shelton:** No, not necessarily. So, they're all Welsh children, but some of them have gone into England.

[147] **Aled Roberts:** Yes, that's what I was trying to—. The explanation that I had earlier as to why there was such a difference in rates in north Wales compared to south-east Wales of children where parents had made the initial contact and then went on to adopt—. I was told that the explanation for the figure being so low in north Wales was that those parents may have—. You haven't looked at the parents; you've just looked at the children.

[148] **Dr Shelton:** Yes. I've only got the Welsh children, but some of them have gone into England. It sort of is related to your question in that some of the responses coming back in the questionnaires and interviews do reflect greater support in England. So, they'll say things like, 'I couldn't get much out of the child's social worker in Wales, so we've done everything in England and the support here has been really good.' Now, that's just a handful of families, but I think it speaks to the point a little bit.

[149] **Aled Roberts:** A gaf i droi, felly, at beth yr ydych chi wedi'i ddarganfod? Mae yna ffigyrau yma ynglŷn â'r sefyllfa bedwar mis ar ôl y

Aled Roberts: May I turn, therefore, to what you've discovered? There are figures here about the situation four months after the placement. You say

lleoliad. Rydych chi'n sôn bod traean o rieni yn dweud bod angen cymorth ariannol. Mae mwy na chwarter yn dweud bod angen help gyda chofnodi profiadau bywyd ac ati. A oes yna unrhyw beth o fewn y gwaith yr ydych chi'n ei wneud i astudio'r sefyllfa ar ôl 12 mis sy'n awgrymu bod y sefyllfa wedi gwaethygu erbyn diwedd y 12 mis yna? Neu a ydy o'n rhy fuan, ar hyn o bryd, i chi ddweud hynny?

that a third of parents say that they need financial support. More than a quarter said that they needed help with the life-story work and so forth. Now, is there anything within the work that you are undertaking to study the situation post-12 months that would suggest that the situation had deteriorated at the end of those 12 months? Or is it too early, at the moment, for you to say that?

[150] **Dr Shelton:** We've got 15 responses back at 12 months. There's nothing to suggest to me it has deteriorated, but it was very varied in the first place. So, I don't think it has improved, and at interview, which is at about eight months, the issues are still there. So, I've got a family in a dire financial situation and they've been advised not to move to an adoption order because they'll lose their financial support. I've got numerous families commenting on still not having their life-story book. So, I don't think the situation has changed substantially, but the parents are, in many ways, quite patient in their replies. They're quite measured in their replies, saying, 'Well, we've been told it'll be another week. It will be a couple of weeks yet'. There are scores of them saying that they're just being asked to wait a bit longer for the information they've asked for.

[151] **Aled Roberts:** Ac o ran y sefyllfa lle yr oeddwn i'n dweud bod angen cymorth brys o ran CAMHS, mae'ch tystiolaeth chi'n awgrymu hefyd, hwyrach, fod y sefyllfa cyn waethed rwan â phan wnaethom ni edrych ar y sefyllfa yn 2012. A ydy hynny'n gywir?

Aled Roberts: In terms of the situation where I was saying that urgent support is needed in respect of CAMHS, your evidence also suggests that, perhaps, the situation is as poor now as when we looked at the situation in 2012. Is it right to say that?

[152] **Dr Shelton:** I haven't done a comparison between the—. I haven't been able to look at the data between 2012 and now, but what we're seeing at three to four months is parents reporting symptoms consistent with conduct problems, emotional problems and anxiety. Now, you can read into that what you may. That could be parents not sure how to calibrate their child, who has just come to live with them. Either way, I think we have to see it as a genuine concern. Now, whether that immediately launches you into thinking about

CAMHS and CAMHS referrals, I'm not sure about that, because it's not that these children meet diagnostic criteria for particular mental health problems, but there seems to be a high level of symptoms that are being experienced. It certainly points to the need for support, and parents having some way of measuring whether this is to be expected for a child who's experienced the level of disruption that these children have. Probably, yes, but it doesn't mean that you don't need support with it. So, I'm not necessarily saying it's indicative of a disorder, but I do think it's indicative of a need to do some more careful support of parents and the children themselves before it becomes a problem, as Julie Selwyn's research has shown.

[153] **Aled Roberts:** One of our previous witnesses was saying it's not just a question of the post-adoption support. She was suggesting it's a lack of preparatory work pre-adoption, where basically parents are taking on—well, they're getting involved in adoption without, perhaps, having explained to them the full impact of what's required by being an adopted parent in the first place, and then also not having a full understanding of the challenges of those adopted children, or their experiences, which then create challenges.

[154] **Dr Shelton:** Yes. There's definitely a need to start that support much earlier, and you have the expertise in Wales. It's been really incredible to sit and see the breadth of expertise here. You've got St David's, you've got Adoption UK and you've got some really good expertise within the region. So, start it months before the child goes to live with that family, and do the preparatory work. I don't think these parents are as naive as perhaps they're portrayed, certainly in the media. They come in with anxieties and concerns and thinking, 'Am I prepared? What am I going to face?', but they don't necessarily have the skills and knowledge about where to go for support when they do confront these problems. I essentially agree with you, yes.

[155] **Aled Roberts:** It's interesting that you said that we have the expertise in Wales, and you actually cited St David's and Adoption UK, but you didn't cite the National Adoption Service.

[156] **Dr Shelton:** I think of the National Adoption Service as including St David's and Adoption UK. So, I sit on their advisory group as a researcher and it's very collegial and open and honest and frank, with Suzanne Griffiths sitting there, and everybody at the table I think of as being part of the service. So, how she described it to me was that the families are part of the service, and everybody who surrounds that child and holds that child up are part of the National Adoption Service. So, that's how I think of it. I think of

them all as being at the table.

[157] **Aled Roberts:** Er hynny, roedd **Aled Roberts:** However, the evidence tystiolaeth gan Dewi Sant ac from St David's and Adoption UK Adoption UK yn awgrymu bod llai o'u suggested that less of their expertise harbenigedd nhw'n cael ei gomisiynu was being commissioned by now by erbyn hyn gan y gwasanaeth the national service than was the cenedlaethol nag oedd yr achos cyn case before the creation of the creu'r gwasanaeth cenedlaethol. national service. So, that's also Felly, mae hynny'n ddi-ddorol hefyd. interesting.

[158] **Dr Shelton:** Yes. My view, just from getting to know all these people over the past two years, is that they should be involved and they should be empowered to work together. So, they're able to come together periodically for meetings—of about this size, actually—but they need to be empowered to do the work that they are capable of doing, I would argue.

[159] **Ann Jones:** Angela, have you got any points now?

[160] **Angela Burns:** No.

[161] **Ann Jones:** No. Okay, thank you. Life-story work, then—Rhodri Glyn.

[162] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you very fawr, Gadeirydd. O'r dystiolaeth much, Chair. From the evidence that rydych wedi'i derbyn, a oes arfer da you have received, is there good yn bodoli o ran cofnodi profiadau practice in terms of recording life bywyd? Mae pawb yn cydnabod bod stories? Everyone recognises that this hwn yn eithriadol o bwysig ar gyfer is exceptionally important for plant sy'n cael eu mabwysiadu a'r adopted children and for the families teuluoedd sy'n eu mabwysiadu nhw. that adopt them. Are there examples A oes enghreifftiau o arfer da yng of good practice in Wales? Nghymru?

[163] **Dr Shelton:** If there are, it's not coming across in our interviews. My colleague on the project Heather Ottaway, who's as Bristol, said, 'It's important to differentiate between life-story work as a product and life-story work as a process.' So, this idea of this book versus the very careful and sensitive work that needs to be conducted by the child's social worker and then going forward in collaboration with the adoption social worker and also involving parents. What the parents are saying is that they are effectively

being marginalised. So, social workers will say, 'You'll have it in due course', and 'You can't see it now'. That theme runs through the interviews and the questionnaires—that people are being excluded from being part of telling that child's story. So, there's nothing I can see in our questionnaires that would allow me to say to you, consistently, 'This is a good example of exemplary practice around life-story work that's happening in Wales.' That may be misrepresenting, and some people may say, 'We're doing this', but I can't see it—. Even if it—. There needs to be some work done on this about how to skill up the social workers to give them the space and time to do the work and to, again, empower them to support that child to make sense of what's happened to them. But include parents in that conversation because they're crucial. You can't wait until these young people are teenagers. You haven't got the time. They're happening now. They have a voice now. So, yes.

[164] **Ann Jones:** Lynne's got a point, Rhodri Glyn, on this now, just before you come back.

[165] **Lynne Neagle:** What you're saying is very worrying. I just wondered whether you thought social workers are taking that sort of, you know, 'You can't have this now' attitude purely because they haven't got time to do the work and, therefore, it's to defend themselves, or is there something more worrying going on?

[166] **Dr Shelton:** I only have the parents' perspective. It would be unfair of me to comment too much on the social workers' perspective. From what the parents are saying, it does seem to be that some of the work is rushed, hurried—social workers don't have time; social workers on long-term sick; change of social workers. So, there's a lot of that kind of procedural stuff happening, but then—. What was the second part of the question, sorry?

10:45

[167] **Lynne Neagle:** It's just, really, I'm trying to get to the bottom of whether it's just a lack of time for the social workers, or whether there's anything, you know—. Is there a fundamental misunderstanding with social workers about what the purpose of the life story book is, or—? I don't know. It seems really odd that they would take that stance on something that is designed to give the parents information about the children that they're adopting.

[168] **Dr Shelton:** Yes, I agree. I can't understand why anyone would deviate

from the view that this is a record for the child for the rest of their life so that, when they're 56 or 65, they can come back to it. So, I can't understand why we wouldn't all be on the same page with that particular view. But I do think that it's very sensitive work to work with a child who has experienced such trauma, and you do need to have the professional competencies to do that and to feel confident to do it, but also to have the space and time to do it.

[169] It may also be more technical than—that kind of shift from the child's social worker to the adoption social worker. And that's why I keep talking about collaborative working, because that handover from the child social worker to the adoption social worker, I think, needs a bit of thought, really, from those who are involved in that area.

[170] **Ann Jones:** Rhodri Glyn, do you want to come in?

[171] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Ydw. A **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yes. Can I ask a allaf i ofyn cwestiwn ynglŷn â question on the recruitment of recriwtio rhieni maeth a hefyd eu adoptive parents and the process of paratoi nhw ar gyfer y broses o preparing them for adoption and fabwysiadu ac o feithrin plant? A oes bringing up children? Is there good yna arfer da yn y fan honno y dylid ei practice in that area that should be ymestyn ar draws Cymru? rolled out across Wales?

[172] **Dr Shelton:** A lot of the parents have commented that they had three to four days' training as part of the preparation and they found that really helpful. What they don't tell me is where they got that training from. So, I think the preparatory training days are an example of good practice in Wales. That's something that several families have commented on. There is some really good social work around preparing families and preparing parents. I did wonder about siblings in families and what work was being done there to prepare other children in the family for the arrival of a new sibling. So, I would say the training days, certainly, would be worth exploring in terms of what's being done there, because that seems to be something they like.

[173] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr.

[174] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Simon, you've got a point on this and then if we move to your questions as well—.

[175] **Simon Thomas:** Yes. I'd just like to go back one step to the life story,

if I may, just to explore, a little more, something on that. If you take a non-adoptive family, you know, we don't have social workers coming in and telling parents when they can or cannot share their child's experience with them; we trust the parents to do that, and parents make mistakes, of course—everyone makes mistakes. But it's the parents who tell the life story to the child, constantly referring back to the childhood experiences that formed them and so forth. You say you haven't had any examples in your study of really good practice in this field. We haven't yet, as a committee, either—either verbally or in written evidence. So, there's clearly a problem here and there is, clearly, a proprietary kind of approach by some social workers that isn't putting the child and their needs and the needs of and support for the adoptive parents central to that, and perhaps process is dictating things more than practice in that sense.

[176] Is there anything intrinsically wrong with having a more shared approach to this life story between the adoptive parents and the agencies, in terms of access to that information and sharing that information—? So, the file—which shouldn't, these days, be a paper file, anyway, it should be some kind of accessible electronic kind of thing—is something that's built jointly between the adoptive parents and the supporting agencies and is then shared with the child, as appropriate, but as a joint venture, not as something that a social worker decides he or she is in control of.

[177] **Dr Shelton:** Yes, my colleagues on the study, such as Sarah Meakings, who also is involved in the disruption study with Julie Selwyn—that would be their recommendation, that it becomes a collaborative piece of work. It can't begin like that, it involves very careful social work practice and good knowledge of where the child is at at that moment. Then you work forward and you start to bring people in, such as parents.

[178] To be fair, we're not talking about when you first rolled over and drank from a cup. This is really sensitive information that is very distressing for everybody involved in a particular case, potentially. So, it does have to be handled with great care, and I suppose social workers have to feel like parents are ready to engage in that process, but, again, that comes back to appropriate training.

[179] **Simon Thomas:** But we're asking the parents to deal with the outcomes of that process.

[180] **Dr Shelton:** Exactly.

[181] **Simon Thomas:** So, why aren't we sharing with them what happened to originate that disturbance or disruption, or whatever it might be?

[182] **Dr Shelton:** Yes. I've got parents saying, 'I don't understand. We've been kicking ourselves because they keep hitting—'

[183] **Simon Thomas:** Well, we had that all through our initial inquiry. All the parents were saying that they only discovered afterwards what the problem was, and why their child was suddenly, at particular ages, manifesting certain difficulties. It was often years afterwards that they discovered the social worker knew all along. Somewhere, buried deep in the file—it was not necessarily the social worker they were dealing with, but, somewhere, buried deep in the file, was some information that could have helped.

[184] **Dr Shelton:** That's happening already. About a third of families are saying, 'We now know things that we know our social worker knew when the child came to live with us that they didn't tell us.' You can't do it with one hand behind your back, but we are asking them to.

[185] **Simon Thomas:** So, this collaborative approach—it may not be working now, but it's certainly something that we should be examining.

[186] **Dr Shelton:** Yes.

[187] **Simon Thomas:** Okay. That's it.

[188] **Ann Jones:** Do you want to move on to your questions on the social care workforce skills, then?

[189] **Simon Thomas:** Ydw. Diolch yn fawr. Fe wnaif i ofyn hwn yn y Gymraeg. Jest i droi yn ôl at yr agenda, fel petai, un o'r pethau sydd yn codi yw pa sgiliau sydd gan y gweithlu fan hyn. Wrth sefydlu'r gwasanaeth cenedlaethol newydd—sydd ddim yn wir yn genedlaethol, ond beth bynnag, dyna'r enw sydd arno fe—a ydych chi wedi canfod, neu a oes gennych chi dystiolaeth,

Simon Thomas: Yes. Thank you very much. I will ask this question in Welsh. Just to turn back to our agenda, as it were, one of the things that arises is the skills within the workforce here. In establishing the new national service—which isn't really national, but that's the name given to it—have you discovered, or do you have any evidence, that the skills required to support the service

fod adnabyddiaeth o'r sgiliau sydd eu are being identified? Are the hangen i gefnogi'r gwasanaeth yna? necessary steps therefore being A oes yna, felly, gamau priodol yn taken to fill those skill gaps where cael eu cymryd i lenwi'r bylchau they exist? hynny?

[190] **Dr Shelton:** I don't know if the necessary steps are being taken to fill those gaps because I only have the parents' voice and the child adoption record. I have been concerned about the information contained in the child adoption record and the way in which technical language is being used. I'm not clear on whether it's being used in a consistent way, that everybody is referring to the same thing. So, when people talk about 'attachment', 'attachment disorder', 'insecure attachment', 'disorganised attachment', and when they talk about 'externalising problems', I have no idea if we're all talking about the same thing or not, and that's really problematic, whereas, if you had confidence, like with a GP—. All the GPs in Wales will be in agreement about what a chest infection is, I assume. I know it's not the same as that when you are dealing with children's trauma, but there is expertise in the UK and, as Ann referred to, the NICE guidelines. We do have the knowledge, but I'm not confident that everybody's been trained. They won't have been trained, because some of this is so new and recent. They won't all have been trained to the same level of knowledge.

[191] **Simon Thomas:** Is there a danger, then, that these terms are being used in a—how can I put it—used by professionals as a way of papering over failures of correct identification or correct—? Perhaps they haven't got time to do it. Perhaps there aren't the resources to do it. Nevertheless, these terms are being used in a way that just papers over the faults that are there. I'm not talking about the individual social worker, but the system. The system isn't able to cope with that, therefore these are being used to hide that, if you like.

[192] **Dr Shelton:** To be fair, they are probably not qualified to make those judgments about disorder. So, yes. I don't know if it's 'papering over'. What I do know is that it's precisely those labels that are delaying placements.

[193] **Simon Thomas:** Yes. I think you put your finger on it there, because you said that they are not qualified.

[194] **Dr Shelton:** I'm not qualified.

[195] **Simon Thomas:** No. So, there are terms being used that people are not necessarily qualified to use, in that sense.

[196] **Dr Shelton:** Yes.

[197] **Angela Burns:** It's like every noisy, busy child has got ADHD. In fact, they haven't; they're just noisy and busy.

[198] **Dr Shelton:** That's it.

[199] **Simon Thomas:** But, once you have used that term, that has implications. That term is picked up by other agencies, and it has implications. So, we go back to how we might be able to address that skills gap. I acknowledge that you are a researcher, but you sit on the national service. In terms of what you see there, do you see that that has been recognised and that there's an attempt to put something in place to address that?

[200] **Dr Shelton:** I don't know that they would feel they're empowered to address it, but I know that, in the region, we have it. Within a mile of here, we have a school that delivers social work training and has the adoption expertise. We have it in Bristol. So, locally, we have the capacity to deliver adoption specialist training for social workers. I think we can do it, but it is again about empowering people to do it.

[201] **Simon Thomas:** And from the point of view of what you've seen—obviously, it's parents telling you about their experiences—do you see variations in terms of the parents' interaction with social workers in terms of what the parents are picking up in whether that person they're dealing with is obviously trained or competent in that area?

[202] **Dr Shelton:** Yes.

[203] **Ann Jones:** Aled, have you got a supplementary before Simon—?

[204] **Aled Roberts:** Yes. You may not be able to answer this, to be honest with you, but I'm just thinking—it appears that one of the issues that is becoming common is the fact that there is this distinction between children's social work teams and adoption social work teams. Is there any requirement, as far as you know, whereby, if you're an adoption social worker, there's a requirement within your continuous professional development that you

actually have the specialist adoption training that you've just referred to?

[205] **Dr Shelton:** No, I don't know, sorry.

[206] **Ann Jones:** Have you finished?

[207] **Simon Thomas:** I'm fine.

[208] **Ann Jones:** David.

[209] **David Rees:** On this point in particular, because I think I've been listening very carefully and, obviously, your research is very much with the parents, and families in that sense, but there are a lot of areas around the social worker that have come to the fore. Have you thought about expanding your research to talk to the social workers to find out, you know, some of the issues that they are finding difficult, whether this situation between the two services is a major problem and whether there is a direction we should be looking at? Have you thought about going in that direction?

[210] **Dr Shelton:** We could go in that direction, and we would have liked to have done some interview work with social workers. I think it's a different piece of work, but I think it would be worth exploring and investigating, yes, what—

[211] **David Rees:** It sounds as if a lot of answers could come from them, in one sense.

[212] **Dr Shelton:** For sure, yes. It is about that balance, isn't it, and not wanting to blame people, you know.

[213] **Ann Jones:** Do you think this committee should recommend in its follow-up whether the function of assessing support needs that arise post-adoption should be moved to be located either within the National Adoption Service or an adoption social work team rather than just being undertaken by generic social workers?

[214] **Dr Shelton:** For post-adoption support?

[215] **Ann Jones:** Yes. So, should they be a really specialised, trained social worker, rather than just—?

[216] **Simon Thomas:** I'm sure we recommended that—[*Inaudible.*]

[217] **Ann Jones:** Well, we did, but I'm just wondering whether it's something that needs to be—whether we add any more evidence to that to strengthen it, probably.

[218] **Dr Shelton:** My sense is to try to ensure the continuity between the children's social worker and then, going forward, with the adoption social worker, just to allow that bridge to be very smooth and so that people are talking to each other and the family all the time. What I'm finding is that it's become quite a divisive issue: 'The child social worker was brilliant—they did lots of really sensitive work with the child—but my adoption social worker never returned my calls.' If it was perceived as one connected service, it might help a little bit.

[219] **Ann Jones:** I think that was the feeling from the committee. I wasn't on the committee when the adoption report was being taken through, but I think one of the feelings from the committee was that that is what they were trying to do—to get that cohesive approach. I'm wondering whether we should strengthen that. I just was after your views, really.

[220] **Dr Shelton:** I do still feel that the National Adoption Service has huge potential—it's brilliant, you know—brilliant potential.

[221] **Ann Jones:** Okay, that's fine. Has anybody else got any more questions? No. Okay. Thank you ever so much, Katherine, for coming and sharing your evidence with us. We'll send you a copy of the transcript of this just to check for accuracy and then a copy of the report when we've made the final recommendations.

[222] **Dr Shelton:** Thanks for listening. Thank you. Thanks, everyone.

[223] **Ann Jones:** Thanks ever so much. Thank you.

10:59

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[224] **Ann Jones:** We've got a paper to note from the Minister for Education and Skills on the follow-up to adoption services. So, if we note that—. I just

remind you that the Minister's in for general scrutiny next week on Wednesday—next Wednesday at the meeting.

11:00

[225] **Simon Thomas:** Can I just ask—? You say 'general scrutiny'; is that general scrutiny on—

[226] **Ann Jones:** It's general scrutiny on the whole of his policy areas.

[227] **Simon Thomas:** Right. Next Wednesday. And we've got questions to him in the afternoon as well.

[228] **Ann Jones:** Yes. We're still in public session.

[229] **Simon Thomas:** So I have a choice: where do I go in the morning and where do I go in the afternoon?

[230] **Ann Jones:** You're getting very unruly now. Unless there's anything else, I'll close this part of the meeting. Can I remind you all that the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty is coming in for 12.30 p.m.? It is a 12.30 p.m. start, so I expect to see everybody sat in their seats—I'm sounding like a teacher now—at 12.25 p.m. so that we can start. It is a 12.30 p.m. start. That's on the budget, and then we'll move on from that. So, if that's okay with you, I'll close this part of the meeting.

Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 11:00 a 12:34.

The meeting adjourned between 11:00 and 12:34.

**Craffu ar Gyllideb ddrafft Llywodraeth Cymru ar gyfer 2016–17—Y
Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi
Scrutiny of Welsh Government draft budget 2016–17—Minister for
Communities and Tackling Poverty**

[231] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Well, welcome back to the next item on our agenda, which is to take evidence on the budget from the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty. Welcome, Lesley, to this part of the meeting. I wondered whether you'd introduce yourself—well, no, you don't need to introduce yourself; I wonder whether you'd introduce your officials who are with you, and then we'll go straight into questions, if that's okay.

[232] **The Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty (Lesley Griffiths):** That's fine. On my left is Owain Lloyd, deputy director, childcare and play division, and on my right, is Alyson Francis, deputy director from the families division.

[233] **Ann Jones:** Okay. We've got roughly four broad areas that we want to try and discuss with you around how the draft budgets will have implications. It's around child poverty, family support—to include Families First, Flying Start and parental support—childcare, and then children's rights, play and participation. So, those are the four broad areas, but we'll see how we go because different Members will have different areas they want to speak on. But, Rhodri Glyn, do you want to start with child poverty please?

[234] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr iawn, Gadeirydd. Rwyf wedi bod yn Aelod o'r Cynulliad nawr ers bron i 17 mlynedd, ac rwy'n credu mai un o'r pethau cyntaf glywais i pan ddes i yma oedd strategaeth y Llywodraeth i ostwng lefelau tlodi, ac yn benodol, tlodi ymysg plant. Ac rydym wedi gwneud sawl adroddiad—fe wnaethon ni adroddiad ar y pwyllgor blaenorol roeddwn arno fe; rwy'n credu roeddech chi'n Gadeirydd ar y pwyllgor hwnnw pan wnaethon ni'r ymchwiliad i dlodi. Ac eto, mae'r lefelau yn gyson ac, os rhywbeth, yn codi. Sut ydych chi yn gweld bod modd mynd i'r afael â'r broblem yma a gwneud gwahaniaeth sylfaenol, a beth yn benodol o fewn eich portffolio chi rydych yn ei ddefnyddio i fynd i'r afael â'r problemau yma o dlodi ymysg plant a phobl ifanc?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Thank you very much, Chair. I have been an Assembly Member now for nearly 17 years, and I think that one of the first things I heard when I came here was the Government's strategy to reduce levels of poverty, and specifically poverty amongst children. And we've done many reports—we did a report in the previous committee I was on; I believe that you were Chair of that committee when we undertook an inquiry into poverty. And yet, the levels remain constant and, if anything, are rising. How do you see a way of tackling this problem and making a fundamental difference, and what specifically within your portfolio are you using to tackle these problems of poverty amongst children and young people?

[235] **Lesley Griffiths:** I don't think we can look at child poverty in isolation; you have to look at the whole of poverty, because, obviously, if children are in poverty, it's because their parents are in poverty. So, you will have heard me say before that, since I've been in portfolio, we've refreshed the way we look at tackling poverty right across Government. So, whilst 'tackling poverty'

is in my title, every Minister is responsible for tackling poverty, and every decision that every Minister takes, they have to now look at tackling poverty. Every decision report has looked at tackling poverty.

[236] I think the big difference in what we've done recently is looking at employability, with specific focus on tackling poverty. So, for instance, within Communities First, which has been our flagship tackling poverty programme for many years, there's been much more of a focus on employability over the past year or so. So, we've introduced the Lift programme; we've introduced Communities for Work, using the infrastructure of Communities First. So, that's the first thing where I think we've changed the focus. Last year, in March, I launched the revised child poverty strategy, and one of the questions we asked was, 'Our ambition is to eradicate child poverty by 2020, and, of course, we're now at the beginning of 2016, so should we keep that target?' Certainly, the response that came back from stakeholders was that we should. I know the UK Government have got rid of it, but we kept it, and I'm really pleased that we kept it, because I think it does focus people's minds, because we have kept that target. But, I won't pretend it's going to be easy to reach; it's not, and I think, with the welfare reform changes that we're seeing coming in from the UK Government, that's made our job even harder.

[237] So, I think it's about making sure that we fund the right mix of programmes as well, in relation to child poverty. Flying Start has been a great success; a long-term programme that we are now starting to see the benefits of. I've also undertaken a piece of work recently to align the tackling poverty programmes, the three main ones—Families First, Flying Start, Communities First—but also, some aspects of Supporting People as well, which I know isn't particularly a tackling poverty programme, but there are elements of it too.

[238] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Rydych yn sôn mai un o'r pethau rydych wedi blaenoriaethu ydy gwaith a chyflogaeth, ac eto, un o'r casgliadau ddaeth o'r ymchwiliad wnaeth y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol i dlodi oedd, erbyn hyn, bod llawer iawn o bobl sydd mewn gwaith o dan y lefel dlodi. Fe gawson ni dystiolaeth yn benodol ynglŷn â'r banciau bwyd—bod yna **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** You mention that one of the things that you have prioritised is work and employment, and yet, one of the conclusions that came out of the inquiry that the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee undertook into poverty was that, by now, many people who are in work are under the poverty line. We received evidence specifically about the food banks—

bobl mewn gwaith, yn enwedig that people who were in work, teuluoedd â rhiant sengl, hwyrach particularly single-parent families mewn gwaith, ond â dau neu dri o who might have been in work, but blant, ac roeddent yn gorfod gwneud with two or three children, had to defnydd o fanciau bwyd. Felly, ni make use of food banks. So, being fydd cyflogaeth ynddo'i hunan o employed in and of itself is not reidrwydd yn ateb y broblem. necessarily going to be a solution to this problem.

[239] **Lesley Griffiths:** No and you're quite right—we've seen a rise in in-work poverty. In fact, we have more people living in in-work poverty now than in out-of-work poverty. So, I can see why you would think that I'm being contradictory, but I still believe that employment is the best route out of poverty. I've just read something, and I can't remember whether it was from within Government or outside of Government, which said that 70 per cent of people who go into work do then get out of poverty. So, I absolutely believe that employment is the right way out of poverty.

[240] On the barriers that people have to getting into work, I think we've done a great deal of work around that. So, you'll be aware of PaCE, which is our childcare programme, which helps people with childcare, particularly lone single parents, who come to us and say that childcare is a barrier. So, I can understand why you're asking that question, but I do think, and certainly evidence is showing, that long-term, permanent employment is the best way out of poverty.

[241] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** O ran y Rhodri Glyn Thomas: In terms of rhaglenni yma rydych yn sôn these programmes that you're talking amdanynt—pethau fel gofal plant a about—things such as childcare and hefyd Dechrau'n Deg a rhai o'r also Flying Start and some of the rhaglenni eraill—i ba raddau y mae'r other programmes—to what extent rhaglenni hynny ar gael yn y Gymraeg are those programmes available yn ogystal ag yn Saesneg? through the medium of Welsh in addition to the medium of English?

[242] **Lesley Griffiths:** Certainly with Flying Start, I think the figure—I'm looking at Owain; no sorry, it's Alyson I should be looking at—was that 96 per cent of parents who had asked for Flying Start provision through the medium of Welsh had received their choice.

[243] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** A'r Rhodri Glyn Thomas: And the

gwasanaethau rydych yn sôn services that you talk about in terms
amdanynt yn awr, fel gofal plant, a of childcare, are those also available
ydy'r rheini ar gael hefyd i rieni sy'n to parents who wish their children to
dymuno i'w plant fynd i feithrinfa have nursery provision through the
trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg? medium of Welsh?

[244] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, they are. I don't have any percentage figures. Perhaps that 96 per cent covers all programmes.

[245] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you very
fawr. much.

[246] **Ann Jones:** Could I ask you, Minister, to explain why you felt it necessary to rename the 2015–16 child poverty policy budget line, or the BEL, as the 'tackling poverty' BEL? Does that not disadvantage children who are in poverty?

[247] **Lesley Griffiths:** No. That's just an administrative change. I think it took place way before I came into portfolio—probably in about 2013–14. It doesn't actually fund any programmes, for instance; I think the last thing that I spent out of it was on—. I've got a tackling poverty external advisory group, so it funds the activity around that. I've just recently held two tackling poverty summits and that comes out of that. That BEL doesn't actually fund tackling poverty programmes. It's just an administrative change.

[248] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Shall we move on to family support? Aled first, then David and Simon.

[249] **Aled Roberts:** Rwyf eisiau **Aled Roberts:** I want to start with
dechrau ar Dechrau'n Deg. Flying Start. You've been asked in the
Gofynnwyd i chi o'r blaen a ydych yn past if you are willing to gather data
barod i gasglu data ynglŷn â faint o on how many of the four elements
bob un o'r pedair elfen y mae that families are in receipt of. In
teuluoedd yn eu derbyn. Rwy'n previous evidence, you've said that
meddwl, mewn tystiolaeth flaenorol, your officials have looked into that,
rydych wedi dweud bod eich but have come to the conclusion that
swyddogion wedi edrych i mewn i it isn't practical to place an additional
hynny, ond eu bod wedi dod i'r burden on local authorities to find
casgliad nad yw'n ymarferol i roi those data and that you don't see
baich ychwanegol ar awdurdodau that there is much benefit in doing
lleol ac nad ydych yn gweld bod yna so. How, therefore, do you ensure

lauer o fudd mewn gwneud hynny. value for money if you have no
Sut, felly, ydych chi'n sicrhau gwerth information on how many of the
am arian os nad oes gennych dim 37,000 children are in receipt of the
gwybodaeth o gwbl ynglŷn â faint o'r different elements of those four
37,000 o blant sydd yn derbyn y elements?
gwahanol elfennau allan o'r pedair
elfen?

[250] **Lesley Griffiths:** We do have research on each element as to how Flying Start families and parents feel the programmes improve their lives. Obviously, each element is monitored. The account manager meets the Flying Start providers at least twice a year, if not more—perhaps once a term actually. They meet more regularly than that now—at least once a term—to go forward. We've just had some recent research where we've collected parents' views about how they feel their children have benefited. We've had some really positive responses. So, some of the elements of, for instance, a health visitor, relationship with the parents, speech and language, the outreach provision. So, we are developing a new approach to evaluation and that will allow us to collect much more detailed information around the provision of services, particularly around families' engagement with the different elements of the programme. I'm sure, from that, we will be able to glean the sort of information that you're requesting. We're going to pilot this approach in April this year. So, I think, going forward, we will have much more data to be able provide.

12:45

[251] **Aled Roberts:** Ond, os ydych chi'n casglu'r data—. Rwy'n meddwl eich bod yn dweud rywle, wrth sôn am iaith a lleferydd, mai'r data rydych yn eu casglu ydy bod y defnydd o'r gwasanaeth yn cael ei ddiffinio fel cwrs sy'n cael ei gynnis i riant a bod y plentyn yn mynychu'r sesiwn gyntaf. Pa fath o ddata yw'r rheiny hynny os oes gan y plentyn broblem efo iaith a lleferydd? Mae hon yn broblem gynyddol, os ydych yn siarad efo athrawon meithrin, er enghraifft. Os ydych yn casglu data

Aled Roberts: But, if you are gathering the data—. I think you do say somewhere, in mentioning speech and language, that the data you gather are that the use of the service is defined as a course offered to a parent and that the child actually attends just the first session. What kind of data are they if the child does have a speech and language problem? This is an increasing problem, if you speak to nursery teachers, for example. If you're only gathering evidence on children

ynglŷn â mynd i un sesiwn yn unig, ni fuaswn i'n meddwl, o fewn un sesiwn, fod llawer o siawns i'r plentyn yna ddod dros unrhyw anhawster o ran lleferydd ac iaith. Felly, a ydych chi'n fodlon bod beth rydych yn ei fesur yn rhoi unrhyw fath o sicrwydd i chi fod y rhaglen yma'n gweithio?

attending a single session, then I wouldn't have thought that, in a single session, much progress could be made with that child in actually overcoming any difficulty in terms of speech and language. So, are you content that what you're measuring can give any sort of assurance that this programme is working?

[252] **Lesley Griffiths:** I'm happy with some of the monitoring. One of the things I have asked for and is coming in—. You'll be aware that we brought in some new materials and tools in relation to speech and language. I don't know if any of you have seen it—it's a wheel, I don't know if you've seen this—which sort of helps with milestones, et cetera. That came in—probably last summer I launched that. So, I have asked for some monitoring to be done from that to give us some better data in relation to speech and language. So, the review of the usefulness of that is now under way and I'm hoping that will be able to give us a better understanding of how the speech and language provision we are providing is helping. You get lots of anecdotal—. Certainly, talking to headteachers, they now say, particularly from a speech and language angle, that it's getting more difficult to be able to differentiate between children who have been through Flying Start and children who haven't. But, as I say, that's anecdotal and I think it is really important that we are able to access that kind of robust evaluation and data.

[253] **Aled Roberts:** Ond, yn y pen draw, oni ddylech chi fod yn mesur yr allbwn o ran y cymorth sy'n cael ei gynnig ac os yw'r plentyn unigol wedi gwneud cynnydd? Nid wyf yn gweld eich bod yn gallu bodloni'ch hun drwy ddweud bod plentyn wedi mynd i un sesiwn ac felly bod yr adnoddau sy'n cael eu rhoi i wasanaethau iaith a lleferydd o fewn Dechrau'n Deg yn cynnig gwerth am arian.

Aled Roberts: But, ultimately, shouldn't you be actually assessing the output in terms of the assistance provided and whether that individual child has made progress? I don't see that you can be satisfied yourself by saying that a child has attended just one session and therefore stating that the resources provided to speech and language services within Flying Start are providing value for money.

[254] **Lesley Griffiths:** I'll ask Alyson to say a bit about that.

[255] **Miss Francis:** I think there's a few elements there. There is the course that you mentioned, but there were also other elements to the speech and language entitlement as part of Flying Start and they cover a whole range of things, from the activities as part of childcare to the book bags and the development wheel and tools that the Minister has mentioned. As part of the qualitative research that's just been published, there's more information in there about how useful families are finding the speech and language entitlement. Their assessment was—. They were asked to give a mark out of 10 and their mark out of 10 for the speech and language element was 9. So, those who are accessing that particular service seem to be quite happy with that.

[256] **Aled Roberts:** What about the ones who might not access it because they go to one session and then disengage?

[257] **Miss Francis:** This is where some of the health visiting entitlement comes in sometimes—where they're spending time with the families and the children. Quite often, they may be referring families to speech and language therapists where they think there may be the need for additional intervention in this area.

[258] **Aled Roberts:** A gaf i ofyn am eich sylw chi hefyd? Mae'r Comisiwn Symudedd Cymdeithasol a Thlodi Plant wedi cyhoeddi adroddiad ym mis Rhagfyr, sydd yn dweud ei bod hi'n siomedig nad yw cyfran y plant sy'n derbyn rhaglen Dechrau'n Deg ac sydd wedi cyrraedd neu ragori ar eu cerrig milltir wedi cynyddu ers 2012–13. Rydym yn dal yn gweld 55 y cant yn unig o'r plant hynny yn cyrraedd eu cerrig milltir. O gofio'r holl adnoddau sy'n cael eu rhoi i mewn a'r ffaith na chafwyd unrhyw gynnydd yn ystod y ddwy neu dair blynedd ddiwethaf, a yw hynny'n creu unrhyw fath o bryder i chi?

Aled Roberts: May I ask for your comments as well? The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission published a report in December that states that it's disappointing that the proportion of children in receipt of Flying Start and that have reached or exceeded their milestones has not increased since 2012–13. We are still seeing only around 55 per cent of those children actually reaching or exceeding their milestones. Given all of the resources provided to this programme and the fact that there has been no progress over the past two or three years, is that a cause of concern to you?

[259] **Lesley Griffiths:** I think, you know, it's really important to remember that children develop at different rates, and that we are not always measuring

the same children too. You measure one group of children, and then, obviously, they go out of Flying Start because of their age or because they have moved out of Flying Start. So, I think it's really difficult. You have heard me say before: we should put a barcode on their head. It would be much easier, then, to be able to see their progress. In terms of the quantitative research that Alyson just referred to, while I accept it's reduced slightly in terms of those who have reached the milestones by the age of three, I think it was just a couple of per cent. It was down to about 55 per cent in 2014–15. The ones who were up to one age band below their developmental milestones over the same period has increased slightly—I think that's gone up 3 per cent. So, I think, you know, there is a balance here. But I think that it's really important to appreciate that there is wide scope to exercise that professional judgment by health visitors when they do assess individual children. But, it is incredibly difficult to measure the success of Flying Start. Again, if you keep one child away from social services, to me that's hugely important and significant.

[260] **Aled Roberts:** Y cwestiwn olaf: pa reswm a ydych chi'n ei roi gerbron heddiw ynglŷn â'r gostyngiad o ran cyllid Teuluoedd yn Gyntaf, yn hytrach na rhaglenni eraill? Rwyf ar ddeall bod yna ostyngiad cyffredinol o awdurdod i awdurdod, ond bydd y penderfyniadau ynglŷn â pha rhaglenni sy'n cael eu dileu neu eu lleihau yn cael eu gwneud gan yr awdurdodau unigol hynny. Sut, felly, y mae unrhyw fath o drosolwg gan Lywodraeth Cymru er mwyn sicrhau nad yw rhaglenni sy'n eithaf llwyddiannus—neu sy'n fwy llwyddiannus na'r rhaglenni sy'n parhau o fewn awdurdodau lleol—yn diflannu?

Aled Roberts: Just a final question: what would you put forward as the reason in terms of the reduction in funding for Families First rather than other programmes? I'm given to understand that there is a general reduction from authority to authority, but that decisions as to which programmes will be scrapped or reduced will be taken by those individual authorities. So, how can the Welsh Government have some sort of overview to ensure that those programmes that are relatively successful—or more successful, perhaps, than some programmes that are to remain within local authorities—don't disappear?

[261] **Lesley Griffiths:** The decision to protect the Flying Start budget—so, the cash-flat settlement—was mine. I absolutely believe that Flying Start should be protected in that way. We've invested a huge amount of funding. In this Assembly term, you'll be aware of our commitment to increase to 36,000; we are well over that now as it's reaching over 37,000 children.

Infrastructure: again, millions of pounds into it. Because I can see the benefits of Flying Start—as I say, it’s a long-term programme, and I really think that we can see them—that was my decision.

[262] Families First has had a reduction. It is still a very significant budget: £42.6 million. It’s had a reduction of just over £1 million. Obviously, I had to cut somewhere. By protecting Flying Start, Supporting People and Communities First, you know, somewhere had to have a cut. My thinking behind Families First was that it was never intended to be a long-term programme. It was always intended that elements of Families First would be sustainable; so, the team-around-the-family approach and the multi-agency approach. I think that local authorities—and probably some are better than others, of course—have embedded that now. The local authorities have asked for some flexibility between funding for the programmes. I have agreed—only yesterday, I think—to 5 per cent of that being able to be vired because I can see that that would be beneficial in some local authority areas. So, that was the reasoning behind the reduction in Families First as opposed to the other programmes.

[263] **Aled Roberts:** Felly, i mi ddeall yn iawn: rydych yn dweud bod yna ostyngiad o £1 miliwn allan o gyllideb o £42 miliwn. Ai dyna beth ddywedoch chi?
Aled Roberts: So, just so that I understand this correctly: you say that there is a reduction of £1 million out of a budget of £42 million. Is that what you said?

[264] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, that’s right. The Families First budget for next year is £42.6 million, and the reduction, I think, is £1.074 million.

[265] **Aled Roberts:** Felly, a ydy’r gostyngiad o awdurdod i awdurdod yn gyson?
Aled Roberts: Therefore, is the reduction from authority to authority consistent?

[266] **Miss Francis:** It’s calculated by a formula.

[267] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, I was going to say it’s the formula, isn’t it?

[268] **Aled Roberts:** So, is it the local government formula that applies, or is it a specific formula to the Families First programme?

[269] **Miss Francis:** I’m not 100 per cent sure.

[270] **Aled Roberts:** Perhaps you can come back to us.

[271] **Ann Jones:** Can we have a note?

[272] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, you can have a note on that.

[273] **Ann Jones:** Another note on the wonderful local government formula.

[274] **Lesley Griffiths:** I should say as well that the disability aspect of all my programmes is ring-fenced.

[275] **Ann Jones:** Okay. That's what I like to hear, Minister. David.

[276] **David Rees:** Thank you, Chair. I'll keep on with Families First initially, and then I'll go back to Flying Start if that's okay. In relation to Families First, two points. Clearly, as Aled has pointed out, some of it goes back in-house into the local authority's operational budget. The consequence of that is that we're going to see some third sector organisations struggling now to maintain and deliver other services. What evaluation have you done of that decision by local authorities and the impact it has on the third sector, which was previously providing Families First schemes?

[277] **Lesley Griffiths:** The account managers would monitor against their local authority's delivery plans, so, at the moment, they're doing the delivery plans for next year. But, you know, obviously, they always have a delivery plan in place, so it would be monitored by officials very carefully and closely.

[278] **David Rees:** That's the programme, but have you looked at the impact on third sector organisation as a consequence, and have they been reducing their services, in one sense, as a consequence of that? Do we know that?

[279] **Miss Francis:** We don't know whether they have or they haven't. A number of the commissioned projects are in place for different periods of time. So, as local authorities are carrying out their planning, they will be looking at what they have in place and what they might need to put in place for the future. So, it's quite an iterative type of process; there's not one point in time where they will automatically take that view.

[280] **David Rees:** And again on Families First, what analysis have you looked at for the hard-to-reach groups, for example, ethnic minority groups or other types of groups, where the schemes should be focused on hard-to-

reach groups of people and families? Because there are many. Obviously, Traveller families in one sense should be supported in this area.

[281] **Miss Francis:** And local authorities look at that as part of their assessment.

[282] **David Rees:** And your evaluation of it is—? What I want to know is what the Government's evaluation of that is, because it's important as you have the oversight that you're ensuring that local authorities are delivering on that.

[283] **Lesley Griffiths:** Again, it would be against the delivery plan, so—

[284] **Miss Francis:** It would, and to some degree the local authorities know their local areas, and there's a balance between what is the local determination and what we do nationally. Nationally, we try and support all the local authorities through things like learning events and the promotion of different elements of our programmes.

[285] **David Rees:** I appreciate that, but it sounds as if you're leaving it to local authorities to actually make that call, rather than the Welsh Government overseeing it.

[286] **Miss Francis:** We do collect data around protected characteristics and the different types of groups, which we do monitor. If we thought there was a particular issue, obviously, our account manager would discuss it with the local authorities. But, there is monitoring of those different groups available.

[287] **David Rees:** Can I go back to Flying Start?

[288] **Lesley Griffiths:** Can I just say, if the account manager came back with a concern—? So, I can think of one aspect: I was concerned about the duplication of services. So, you know, it's monitored to the point where we can go back and query something if we're not happy with the delivery part.

[289] **David Rees:** Can I go back to Flying Start? Minister, as you know, I've raised it with you on many occasions before now, the impact of the closure of a Flying Start scheme in my constituency. I think what I want to know is: how does the Welsh Government assure itself that the programmes that are, basically, commissioned by local authorities are sustainable and will deliver on the ground in the longer term, so that we don't get a situation where the

impact is that communities struggle to benefit from these when they need it?

[290] **Lesley Griffiths:** Again, it goes back to the monitoring and the account manager. We've actually had two incidents this year where it hasn't, obviously, been sustainable; for whatever reason, the provider has withdrawn. We've had to do some intensive work to assist both of those local authorities to make sure that the provision is continued. But, again, we go back to the account manager and the delivery plan. It's really important that they're monitored very carefully.

[291] **David Rees:** Because, as you quite rightly point out, the budget this year is a flat budget, therefore there's no increase or decrease, therefore there's a real-terms decrease. If there are questions of sustainability financially, which is what some excuses were that were being made, I want to have reassurances that you're checking the programmes so that the—. That excuse is no longer an acceptable excuse.

13:00

[292] **Lesley Griffiths:** No, I don't think it's an acceptable excuse at all. We also have the outreach element of Flying Start, which can obviously step in.

[293] **David Rees:** I'll come back to that now. On the outreach side of things, clearly many people, I'm sure, have raised the question of the postcode scenario. You've introduced the outreach. What evaluation will you undertake of the outreach and its effectiveness in delivering some of the problems that have become—?

[294] **Lesley Griffiths:** Flying Start is a geographical programme. I wish I had enough funding to do 100 per cent—I really do—but I don't. I think sometimes the outreach isn't used in the best way. It gives the flexibility to local authorities. Because I get complaints about it so much we have asked for some extra evaluation to be done. I don't know if Alyson wants to add anything on that.

[295] **Miss Francis:** Yes. We also monitor the provisions of outreach in the same way that we monitor all of the entitlement as part of Flying Start as well.

[296] **Lesley Griffiths:** It's not a huge part of the budget, outreach, and I do accept that. It might be worth looking at that going forward as to whether we

increase from within the budget, but that's for a future Government.

[297] **David Rees:** The programme for government clearly has indicated its intention to tackle child poverty, and, because of Flying Start, there are large areas where it is being approached. It's been identified clearly on many occasions that there are small pockets, sometimes, outside of those areas. Have you got any programmes that you're looking at to actually tackle those small pockets, not on top of Flying Start but separate programmes and separate funding that may be used to tackle poverty in those areas?

[298] **Lesley Griffiths:** No, I can't think of anything specific. No. It would have to be the outreach that could be used.

[299] **David Rees:** It's just the outreach.

[300] **Ann Jones:** I'll be very generous, because Aled's got a point on this, even though he's just had—.

[301] **Aled Roberts:** Jest, os ydych chi'n asesu ar hyn o bryd llwyddiant gwasanaethau allgymorth, pryd y bydd yr asesiad yna wedi'i gwblhau, a phryd y byddwch chi'n cyhoeddi'r canlyniadau? **Aled Roberts:** I just wanted to know, if you are currently assessing the success of the outreach programmes, when will that assessment be concluded, and when will you be publishing the results?

[302] **Lesley Griffiths:** Well, I've got those data anyway because account managers would have a look and monitor that just the same as they do any other part—

[303] **Aled Roberts:** But I thought you said that you were carrying out an assessment—or an evaluation, I think, was the word you used—of the outreach programme.

[304] **Lesley Griffiths:** It's the monitoring.

[305] **Aled Roberts:** It's monitoring. Okay.

[306] **Ann Jones:** David.

[307] **David Rees:** I'll just finish off with a point on universal tenant and support programmes. I just wondered as to where the budget actually might

be found, and could you perhaps give us an intention of the future 'Parenting: Give it Time' campaign?

[308] **Lesley Griffiths:** Well, there isn't a sort of universal parenting—. The 'Parenting: Give it Time' campaign is our positive parenting campaign. I launched that quite recently. The first part runs till the end of March. I think it's envisaged that the campaign will run for three years. We've had some really good data up to now on the campaign. You know, the website has had a significant number of hits. I think I've got the data somewhere. I think it's about 1,200 hits to the website. We've also got a Facebook page. Now, that funding will come from the Families First BEL.

[309] **David Rees:** Right. Okay. You said three years. Is the funding allocated for three years?

[310] **Lesley Griffiths:** It's envisaged it will be for three years. The first part of the campaign runs to the end of March, but, obviously, a new Government coming in could have a different positive parenting campaign. At the moment it's envisaged that it will run for three years and the funding will come from the Families First BEL.

[311] **David Rees:** So, the Families First funding allocation for the next financial year is including that campaign.

[312] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes. I'm not quite sure what you mean by 'universal parenting', but that's—

[313] **David Rees:** Universal parenting support. Basically—

[314] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes; that's our parenting campaign.

[315] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Simon, on family support.

[316] **Simon Thomas:** Can you just—going back to the beginning, in a sense—say, in your view, Minister, whether Flying Start is designed to deal with material poverty or the impact of material poverty in terms of emotional deprivation and behind-the-curve learning skills and so forth? Which is it actually designed to cater for?

[317] **Lesley Griffiths:** I think it's probably a bit of both. Certainly, the Flying

Start settings I've been to, and the children and the parents that I've met, I would say probably the latter. The fact that headteachers are now saying, because the programme's been running for so long, that they can't tell the difference, at times, between those who have had Flying Start provision and those who haven't, I think would support that as well.

[318] **Simon Thomas:** Thank you for that. The reason I ask it in a sense is that I accept that you don't have the resources to apply this throughout Wales, but a geographical approach is a bit like free school meals delivering anti-poverty—. You know, it's a proxy approach. You're assuming—it may not be a very bad assumption on the whole, but you're assuming that people of similar material means are living in similar communities and you're delivering it in that way. There is, on the other hand, clear international evidence that the early intervention is more successful on the emotional side, on the deprivation side, if you like. I'm not talking about material deprivation; I'm talking about the wider deprivation stuff. Is there a danger that Flying Start is actually targeting the one whilst being geographically located in the other? Is it sophisticated enough?

[319] **Lesley Griffiths:** I can see where you're coming from. Certainly, over the past year, the geographical element has been brought up with me time and time again. At the moment, we're reaching 25 per cent of children. When you think that we've got 40 per cent of children living in poverty, then clearly, to me, that would be the gap that we would need to look at. We've had a significant expansion of the programme this term. Is it sophisticated enough? Only time will tell, I suppose. I think the one thing I am pleased about with the expansion is that it doesn't seem to have diluted things because I think there was a concern that, if we expanded that significantly and that quickly, there could be dilution of it, which I don't think has happened.

[320] I certainly think that, going forward, it's an issue that we can look at. I was reading a paper on adverse childhood experiences last week, which has made me think about what you've just raised now in relation to Flying Start, but I think we certainly need to look at that.

[321] **Simon Thomas:** We wouldn't want—I'm sure I wouldn't and I'm sure you wouldn't—to give the impression that, if you're in material poverty, you're going to raise your children worse than somebody who's not in material poverty—

[322] **Lesley Griffiths:** Absolutely not, no.

[323] **Simon Thomas:** So, we know there is a link, but we also know that this is very down to individual circumstances and that it's a lot about the community and the family and everything else. I read the qualitative analysis on Flying Start that's just been published—Wave 1, I think it is—which is really talking to parents, isn't it? It's getting their responses. It's encouraging to read that they have engaged, that they know about the programme, that they know what's being delivered. But I just wonder whether, at the other end, going forward, the more sophisticated approach would be to try and integrate what you do a lot more with what education is doing. When I talk to headteachers and the teachers in the foundation phase and reception and so forth, yes, I get some good examples and that's great, but I also get an understanding that they are not feeding down their expertise into the Flying Start context. If the aim is to close that emotional and wider deprivation gap, then perhaps more integration with early years education is the way to go—not all our schools are ready for this, perhaps, but our good schools really do it already—and close integration there, including co-location, is the way to go in that regard.

[324] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, I think that's a very good point. Certainly, with the expansion we've seen of Flying Start, a lot of the settings are now in schools. In fact, I think probably the last half a dozen I've visited have all been alongside our schools. So, I think you will see much more of that. I think, policy-wise, going forward, that's probably something to look at. I think the fact that parents, whilst we've been asking parents what they think, feel the programme is beneficial for them—it's not just the impact it's had on the child's life; it's the impact it's had on the parents' lives as well in that they communicate more, et cetera—. It's been great to go to Flying Start settings where they've had reading groups and the parents have been encouraged to come in and read with their children. Certainly, policy-wise, going forward, I think that's something to look at.

[325] **Simon Thomas:** That brings me to the nub, which is about money, which is to ask, therefore: what's your capital programme in Flying Start designed for? What is your capital programme in this budget? It's quite difficult to follow the movement, actually.

[326] **Lesley Griffiths:** Going forward into 2016–17, we've just got £3 million for maintenance, because we've put, as I say, millions of pounds into infrastructure this term, but I think it's really important that we have some

funding available to keep those settings at the very highest standard. For those of us—. I'm sure everybody's visited Flying Start settings. To me, they are always of a really high standard, you know, the equipment is of a high standard and the material. So, the budget for 2016–17 is £3 million for maintenance.

[327] **Simon Thomas:** Looking back on what that investment has been, okay, you've got money for maintenance now, that's clear. Yes, I have visited such settings; they're not all where, as a lay person, I would think, 'This is a good place for a Flying Start setting'. I talked to you earlier about co-location with schools and other services and one or two I've seen are quite isolated in that sense. What lessons have you learnt from your capital investments and what are you doing with other Ministers to try and streamline this money to make sure that these are much more working hand-in-hand?

[328] I can also think of some Communities First—not to bring up a sore subject—investments that are now closed, empty, shuttered up and boarded. So, there was capital money spent there that is now not in that community being used anymore. We don't want to see that happening with Flying Start, so what measures are you taking to ensure that that doesn't happen, going forward?

[329] **Lesley Griffiths:** Certainly, when we were looking at the expansion, obviously it had been going on for a few years before I came into portfolio, but I just carried on ensuring that, if somebody wanted to open, they had to identify a setting and they should look at such a place as you've just referred to, purpose-built, for instance. So, I think co-location with schools was certainly one area where we've worked closely with the Minister for Education and Skills, but, going forward, depending on what happens with the programme, obviously, with the new Government, I think that is an area we should be looking at. We should be looking at community assets, for instance, and, if there are buildings such as those you referred to that are empty, then, if they could be used, that would be so much better than starting from scratch.

[330] **Ann Jones:** Do you want to go on to childcare, because you're doing the childcare stuff?

[331] **Simon Thomas:** Fe wnaif i droi **Simon Thomas:** I'll turn to Welsh just i'r Gymraeg jest i ddangos ein bod to show that we're changing the ni'n newid pwnc. Awn ni ymlaen i subject. We'll go on now to discuss

drafod ychydig ar ofal plant. Mae yna childcare. There is some £3 million, I ryw £3 miliwn, rwy'n meddwl, ar think, for childcare and play. There is gyfer gofal plant a chwarae. Mae reference to a number of schemes. cyfeiriad at sawl cynllun. Un sy'n One is Progress for Success, but I taro'r llygaid fan hyn yw *Progress for Success*, ond rwy'n deall nad yw'r approved. What's the purpose of that cynllun yma wedi'i gymeradwyo eto. scheme? Beth yw pwrpas y cynllun yna?

[332] **Lesley Griffiths:** That's been developed alongside the 10-year draft plan for the early years childcare and play workforce in Wales, and that's to increase the quality of provision within maintained and non-maintained settings by increasing the levels of recognised childcare and play qualifications.

[333] I think the childcare sector is not as valued as it should be. I think the social care sector can show it the way forward. I think the way that that's been professionalised—and, so, working, again, closely with the Minister for Education and Skills, it's something we've taken forward with the early years partnership board, because I think to leave your most treasured possession with somebody is really difficult at times, and we want the workforce to be seen to be professional. And I want people who enter that career to see it as such and that they're not undervalued. So, as you say, we are waiting for Welsh European Funding Office approval—not for the first time. I don't know if Owain's got any update he can give us on that.

[334] **Mr Lloyd:** No, just to say that we have recently received WEFO approval for west Wales and the Valleys. I think there was a press release issued earlier this week, so it's full steam ahead now, in terms of the procurement route and so on, so that we can, in the next financial year, really start pushing ahead. I think, as the Minister said, it's about developing the workforce. There are two strands as part of Progress for Success. There's the upskilling up to level 3 and then the other strand is looking at levels 4 to 6. So, yes, I think an exciting opportunity moving forward.

[335] **Simon Thomas:** Diolch am yr ateb yna, achos dyna fy symud i at y response, because that takes me cwestiwn nesaf rwy'n mynd i ofyn neatly to my next question as to what ynglŷn â pha lefelau sgiliau rydych skill levels you're going to be chi'n mynd i ddelifro fan hyn. A yw'n delivering here. Is it clear, therefore, glir, felly, Weinidog, bod o leiaf lefel Minister, that level 3 will now be a

3 nawr yn mynd i fod y lefel o sgiliau y byddech chi'n dymuno ei gweld yn y cyd-destun yma? Ac, yn ogystal â *Progress for Success*, a oes yna adnoddau eraill, felly, rŷch chi, neu ar y cyd gyda'r Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau, yn dynodi i sicrhau bod y sgiliau hynny i gael?

minimum in terms of the level of skills that you would wish to see in this context? And, in addition to Progress for Success, are there other resources that you, or you jointly with the Minister for Education and Skills, are putting in place to ensure that those skills are available?

[336] **Lesley Griffiths:** Level 3 is the minimum. I don't know if there's anything else you can add.

13:15

[337] **Mr Lloyd:** No, I think Progress for Success is really the main programme at the moment. Obviously, because of budget availability, there isn't anything else, but we do work very closely with the Care Council for Wales on this agenda, and with other bodies; there's a Cwlwm project which is funded. So, it's very much working hand-in-hand with the sector in terms of what we can do to upskill and to draw new people into the sector as well. So, it's important to retain and to upskill, but also to make it an attractive career option.

[338] **Ann Jones:** Aled's got a point just on Progress for Success.

[339] **Aled Roberts:** Os mai cynyddu cymwysterau ydy'r bwriad—rhaglen yng ngorllewin Cymru a'r Cymoedd fydd hon, achos bod yna gais at gronfa gymdeithasol Ewrop. Felly beth fydd y sefyllfa yn nwyrain Cymru, lle nad yw'r gronfa honno ar gael?

Aled Roberts: If increasing qualifications is the intention—this is a programme for west Wales and the Valleys, because there's the bid to the European social fund. So what will the situation be in east Wales, where that fund is not be available?

[340] **Mr Lloyd:** Ar hyn o bryd, ar gyfer y Cymoedd a'r ardaloedd hynny, mae WEFO wedi dweud 'ie' iddynt. Rydym wrthi yn edrych i weld beth allwn ni wneud o ran gweddill Cymru, achos nid yw'n gwneud synnwyr y byddai hyn jest ar gael

Mr Lloyd: At the moment, we have received approval from WEFO for west Wales and the Valleys. We are currently looking to see what we can do for the rest of Wales, because it doesn't make sense that this should only be available in specific areas. We

mewn manau penodol. Rydym mewn trafodaethau gyda WEFO a gyda phobl yn adrannau eraill y Llywodraeth, a gobeithio y byddwn ni mewn sefyllfa cyn bo hir i ddweud mwy ar hynny.

[341] **Aled Roberts:** Ond byddai'n rhaid i chi gael arian ychwanegol i'r £3 miliwn, felly, gan nad oes yna linell o fewn yr arian presennol i ymestyn i ddwyrain Cymru.

[342] **Mr Lloyd:** Mae yna arian ar gael o gyllideb y Gweinidog yma ac hefyd o gyllideb Huw Lewis i roi i mewn i hynny, os ydym yn llwyddo gyda WEFO.

[343] **Lesley Griffiths:** Just to say, we do want to see a national programme, so we are in discussions around east Wales.

[344] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Simon, sorry.

[345] **Simon Thomas:** Y pwynt olaf, efallai, ar hyn i gyd yw—roeddech chi gynnu fach yn sôn eich bod chi'n dal o'r farn mai'r llwybr orau allan o dlodi oedd gwaith cyflogedig parhaol. Ac, wrth gwrs, rydym i gyd yn ymwybodol yng Nghymru bod mynediad at ofal plant yn un o'r pethau hynny sydd yn rhwystro rhieni—matau yn bennaf—rhag mynd at y gwaith yna. Ac rydym hefyd yn gwybod, yn gymharol, oherwydd cyflogau is yng Nghymru, fod cost gofal plant yng Nghymru yn uwch ac yn fwy o faich ar deuluoedd nag yw yng ngweddill Ynysoedd Prydain, hyd yn oed. A oes yna

are in negotiation with WEFO and with people in other Government departments, and we hope to be in a position before too long to say more about that.

Aled Roberts: But you would have to have additional funding to that £3 million, therefore, because there's no line within the current funding to expand to east Wales.

Mr Lloyd: There is funding available from the budget of this Minister and also from Huw Lewis's budget to invest in that, if we are successful with WEFO.

Simon Thomas: The final point on all of this, perhaps—earlier you mentioned that you were still of the view that the best pathway out of poverty was permanent employment. And, of course, we're all aware in Wales that access to childcare is one of those barriers for parents—more likely mothers—from accessing that work. And we also know that, relatively speaking, because of the lower wages in Wales, the costs of childcare in Wales are higher and are more of a burden for families than in the rest of the British Isles, even. Is there something more specific in the budget for facilitating that process?

rywbeth arall yn y gyllideb, mwy penodol, ar gyfer hwyluso'r broses yna? Ie, bydd yna ychydig fwy—yn ôl beth welaf i o'r gyllideb—o leoedd; bydd yna fwy o sgiliau, ac felly bydd mwy o baratoi y plentyn a'r person ifanc—wel, nid person ifanc; mae'n blentyn—ar gyfer addysg a symud ymlaen yn y broses. Mae'r rhain yn bethau positif, ond nid wyf yn gallu gweld yma unrhyw beth penodol yn eich cyllideb i symud ymaith y clwydi yna mae'r comisiwn hawliau dynol, er enghraifft, wedi eu hadnabod; rhywbeth sydd yn dal yr economi ôl, ac yn dal rhieni nôl rhag mynd am y swyddi hyn.

Yes, from what I see of the budget, there will be a few more places, and there will be a greater range of skills, and therefore more preparatory work for the child for education and to move on in that process. Those are all positive things, but I can't see here any specifics in your budget to remove those barriers that the EHRC, for example, has acknowledged are still holding parents back from going for these jobs.

[346] **Lesley Griffiths:** We've got a number of programmes within my budget; I've mentioned PaCE, which is quite new. That's going forward. Obviously, Cwlwm; that's a third-sector project where we're providing over £4 million—I think it's £4.3 million over three years—to help us develop innovative flexible childcare. We've got the out-of-school childcare grant. We've got Flying Start. I suppose, and I'm not giving any secrets away, we'll all be looking at the childcare offer going into the election. So, I think Welsh Government has got a proven record with childcare, and I think we'll be building on that going forward.

[347] **Simon Thomas:** You mentioned some of the projects there, but they are projects; PaCE, for example, is interesting, but it's a project. And when we look at the value for money that comes out of this, or whether there's a preventative spend or a spend that has an impact positively on other budgets or the ongoing Welsh Government budget, it's very difficult to evaluate the impact of projects like this. They tend to pop up as one project and then a year later it's called something different, but it's very similar to the previous project. It's very difficult to track this. Okay, it looks like you're saying 'Look at the Labour manifesto' as part of your answer there. I've already published what Plaid Cymru's manifesto on this will be, so that's my answer to that. [*Laughter.*] How are you going to take—. This is the budget for the next year, so how are we going to be able to scrutinise in an integrated way the impact of these different projects and whether they really are opening the doors for

parents to access economic work?

[348] **Lesley Griffiths:** As you say, I mentioned several programmes, and they obviously will be running over into the next year. I think PaCE, particularly, is quite significant. It's £13.5 million. We've also got the foundation phase—I forgot the foundation phase—and I think that does obviously provide an element of childcare. All the programmes I've mentioned will continue with a significant level of funding.

[349] On PaCE evaluation—Owain, when will we receive the evaluation on that?

[350] **Mr Lloyd:** We're just about to go out to—no, actually, we have gone out.

[351] **Lesley Griffiths:** We've been out, haven't we?

[352] **Mr Lloyd:** We've gone out to tender on that and we've got quite a number of bids that have come back, so we'll be evaluating that. It will be a key element of PaCE moving forward so that we can actually demonstrate, in terms of where we're making a difference, where we're getting people back into employment or where we've pointed them in the right direction. So, I think we'll probably have some news on the evaluation of PaCE quite shortly.

[353] **Simon Thomas:** And a final question on all of these programmes, in all their different ways: what's the situation now with the interaction with the DWP and any kind of work on Supporting People that you might be needing to do?

[354] **Mr Lloyd:** I think in Wales the relationship is very strong with DWP on the ground, because obviously both PaCE, which the Minister's mentioned, and Communities for Work—we're doing in partnership with the DWP. So, it's a very strong relationship. They're represented on an officials board, which looks at how we're going to take those particular programmes forward, and they've been busy in terms of recruiting advisers out there on the ground. So, we'll have 43 advisers when it comes to PaCE, shortly.

[355] **Lesley Griffiths:** Most of whom will come from DWP.

[356] **Mr Lloyd:** So we've got a very strong, positive relationship with DWP in Wales—

[357] **Lesley Griffiths:** At an official level.

[358] **Mr Lloyd:** —which is going to be key in terms of delivering this.

[359] **Simon Thomas:** Yes. Diolch.

[360] **Ann Jones:** Right. We'll move on to children's rights, participation and play. Lynne.

[361] **Lynne Neagle:** Thanks, Chair. Can I ask, please, whether a children's rights impact assessment was undertaken on the Welsh Government's draft budget?

[362] **Lesley Griffiths:** Well, in preparation for the draft budget for 2016–17, we built on the approach that we've taken in previous years to ensure that children's rights have been fully considered in all decision-making processes in the budget. You'll know that every Minister's got a duty upon them to have due regard to children's rights rather than completing a CRIA. In terms of our draft budget, we decided to complete a SIIA—a strategic integrated impact assessment—and that took account of children's rights alongside impacts on equality, Welsh language and socioeconomic disadvantage. I think that approach came about—I was with the finance Minister in front of another committee this morning, and she made it very clear that that came about following recommendations and advice from Assembly committees, from stakeholders and from BAGE. You'll be aware of our budget advisory group for equality. So, we concluded that an integrated assessment would provide a much more comprehensive assessment of the overall impact of spending decisions, but I know the Public Policy Institute for Wales has been requested to undertake a review of the impact assessment arrangements. Now we've got the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, obviously that's kind of focused that.

[363] **Lynne Neagle:** So will this review look at whether the way it has been done was adequate to measure the impact on children?

[364] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, it will, and I think it's due—

[365] **Lynne Neagle:** Will you keep this committee updated?

[366] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes. I think it's certainly due to be published before

the end of term.

[367] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. The budget shows a 10 per cent reduction in cash terms for the allocations to the children's commissioner. Does this take into account the costs of implementing any changes that will come arising from the independent review of the commissioner's office?

[368] **Lesley Griffiths:** The 10 per cent cut to the children's commissioner budget is in line with all the commissioners. All the commissioners have received a 10 per cent cut. I think it was really important that we were fair and consistent in that approach. I don't think it's for me to comment on how she'll deploy her budget. I know she's got some significant reserves if needed. I know the children's commissioner has been in post nearly a year now, unbelievably, and she's coming forward with her three-year strategic plan with the budget. So, that will be laid before the Assembly, and we'll be able to scrutinise it.

[369] **Lynne Neagle:** In terms of the reserve, I'm sure we'd all want to see the commissioner using the reserves in these hard times, but are you satisfied that that's not going to become a problem, if that has to happen every year?

[370] **Lesley Griffiths:** Well, as I say, that's for her, really. Her budget has been very well protected for a number of years, and obviously, with the reduction to our budget, I spoke with ministerial colleagues, and we thought the best approach was to be fair and consistent across the commissioners, and they've all received a 10 per cent cut.

[371] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Just turning then to the funding for Children in Wales, under the child and families delivery grant, you've referred to an extra £80,000 allocated for additional work on children and young people's participation. Could you tell us a little bit more about specifically what that's funded?

[372] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, that's funded promotion and management of the national participation standards; support for young people to attend and participate in UK youth parliament events. So, just last week, I met with four young people who'd attended that and had been supported by Children in Wales. A fantastic group; one was 13, and the way he articulated the benefits he'd gained from attending the youth parliaments was just amazing. Also, social media and IT elements have been upgraded, and revised and

introduced. I think that is really—. We are seeing far more children and young people now involved in participation events.

[373] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. In terms of the grant generally, you've highlighted that there is a slowing down of start-ups; there's been a reduction because the projects haven't got going due to slow start-ups. Do you feel that the systems in place are sufficiently robust to ensure that that's prevented from happening in the future?

[374] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, absolutely. I think, out of the £10 million budget, it was about £13,000 that hadn't been spent; it was a tiny, tiny proportion. We'll just have to spend that £13,000 next year; I'm sure we'll manage.

[375] **Lynne Neagle:** Just moving on then to Play Wales, you've said that you're currently considering an application from Play Wales for financial support beyond March 2016, but, of course, we know that the decision was taken previously to end their core funding. Can you just tell us a little bit more about what your thinking is about that at the moment?

[376] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, absolutely. I've agreed it, actually; I've agreed it for the extension of 18 months beyond March 2016. I know—I think it was in the summer before I came into post—that there'd been a decision taken to cut the funding to Play Wales. Play is a priority for me, and I listened to what Assembly Members were saying, and other people, and I then reinstated some funding to them. I think Play Wales is renowned, not just in the UK, but throughout Europe. I certainly value the advice and the work they've done for us as Welsh Government. However, they've been told they need to be looking at the funding; they need to make themselves sustainable. They can't just keep relying on Government money, but I did think, and I still think, that play is absolutely a priority for us as Welsh Government.

[377] **Lynne Neagle:** And are you able to tell us how much you've made available to them?

[378] **Lesley Griffiths:** I can. They were awarded a grant of £240,000 for the period of 1 April to 31 March 2017, and then, there's an indicative of £120,000 from March 2017 to September 2017, and that brings it into line. It sort of aligns with the remaining period of the children and families delivery grant.

[379] **Lynne Neagle:** And the fact that it's reducing is presumably meant to

encourage them to become more sustainable in their own right.

[380] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, because when I came into post and decided to give them some core funding, I told them then that they really needed to be looking—and, in fairness, they have. But, just because I've given them further funding doesn't mean that they shouldn't be focused on that.

[381] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. In terms of the Welsh Government's child wellbeing monitor, the one that was published in December 2015 says that there's limited information on trends in relation to children's play, sport, leisure and culture. Can I just ask what the Government's doing to address this lack of data in order to inform future budget allocations?

13:30

[382] **Lesley Griffiths:** I can only answer in relation to play, really. I know that further information will be available through the play sufficiency assessments that local authorities have to do. So, I think that will help to fill that gap. I understand the assessments are to be submitted by the end of March, so we will have those data available, because they do it every three years, so we will have those updated data. We have listened to children and young people. I think local authorities have to listen, as they're doing that sufficiency assessment. We're also asking—. I think it's CWLWM that is doing workforce surveys to try and find further information to fill the gaps that were addressed by the child wellbeing monitor.

[383] **Ann Jones:** I know Angela's got a couple of questions that she wants to ask.

[384] **Angela Burns:** Yes, thank you very much. Minister, I've been listening with interest to your evidence session because I think, within your portfolio, what we're here to scrutinise you on is quite difficult because a lot of it is buried in amongst a lot of other programmes. So, what I'd like to try and understand a little bit more clearly from you is: how do you assess value for money on the programmes that you have talked about? Some of those that you've talked about have only just started, so you haven't had a chance to evaluate; on others, such as Flying Start, the evaluation is not indicative either way, and many people say that it's still early days, although it has been going for a substantial number of years. So, how do you really satisfy yourself that the money that you have to spend is achieving some measure of value for money?

[385] **Lesley Griffiths:** I think, Flying Start—it's not early days, you're quite right, and I hope I've said that I think we are now really starting to see the benefits. I think value for money, certainly in relation to Flying Start, is incredibly difficult to assess because how do you keep—? Keeping one child out of social services—how do you evaluate that from a value-for-money point of view? That's incredibly difficult and, some would say, priceless. So, the evaluation is done alongside the monitoring. You've heard me talk about delivery plans and the account managers who go in, et cetera, but the fact that we are reaching so many children through Flying Start, and that the quantitative evaluation is showing us that we are making progress, is important. Whether you think that that shows value for money—as I say, it's incredibly difficult to do that.

[386] **Angela Burns:** Of course, value for money works the other way too because people always assume that when you challenge on value for money, you're basically saying, 'If it doesn't show a lot of value, then get rid of it.' But, actually, value for money also works in terms of it may not be showing that much, but, if you actually put a little bit more into it, it could show—. So, for example, I think I heard you say that schools say that, when they have a child in front of them who's from a Flying-Start-supported environment, it's very difficult for them to tell the difference between them and children who are not from that, which is an absolute positive. And yet, when those children pop out the other side of primary school and go into secondary school—.

[387] David Egan's done an enormous amount of work on this and on the transitional and how so many of those children are recidivists. They drop back out of all of that support, and then it's almost like they never had any of that support for the first seven, eight or nine years of their lives. Whereas you could argue that a value-for-money option may be to have put in yet more support to carry them through that transition so that we don't then lose the value for money by having 80 per cent of our 20 per cent actually fall back into an unsupported environment, where the good that was done has been undone. That's why I'm interested in trying to follow the money through and see how we can judge that value for money more clearly. Do you understand what—

[388] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, I absolutely understand, and, interestingly, it was in Pembrokeshire where I first spoke to a high school head who said, 'I've seen the first tranche now of Flying Start children coming into my high school', and, as you say, it's positive that you can't tell the difference

between a Flying Start—. The Minister for Education and Skills has got a project called—Teach Smart or Teach First?

[389] **Mr Lloyd:** Teach First.

[390] **Lesley Griffiths:** Teach First. Actually, in my own constituency, I've seen that in action, where the person is recruited, as quite a 'new-ish' teacher, to work with these children who have come, perhaps, from a Flying Start background or a Communities First background, to carry on that work. I haven't seen an evaluation of it. But, again, anecdotally, I think that is something that perhaps we can look at, you know, continuing with, because I do think then it does carry on the support that we're referring to with Flying Start.

[391] **Angela Burns:** So, talking again still about value for money and about monitoring, you know, for me, when we're talking about a budget discussion—this is nothing to do with the policy, which I may or may not agree with; there are all sorts of different nuances on policy—but, if we're looking at the money, the questions I always have to ask are: 'Do we have value for money?', and, 'Is that money being thoroughly monitored?' You talked about—you've got lots of data and we're quite happy about the fact that you're getting data collection. But data collection isn't the same as analysis and monitoring. So, could you perhaps just expand a little bit about who and where within your organisation, within your programmes, actually assesses and analyses all of these data to produce a monitoring system?

[392] **Lesley Griffiths:** Certainly, officials will carry out that sort of monitoring that you're referring to. Perhaps if we move from Flying Start and go to Communities First for a minute, again, when I looked at the monitoring that was coming out of Communities First when I came into post, to me, the gap around employability was very obvious. We will have all been to Communities First events in our constituencies that are very nice to have. But, for me, if we're going to lift people out of poverty, as I say, I think the way forward is employability. So, that's why we've had the refocus on Communities First. So, whilst Communities First has been there for 17 years, it has changed a lot over the years. I think now the focus is on employability and getting people into training opportunities. So, therefore, Lift came—Lift isn't a Communities First project, but we are using the Communities First structure. That is because, to me, the gap in the monitoring was employability.

[393] **Angela Burns:** Are you confident then that—? Does this all happen on the ground or, is it at a much higher level where, for example, you'll be saying—? Because you're absolutely right; employability is the route out of poverty. So, at a higher level, do your officials and, say, the business Minister's officials talk about inward investment that might go into a Communities First area? Is it at that level, or is it much more on the ground about trying to find small local solutions?

[394] **Lesley Griffiths:** No, it's much more on the ground. Obviously, you know, you have the high-level discussions about the budget. But, ultimately, it's for me to decide how that budget is spent. I was warning Communities First, probably back in the summer, when we were looking at perhaps cuts to our budgets of 40 per cent—. I'm not scaremongering—that was the first figure that came out of the Chancellor's summer budget. We were looking at those sorts of cuts. So, I've had those discussions with Communities First and they were refocusing their budgets much more towards employability. The fact I've been able to protect the cash flow—the cash-flat settlement, I can't get my words out, for Communities First—. They're under no illusions that this isn't to go back to how they were. They still need to continue to refocus the programme much more towards employability and much more towards child care than they were doing before. So, those discussions are on much more of a local level. Obviously, Communities First—I mean, to me, one of the main successes of Communities First is working with the locality, working with the local population. They know what's needed.

[395] **Angela Burns:** I really get a good sense that, in terms of where you want to go with your policies, you have—and, therefore, I'm assuming your department have—a very good feeling for how you see success and how you would measure success or how you would define the success of a policy. What I'm less confident of, within the budget process, is where success is defined or if there's a real good handle on the measurement of the definition of success in terms of monetary spend. Because I did listen very carefully to the answers that you gave to other members of the committee. I picked up things like, 'We know this because somebody came back and told us'. That, to me, isn't a system. That's not a process. That's not a definition of how I'm monitoring something.

[396] You just mentioned Communities First, but I know that there are examples where Communities First has had serious amounts of money sucked up by staff and overheads, rather than programmes. So, if that is how the success is defined, then so be it. But what I wanted to find out or be

reassured of is that you, your department and your officials, are aware that a big proportion of that pot is spent on staff because that's actually what you need and, therefore, that is the definition of success. You know, Flying Start—there aren't those tangible results. You've said a number of times that saving one child from a social worker to you is a definition of success. So, does that equal through to how the definition of success is for the monetary spend to save that one child? That's what I'm really trying to drive through. I drove through it with the Minister for Education and Skills as well. It's about following the money, ensuring it's really monitored, and ensuring we have the value for money. I've never been overly convinced that there is enough comprehensive monitoring. I think, Owain, you spoke about that you were going to just start an evaluation programme on something. You know, one might argue that there should be constant evaluation because of the very thing that I started off by saying. It's not always about saying, 'This doesn't work. Let's cut back the money.' It's about saying, 'We think this might actually work. Let's put in more money.'

[397] **Lesley Griffiths:** If we start with staff-intensive—. Communities First is a classic example of a staff-intensive programme, you know. I've read criticism in the press from different political parties around this, but it's incredibly people-intensive, and, you know, the staff in Communities First areas have worked for many years to build up confidence among people who wouldn't normally go to any establishment or organisation for assistance. So, I think, Communities First—yes, the staffing aspect of it is very expensive. How do you know if it's value for money? Well, that's on outcomes. So, I can say to you that we have—I'm not saying that this is the figure—11,000 people who've gone into training and job opportunities. So, to me, then, you can compare those outcomes to see if it's value for money.

[398] On Flying Start, I do think it's very difficult to demonstrate value for money. But, again, we have the outcomes. We have the number of children who've engaged with speech and language. We have the number of families who've engaged with health visitors. I think the programme that Owain was referring to and that we just started to evaluate is Parents, Childcare and Employment, PaCE, which is obviously a very new programme assisting with childcare. I think it only started back in October, I want to say. Was it October?

[399] **Mr Lloyd:** Yes.

[400] **Lesley Griffiths:** We have ensured that that monitoring and that

evaluation are there. But I suppose outcomes are the way that you can assess whether it's value for money.

[401] **Angela Burns:** Okay. Thank you.

[402] **Ann Jones:** Simon, on this one.

[403] **Simon Thomas:** Yes, just specifically on that then. The obvious way to measure the outcomes of Flying Start would be to look at that cohort of young children who went through Flying Start and who have now gone through—. You mentioned that they are already starting—

[404] **Lesley Griffiths:** High school.

[405] **Simon Thomas:** —high school. Well, I still call it 'secondary'. They soon will have academic or other vocational—. They will have results. There will be independent tests of how we—. And, of course, the education Minister also evaluates his success on that same basis. Are you following that cohort, and do you have that information?

[406] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, we are doing some work to try and match those data. We've got a pilot starting in April, because I do think that would be very beneficial, now we are seeing that first cohort going to secondary school. I think that would be very, very beneficial. Because it's such a long-term programme—

[407] **Simon Thomas:** I accept that.

[408] **Lesley Griffiths:** I think the fact that we are—

[409] **Simon Thomas:** But the validity of long-term programmes is you also see long-term results.

[410] **Lesley Griffiths:** Absolutely. So, I think the fact that they are now going to high school—it's a really important time, and it's really important that we are able to capture those data.

[411] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Aled, briefly.

[412] **Aled Roberts:** Even before high school, of course, there's individual monitoring for each pupil. The whole of the pupil deprivation grant is

predicated on outcomes. So, I'm quite surprised that we're talking about starting an evaluation from April.

[413] **Lesley Griffiths:** That's just a pilot. That's one specific pilot—

[414] **Aled Roberts:** Okay. But there's no direct correlation at the moment, for example, between identifying Flying Start pupils and ensuring that there's no disparity in the number of those pupils, let's say, who achieve level 5 or 6 at the end of primary school. That first cohort will have gone all the way through primary school by now. So, we shouldn't just wait for, perhaps, GCSE results. You know, we have had data. Presumably, the Flying Start records are still available, going back seven or eight years.

[415] **Angela Burns:** And, if I may add, it's in the transition between primary and secondary school that we lose these kids. I mean, Egan's done bags of research on this, which is why I'm a little disturbed that that monitoring isn't in place.

13:45

[416] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Do you want to send us a note on that?

[417] **Lesley Griffiths:** Can I just say that we don't collect it at an individual level? Actually, I went to a Flying Start setting in Llanelli where the headteacher was doing things that I hadn't seen anywhere else, and I have asked officials to have a look at what he's doing, because he was able to track them in a way that I haven't seen at a lot of other Flying Starts. So, we don't collect it has individual data, but, as I say, we do have that—

[418] **Aled Roberts:** Perhaps you ought to have a think, because, I think, at the moment, the policy is driven at an education level because of the pupil deprivation grant. There have been concerns that that individual monitoring wasn't in place and we didn't know that the money that we were investing in the pupil deprivation grant was having the outcome at the end, so it may be that, because it's in different sort of—'silos' is too strong a word, but different departments—. You mentioned that you were looking at closer relationships currently with education. It may be that, perhaps—. I'm just thinking that governing bodies, for example, now have reports on the attainment of free school meal pupils. I can't remember any reference to Flying Start pupils in any of the governors' meetings that I've been in. So, I don't think it's on the radar as far as the educationalists are concerned.

[419] **Lesley Griffiths:** Okay. Well, we'll certainly look at that.

[420] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Does anybody else have anything more on the Minister's budget? No. Thank you very much. We'll send you a copy to check for accuracy and, I suppose, because there are figures in as well, if you can just let us know if there are any amendments. Thank you very much for that.

[421] **Lesley Griffiths:** Thank you.

13:46

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 (ix) i Benderfynu Gwahardd y
Cyhoedd o Weddill y Cyfarfod.**

**Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (ix) to Resolve to Exclude the
Public from the Remainder of the Meeting.**

Cynnig:

Motion:

*bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu that the committee resolves to
gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y exclude the public from the
cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog remainder of the meeting in
17.42(ix).*

*accordance with Standing Order
17.42(ix).*

Cynigiwyd y cynnig.

Motion moved.

[422] **Ann Jones:** If the committee's agreeable, under Standing Order 17.42, we'll go into private session just for a short while.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 13:46.

The public part of the meeting ended at 13:46.