



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

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

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

12/10/2016

[Agenda'r Cyfarfod](#)

[Meeting Agenda](#)

[Trawsgrifiadau'r Pwyllgor](#)

[Committee Transcripts](#)

Cynnwys Contents

- 4 Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau
Introductions, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest
- 5 Ymchwiliad i Waith Ieuenctid: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 3—Llywodraeth
Cymru
Inquiry into Youth Work: Evidence session 3—Welsh Government
- 31 Trafodaeth gyda'r Athro Syr Ian Diamond ar yr Adolygiad o Drefniadau
Cyllido Addysg Uwch a Chyllid Myfyrwyr Cymru
Discussion with Professor Sir Ian Diamond on the Review of Higher
Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales
- 60 Papurau i'w Nodi
Papers to Note
- 61 Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42(ix) i Benderfynu Gwahardd y
Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to Resolve to Exclude the
Public from the Meeting

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

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

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Mohammad Asghar Bywgraffiad Biography	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Michelle Brown Bywgraffiad Biography	UKIP Cymru UKIP Wales
Hefin David Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
John Griffiths Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
Llyr Gruffydd Bywgraffiad Biography	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Darren Millar Bywgraffiad Biography	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Julie Morgan Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
Lynne Neagle Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Alun Davies Bywgraffiad Biography	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (Gweinidog y Gymraeg a Dysgu Gydol Oes (Assembly Member, Labour (The Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language)
Yr Athro Syr/Professor Sir Ian Diamond	
Sam Evans	Uwch-reolwr Strategaeth Gwaith Ieuenctid, Llywodraeth Cymru Senior Youth Work Strategy Manager, Welsh Government
Russell George Bywgraffiad Biography	Aelod Cynulliad, Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (Cadeirydd Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau) Assembly Member, Welsh Conservatives (Chair of the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee)
Kara Richards	Pennaeth Ymgysylltu ag Ieuenctid, Llywodraeth Cymru Head of Youth Engagement, Welsh Government

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

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Marc Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk
Gareth Rogers	Ail Glerc Second Clerk
Anne Thomas	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Sian Thomas	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:29.
The meeting began at 09:29.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau
Introductions, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

[1] **Lynne Neagle:** Morning, everyone. Can I welcome everyone to this morning's meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Committee? We have no apologies for absence. Can I ask if there are any declarations of interest, please?

[2] **Llyr Gruffydd:** A gaf i ddatgan **Llyr Gruffydd:** Could I declare that I'm fy mod yn un o lywyddion an honorary president of CWVYS? anrhydeddus CWVYS?

[3] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. I would also like to declare an interest in that my husband is currently working for the University of South Wales. Are there any other declarations?

[4] **Hefin David:** I should declare I'm an associate lecturer at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

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

09:30

**Ymchwiliad i Waith Ieuenctid: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 3—
Llywodraeth Cymru
Inquiry into Youth Work: Evidence session 3—
Welsh Government**

[6] **Lynne Neagle:** Item 2, then, is our final evidence session on our youth work inquiry and I'm very pleased to welcome Alun Davies AM, who is the Minister for Lifelong Learning and the Welsh Language. We're delighted that you can join us this morning, and thank you too for providing us with the paper in advance. Can I ask you to introduce your officials for the record, please?

[7] **The Minister for Lifelong Learning and the Welsh Language (Alun Davies):** Thank you very much. I'd like to introduce the officials for you this morning: first of all, Sam Evans, and secondly, Kara Richards, both of whom work in the youth work division of Welsh Government.

[8] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you, Minister. If you're happy, we'll go straight into questions?

[9] **Alun Davies:** Yes, sure.

[10] **Lynne Neagle:** If I can just kick off with a question, asking whether the Welsh Government is still committed to a universal youth offer for young people in Wales.

[11] **Alun Davies:** Yes, absolutely. We're committed not just to that, but also to a youth work service that is of high quality, that is open access, available across the face of the country, available bilingually, able to respond to people's needs wherever they live, and a youth work experience that makes a real difference to young people's lives, whether it's through the experiences it opens up for them or the support it offers. Also, youth work underpins delivery on many priorities beyond education, in areas such as health and community regeneration. So, we are committed to youth work, but I would go further than saying that we're committed to a minimum provision across the country; our ambitions go much further and higher than that.

[12] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you, Minister. Michelle Brown.

[13] **Michelle Brown:** I'd just like to ask you: is provision of youth services mapped onto demand? How do you assess demand across Wales for youth services? How do you tailor your service provision to cater for the demand?

[14] **Alun Davies:** I've followed the committee's inquiry with some considerable interest. I know that you've received quite a considerable body of evidence in the short time you've been undertaking the inquiry, and some of that evidence has gone in different directions.

[15] Let me just say this in attempting to answer Michelle's question: youth services are primarily delivered by local government and not by Welsh Government. It certainly isn't my intention, and it wouldn't be my wish, and I don't think it would be the wish of the committee either, to nationalise that service and to seek to deliver it from here. So, there will be differences. One of the themes I've picked up from your evidence is the significant difference in provision across the country. To some extent, we need to decide where we want the balance. There's always that tension, if you like, between a national vision and local delivery. My instinct has always been that it's not for a Minister in an office in Cardiff Bay to tell, whether it's Denbighshire or Flintshire, or even Blaenau Gwent, in this case, how they should be delivering their youth services. It's a matter for them to react to local circumstances.

[16] To go further in answering the question, we have been recently—and I can see that this has been part of your evidence—undertaking a mapping exercise, particularly of voluntary delivery. We're coming to the end of that process. I will certainly be happy to share that with the committee when it's available. I expect it to be available in about two weeks' time. That might aid the committee in its consideration of these issues. That mapping exercise seeks to map out where the voluntary provision is. Of course, statutory provision, as provided by local authorities, is a matter of public record.

[17] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you, Minister. Llyr, on this.

[18] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Yes. You told us early on that you wanted a service to be available across the whole of Wales—equality of access and open access in terms of the service that's available. You also say, and I would agree, I think, primarily, that it needs to be delivered locally. But, where that isn't happening, what is the Government's strategy to address that? Because, clearly, if the delivery isn't meeting your expectations in terms of a service, then clearly you have a role to play.

[19] **Alun Davies:** Yes, I'd agree with that. My predecessor, Julie James, commissioned some work. One of the conversations we've had in Government, in preparing, actually, for this session this morning, has been looking at how we take that work forward. She was given, I think, broadly four different options of ensuring that you have that overview: either a very local model, a regional model or a national model, broadly. There are different elements along that line. I'm considering that at the moment. These conversations took place in the early summer, late spring, around just before dissolution. I think it's an element of this portfolio that I will need to take a decision on.

[20] We have the reference group, of course, which meets twice a year. It last met in May. It's meeting next in December. I'll be attending the meeting in December. The earlier meeting was before my appointment. So, I would hope that at around that time—I'm not going to give any firm commitments to the committee because I don't feel I'm in a position to do so—we'll be able to revisit and take a wider view on that. Because I think that the point that you make is a very good and fair one. You know, it's all very well to say it's a local responsibility, but, you know, that isn't the Pontius Pilate defence—you know, 'It's nothing to do with me, guv. I'm going to wash my hands of this.' I'm not doing that, and I'm not saying that. What I'm saying is that there is a backstop here, that there is a responsibility in this building, and how we discharge that is a matter of active consideration at the moment.

[21] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. I'd like to stay, if we can, on the issue of access at the moment. Oscar.

[22] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair, and good morning, Minister.

[23] **Alun Davies:** Good morning.

[24] **Mohammad Asghar:** What steps is the Welsh Government taking to ensure increased participation among young people in the consultation process on young people's access to youth services? That's part one. Part two is: what targets, in the period of 2020–21, has your Government set to ensure that youth participation in decision making is being increased?

[25] **Alun Davies:** In terms of the approach that we're taking, we did publish a strategy back in 2014, which remains the Government's policy on youth work. If Members have any specific issues with that strategy I'll be

happy to take those specific questions. But the strategy, as established at that point, remains the policy of the Government. But, in terms of ensuring that provision is available, we are committed to open-access provision, not simply the targeted provision. We recognise that there is specific targeted provision that seeks to look at particular segments of the population. We think that that is a good thing and that it should continue to happen. We're trying to find the right balance between open access and targeted provision. It can be sometimes challenging. It can be challenging for local government and for voluntary organisations. My feeling remains that local authorities are best placed to interpret how these matters are delivered on a local needs basis, and that local authorities should—and, I hope, do—prioritise resources based on the needs of the communities that they represent. If there are particular instances that committee members can think of, or have knowledge of in their constituencies, where that is not happening, clearly I'd be more than happy to take up those individual issues.

[26] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Julie, then John.

[27] **Julie Morgan:** Thanks, Chair. You said that you're monitoring the voluntary sector—

[28] **Alun Davies:** Mapping.

[29] **Julie Morgan:** Mapping the voluntary sector provision. Obviously, some of the local authorities are using the voluntary sector to deliver the statutory service. I've got an example in my constituency where we had a fully-run education youth provision that, at one stage, was every night of the week, and that has now become the YMCA running it in a local church for one evening a week, where obviously the provision has gone down fairly drastically, and where the local children have lost out, basically. But that is the way that the local authority is actually using the voluntary sector to keep some provision going. So, I don't know if you had any information about those sorts of arrangements, where they are working together in that sort of way.

[30] **Alun Davies:** I think there are some great examples of where youth work and local authorities are working together. If it would be useful for the committee, I'd be more than happy to forward to the committee some case studies of where we believe that is working well, and perhaps some examples of where we need to go a bit further to make sure that that ambition and that vision is met. But can I say, Julie, in terms of the example that you have

quoted, we know that there are pressures facing local government and that local councillors have to take some very difficult decisions? Certainly, as a Minister here, I don't want to go down the road of being critical or looking critically at decisions taken by local government in dealing with a particular financial situation that they're facing.

[31] I think there is an opportunity for us to look at how we work across sectors, if you like, using the very great strengths of the voluntary sector, to deliver in a way that goes further and beyond that which we're able to do in the public sector and delivering statutory services. And, I'm not familiar with the example that you've quoted, but what I would say is that when I think, across the country, my experience, both as a politician and outside politics, tells me that much youth work is being delivered by the voluntary sector and is being delivered to a very, very high quality. It has been delivered in a way that engages with people, that brings people together and gives those young people some very real life-enhancing, sometimes life-changing, experiences and I think that's something to be valued. What I wouldn't like to see are those strengths, if you like, diluted in any way, by different structural arrangements. So, I understand the tensions that Llyr outlined, but let us look at how we can promote and support that work, rather than try to take it over.

[32] **Julie Morgan:** I agree completely with that, but I just think we have to acknowledge that there's been a big drop in the availability of open-access youth clubs in many areas of Wales.

[33] **Alun Davies:** We'll be publishing new figures in about two weeks' time, actually, for recent numbers. But we do know that there is significant and substantial support, in simply financial terms, available to youth services across Wales. I know that some of your witnesses have spoken about notional figures and the rest of it, but there is significant funding and support that goes above and beyond the revenue support grant.

[34] **Lynne Neagle:** John.

[35] **John Griffiths:** I'd like to return to mapping, Minister. It's great to hear that this mapping exercise is taking place in terms of the voluntary sector. I hear what you've said about local government provision being a matter of public record, but when we asked questions of local government at our last evidence session, there was little confidence that there's any comprehensive mapping of the delivery of youth services. It seems to me that, at a time of

strain, if we're not able to know, comprehensively, exactly what's being delivered and who's delivering it, then nobody is going to be in a position to work out where there are gaps, where there is duplication. So, I wonder whether your mapping exercise is going to be shared with local government and you're going to get together, as it were, to have that comprehensive mapping exercise that I think is probably badly needed.

[36] **Alun Davies:** Yes, certainly. There's probably more information available than perhaps was hinted at last week. Certainly, public service boards in each local authority area, of course, will already have debated and discussed these matters and will have or should have a clear understanding of what is available in their areas.

[37] But can I say this? Public provision, statutory provision from local authorities is already a matter of public record and is available both to this committee and to anyone else. And that stands. So, we understand what is delivered and what is available through statutory services. What isn't so well understood is that delivered through the voluntary sector, through voluntary groups, and it is that element of that that we are currently mapping. It's that element that we will be reporting on in the next few weeks. When you bring those two areas together, you have a much richer and more comprehensive overview of what is being delivered across the face of the country. I hope that, when we're able to bring these different elements of youth provision together, we'll see a very comprehensive picture. And alongside that, of course, comes the funding streams that support and sustain services in different parts of the country.

[38] I'm very happy to share all of this information with the committee. We've already published—I think we've published—quite significant information on funding streams over the last few years. The latest financial year for which we have information is 2014–15. The last financial year's information will be published in the next few weeks, again. But certainly, that information can be forwarded to the committee if it isn't already available.

09:45

[39] **John Griffiths:** Could I ask as well, Chair, in terms of access? I think we're all familiar with the financial situation that we all face, including local government in terms of funding pressures, and that some services are more prone to cuts by local authorities than others, for reasons we're all familiar with. So, with that sort of scenario, I'm interested in what you said, Minister,

in terms of the relationship between Welsh Government, you as the Minister, and local authorities and their own democratic mandate and responsibilities, because I think in some areas, for example, libraries, museums and sports provision, we've seen Welsh Government take quite a strong role and, although understanding local government's position and responsibilities, engaging through meetings, by calling the relevant councillors with responsibility together, looking at new models, new ways of working to cope with these challenges. So, at times, there's been quite a strong, hands-on approach from Welsh Government, and I just wonder whether you could say a little bit about how you would approach that relationship and whether you might give them a strong steer at some stage.

[40] **Alun Davies:** Yes, and I think, John, some of your experience in Government demonstrated the way that Ministers can work very proactively to make things happen in different places, without using those strong-armed tactics. I think some of the work that you did was very effective in demonstrating how that can be done very well. Certainly, that is the view that I would take. I'm always asked, 'Will you insist on local government using any notional numbers', and I say, 'No', because local government is local government and not the local administration of national Government, and I think that's an important differential to make. But, do you know, listening to you, I think you make some very, very clear, valid and important points, and certainly what we can do is refresh the statutory guidance that's currently available to local authorities, and we can do that in a positive way that seeks to encourage the sort of good practice that you've outlined and described. In doing so, of course, we can ensure that stakeholders are involved in that refresh, but also that this committee is involved in that, and I would be very happy for the committee to further scrutinise any additional or new statutory guidance that we give to local government on this matter.

[41] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Still on access to services, then, I've got Hefin, then Darren.

[42] **Hefin David:** In the evidence session last week, the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services raised the issue of the merging of youth offending services with youth services, which they argued caused a lot of problems. Are you aware of that issue? If you are aware, do you have concerns?

[43] **Ms Evans:** We're aware that it's happened in some local authorities, but I'm also aware that they're having very positive results, which I think the

WLGA gave you feedback on as well. So, it was positive.

[44] **Hefin David:** So, you're happy with that.

[45] **Ms Evans:** Yes.

[46] **Hefin David:** There was a specific concern that youth services and youth offending services are two different things.

[47] **Ms Evans:** They're still maintaining their professionalisms, aren't they, within those services, but working together collaboratively?

[48] **Hefin David:** From an access point of view, as a young person, and you see that this is one umbrella body, would it not put young people off a little bit from engaging?

[49] **Ms Evans:** That's not the feedback we've received.

[50] **Hefin David:** Okay.

[51] **Lynne Neagle:** Darren.

[52] **Darren Millar:** I just wanted to ask you about this matter of exercise, Minister. I'm grateful that a piece of work is going on at the national level, but to what extent is that capturing smaller providers in the voluntary sector, particularly faith groups, small sports clubs, the local footie club up the road from me in Abergele, for example? Has it been contacted? How are you mapping those? I appreciate some of this work might have happened at a local authority level and you might be discussing things with local authorities to see whether you can check off those organisations that might have been counted twice, but how is this information being captured? What is the methodology?

[53] **Alun Davies:** Perhaps it would be useful for Kara to explain.

[54] **Ms Richards:** We worked with the consultancy Cordis Bright, and this piece of work came as a direct result of a request from the voluntary sector to help raise their profile. I think it was very much a case of, 'We would like to work with the statutory sector, but sometimes they don't engage with us', and then it was also working with the statutory sector, who said, 'Well, actually, we don't really know what's out there.' So, we took it upon

ourselves to do this piece of research. So, this is a provision map that is for 22 local authorities. We worked with CWVYS, we worked with the WCVA, we worked with the county voluntary councils in order to send out a survey to use their reach to as many organisations as possible, asking them to provide information on the support—and this is for 14 to 18-year-olds, in the first instance—the type of support they provided, when they were open, where they were located—the kind of information that, actually, a local authority would find quite beneficial. That has proven quite an interesting one, because they did an initial round—a trawl—of trying to get as many organisations as possible, and, actually, what that has highlighted is that there was quite a disparity between one authority and another local authority with regard to the number of organisations responding. But, actually, at the end of it, I think in a couple of weeks' time, it's going to prove quite fruitful and useful for local authorities. It's not to say that we can't do this again, but it has, I think in some instances, identified well over 100 organisations that a local authority would not have previously been aware of. So, it's a good starting point, and, as I say, it came from us listening to the sector and to what they needed.

[55] **Darren Millar:** But you still accept that there will be some smaller organisations, perhaps, that may not have been caught with the net, as it were.

[56] **Ms Richards:** Yes, which means that we can't continue to do this.

[57] **Darren Millar:** I understand. It's too resource intensive sometimes, isn't it? But would you also accept that some local authorities have done a great job of cultivating the voluntary sector in their areas, building the capacity of the voluntary sector so that, frankly, they don't have to spend as much on their traditional statutory provision in those localities? Do you see that as something that, perhaps, is a model that could be picked up elsewhere? I look at Conwy, for example, and they've done an excellent job supporting the voluntary sector, growing the local capacity of these organisations in their area, and, as a result, they spend less than the amount that's given to them through the revenue support grant on youth services, and obviously spend it on other services that they're providing.

[58] **Alun Davies:** Look, my view is that, where you have local provision, the role of Welsh Government is to provide leadership, to provide support and encouragement to enable the exchange of best practice, with excellent case studies of different examples of different ways of working, and as an

enabler. That's why I always try to tread this sometimes very difficult path of providing support without providing that support with a sledgehammer. I think it's important that Government here understands what its role, a positive role, can be, but as a part of that also understands where it is important to step back as well, and to allow local decision making to take place.

[59] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Okay, we'll move on now, then, to look in more detail at Welsh Government strategy. Llyr.

[60] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Well, we mentioned that your role is there just now to offer leadership, but the evidence we've received seems to suggest quite strongly, actually, that the sector generally feels there's a failure of leadership from the Welsh Government in terms of youth services. How do you respond to that?

[61] **Alun Davies:** I disagree. I think, you know, that we as a Government have a strategy in place that was established as a result of a significant period and process of engagement and consultation and debate and discussion, so it wasn't a strategy that was imposed on the sector—it came from the sector, and that, of course, has been established with £2.7 million of additional funding in order to enable that to happen. We have, for example, developed and are rolling out the national quality mark for youth work in Wales, so we actually understand what is 'good', and what 'good' looks like, and enable people to understand that so that people can see that. Welsh Government's role, as I said in an earlier response to Darren, is to encourage and to give people opportunities to improve what they're providing there. The youth work reference group, which we discussed in answer to an earlier question, exists to provide that sort of linkage, that sort of debate and discussion between the sector as a whole and Government. There are I don't know how many youth organisations in Wales—a couple of thousand, I would have thought, in total—and you are going to hear a couple of thousand different views from those organisations, and it will be a matter for the committee how much weight it attaches to each one of those different views. But it's clearly a matter for Government to understand an overview of the sector and not simply to respond to each individual point of view that might be expressed.

[62] **Llyr Gruffydd:** I wouldn't treat the view of the CWVYS or the principal youth officers' group as individuals' points of view. I think they are, basically, the crux of the sector in Wales, and despite the national youth work strategy,

the message is perfectly clear coming back that there is a feeling that there's a lack of strategic direction and vision. The absence of a clear and funded plan as well is another concern that's highlighted. So, why is it, do you think, that the sector's view—and I stick to my guns on this; I believe it is the general consensus within the sector—is so different to yours?

[63] **Alun Davies:** Well, you stick to your guns and I'll stick to my guns. [*Laughter.*] CWVYS, as you will know, is a trustee of the organisation that represents about 90 organisations of the couple of thousand that are not represented by them. So, I don't think you're in a position to make that judgment on that basis.

[64] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, one of us is in denial, then.

[65] **Alun Davies:** I'm not trying to pretend that one organisation represents everybody, when, clearly, it doesn't, and the organisations that Darren described in his own constituency, and in other parts of north Wales, which you also represent, are not represented by that organisation, and have probably had absolutely no contact with that organisation. So, let's not pretend that an organisation, because it has a big name, has a big membership.

[66] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Do you think, therefore, that the youth service has a sufficient profile and status within the Welsh Government, because the principal youth officers' group, in their evidence to us said that they believe that there's been a systematic downgrading of youth work within Welsh Government?

[67] **Alun Davies:** And did they give any examples of that?

[68] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Well, I haven't got the evidence in front of me.

[69] **Alun Davies:** Did they give any examples of what they meant by that?

[70] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Well, look, I can only work from the evidence that's been provided to the committee. Clearly, there are concerns about the number of civil servants in the youth department. Would you like to tell us what the reduction has been in recent years?

[71] **Alun Davies:** I don't have any evidence of that at all.

[72] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Well, maybe you'd like to write to us, because I've seen figures—

[73] **Lynne Neagle:** You can't have dialogue back and forth. Can you ask a question and the Minister will answer?

[74] **Llyr Gruffydd:** I've seen figures, and maybe the Minister would like to confirm that. And I think he'll find that, in terms of resource, certainly, there's been a huge drop in numbers.

[75] **Alun Davies:** In terms of where we are, I have not, in the time I've been in office, and certainly, I don't think Julie James before me has, in any way, undertaken a significant reduction in the importance or priority given to youth work in the Welsh Government. There is no evidence to sustain that argument. I have seen no evidence in the evidence that you have received as a committee to sustain that argument. And there's a difference, of course, between evidence and opinion. Opinion is freely available to everybody, equally; evidence is different. So, if you provide me with evidence, then I will respond to that, but so far you've provided me with opinion and not evidence.

[76] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, are you agreeing to provide us with the figures?

[77] **Alun Davies:** Yes, I will provide you with them, of course.

[78] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Okay. Can I just quote further from the principal youth officers' evidence? They say, regrettably, that it's rare that the Welsh Government engages with important youth work stakeholders, including the principal youth officers' group, unless invited to do so, and that documents and policies are published without the sector being involved. They're not an unimportant group of people, are they, the principal youth officers' group, so why do they feel so aggrieved? You may deny that this is an issue, but, clearly, they have concerns, and there must be a reason for that.

[79] **Ms Richards:** I'm happy to take that. Sam and I are more than happy to go and meet with the PYO group. We have no issue with that at all, and we go when invited. But, equally, we're happy to collaborate with them whenever. I recently participated in one of their conferences just last week, with our director of education, Steve Davies, about the importance of the role of youth work in the delivery and development of the new curriculum. We value youth work within Welsh Government, and I think we resource it accordingly.

[80] **Alun Davies:** Can I say that none of those organisations have contacted me since I've been appointed to make those criticisms or to make those points? So, if they are making those points to the committee, then, clearly, they're doing so without reference to the Welsh Government, and without making those points to the Welsh Government. And perhaps, if they are concerned about the actions of the Welsh Government, they should contact the Minister in the Welsh Government, and, clearly, they have not done so.

[81] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Is it not clear, then, that there is a bit of a breakdown in relationship there, because they do also say in their evidence that they would like to know whether the youth work reference group is to continue to meet to discuss high-level strategic issues? [*Inaudible.*] Well, clearly, it is, because you've said you're meeting in December, but they're not sure whether it still exists.

[82] **Alun Davies:** I don't think that's quite what we said, Llyr. But, in terms of where we are—

[83] **Llyr Gruffydd:** I was reading from—

[84] **Alun Davies:** In terms of where we are, there is no proposal, and there hasn't been any proposal, to change the status of that, except, actually, from others, which I indicated earlier I'm considering at the moment. If we do create a single national body of any description or structure, then, clearly, that will mean dismantling the existing structures, and that will happen. But no decision has been taken on that. And can I say, in a structure where there are many hundreds and thousands of organisations, you will see a great number and variety of different views—some of which are colourful and some of which are robustly described and articulated. But that doesn't necessarily mean that they represent the whole diversity of the sector. This is a sector that is sustained and supported primarily by local government within a strategy determined by the national Government. It is not my role, and I do not see it as a role for Welsh Government, to step in and nationalise these services. It is a role to stand back and to allow the services to be provided, but within an overall vision and structure and there will always be tensions between that.

10:00

[85] I have not heard or seen or been made aware of any of the points that you've raised this morning. I'm not aware of those points being made to Welsh Government and what I would say to anybody who feels that way is that surely the first point of reference would be the Welsh Government and if they are not saying that to Welsh Government, then that's a matter for them and not a matter for me.

[86] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Minister, you referred in your answer to Llyr then, to the calls for a national youth council for Wales, which has been put forward by a number of respondees. Can you expand on your views on that? Do you think that that might be a better way of co-ordinating things, by bringing the voluntary organisations and the statutory providers together?

[87] **Alun Davies:** Yes. I don't want to mislead the committee by my answer because I haven't reached a view on this yet. But, I notice that the Welsh Local Government Association said last week that there's room for a national forum. I know that different people have described different national structures in different ways and, from the evidence that I've seen that you've received, you haven't received any consistent view that could be said to be a consistent, across-the-board point of view. That, frankly, reflects our position as well—there isn't a consistent view on these matters.

[88] So, in terms of where I am at the moment, we had proposals to the previous Minister—to my predecessor in this role—and she was minded to move in a particular direction, but obviously we had dissolution and the election. I'm returning to that now. We have the national youth work reference group meeting in December. It would be my view that I would be best advised to have that debate and discussion with them before announcing a decision, rather than turning up there and announcing my decision in the way that Llyr has perhaps described. So, I will, if you forgive me, Chair, be a little coy this morning on these matters.

[89] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Can I just ask about consultation with young people? You've described the kind of engagement that there is between Welsh Government and principal youth officers. Is there direct consultation between Welsh Government and young people?

[90] **Alun Davies:** Yes, I hope so. The youth reference group has places for young people on it. This participation of children and young people is key to the development of our legislative programme and of the different elements of our programme for government. We are providing significant funding to

Children in Wales to facilitate Young Wales, for example, which is an example of looking beyond some of the formal structures, if you like, to actually stimulate and seek out engagement of young people in different matters. But if the committee has any views on how that can be improved or how we can strengthen that engagement, then I'd very much welcome that. I would particularly welcome any views the committee might have on how we can strengthen the voice of young people and children who may be, at the moment, marginalised, lacking in confidence, from disadvantaged backgrounds, or excluded from services and providers in other ways. So, I would be very happy to hear from the committee, if you have taken any evidence on that and have any views or recommendations on those matters.

[91] **Lynne Neagle:** Thanks, Minister. Hefin on this and then Darren.

[92] **Hefin David:** Sorry, Chair, but I'd like to go back to the first question you asked, with your permission.

[93] **Lynne Neagle:** Go on then.

[94] **Hefin David:** The thrust of your arguments and the two things that you said that struck me were that it wouldn't be your wish to nationalise the service. You've said that several times now, and you believe that local government is not a local administration of national Government. Therefore, it seems that the thrust of your views are that—and tell me if I'm wrong here—local provision, organic provision should be the driver of youth services.

[95] **Alun Davies:** Yes.

[96] **Hefin David:** So, just this issue of this national youth work council for Wales idea, which you've already said you're going to be deliberately coy about, which is perfectly understandable given the time it takes to make a reasoned decision, four key pieces of evidence we received last week, or key views we received last week, were that a national body would enable better collaborative processes, reduce duplication across the sector, raise the status and profile of youth work, and enable workforce development. Do you see other ways, alternative ways in which that could be achieved, alternative to a national youth work body?

[97] **Alun Davies:** I think some of those things are happening at the moment and are happening in different ways in different parts of the sector.

So, I don't see a single national organisation as being the answer to all of those different questions, but I do see that it could play a role. My concern would be that it could play a—. 'My concern', sorry, indicates a more negative view; it's not. One of the imperatives for, or one of the priorities for, a national structure could be to provide both the roles that you have outlined there, all of which I accept, by the way, but also a role in terms of informing Government and having a stronger conversation with Government about issues facing the sector—you know, the issues that Llyr has brought up in his typical, robust way. They are issues that may or may not have an element of consistency across other organisations, and I think one of the things that I've seen your evidence as a committee is that lack of consistency. So, you have one person saying one thing and another person saying something else—I mean, Darren usually coming in with a more idiosyncratic view from his own point of view. So, it might well be that that forum or structure—I'm trying to avoid using words that have particular meanings—might help us articulate a more collective view, which may or may not be a good thing.

[98] **Hefin David:** Therefore, we look forward to hearing more, I think.

[99] **Alun Davies:** I hope the committee forgives my coyness and will accept it's not my usual style in front of committee, because I think it is important that if you ask me to engage and to converse and to speak with and listen to and understand these matters, I can't then agree to do that and then tell you what a decision would be at the same time. You can't do both of those things. So, I do want, at the moment—. Perhaps if timescales were different and we'd had conversations over the summer, then I would be in a different situation, but my strong preference at the moment is to continue these conversations, meet the youth work reference group in December, and then, from that process, reach a decision that I can hopefully announce after Christmas.

[100] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Some witnesses have called for a strengthening of the statutory guidance on youth work through the learning and skills Act. Is that something that you're willing to consider when you are looking at this in a few weeks' time?

[101] **Alan Davies:** Sure. I think I said in answer to John Griffiths that I'd be very happy to refresh—I think that's the term we are using at the moment; a term we're using in all sorts of different areas—the statutory guidance available to local government. I would be happy to do that in a collaborative process to enable Llyr's friends to express their points of view and then to

provide committee with the opportunity to scrutinise it as well.

[102] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Sorry, Chair; I take some offence at that comment.

[103] **Alun Davies:** I apologise.

[104] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Darren.

[105] **Darren Millar:** I just wanted to ask about the workforce, the youth worker workforce. We've got a situation where we know there's variability in terms of access to services, but there's also variability, of course, with quality of services as well, even where they are provided. One of the steps that the Welsh Government has taken to address that is to recognise youth work as a profession and to require registration by professional youth workers with the Education Workforce Council. I know that that's something that is under way at the moment and has not yet been completed, but every profession ought to have some professional standards, and there aren't any at the moment. It's not the responsibility of the Education Workforce Council, as I understand it, to develop those professional standards, so what work is the Welsh Government doing to develop a set of professional standards for youth workers in Wales?

[106] **Alun Davies:** I think the process that you've described in terms of the registration will actually deliver that. I think it will also go a long way to delivering the points that Hefin made in terms of status of the youth profession in Wales as well. I hope that the Education Workforce Council registration process will both strengthen the sector and provide an underpinning, if you like, of the skills available to the sector, and also then increase the status of the sector and of youth workers. I hope that it will then provide the opportunity for a progression, if you like, and a more profound engagement in how we develop youth work and youth workers in the future. So, I stand on that.

[107] **Darren Millar:** But, just in terms of professional standards, registration in itself is not going to set a list of professional standards for youth workers to meet, is it, Minister? There's no remit within the Education Workforce Council to develop those standards. So, what is the Welsh Government doing to set some standards for youth workers to adhere to?

[108] **Alun Davies:** I hope that the quality mark, which I described in answer to an earlier question, will do that as well.

[109] **Darren Millar:** But the quality mark is for an organisation that delivers; it's not for the individuals to abide by. For example, the Education Workforce Council has a list and suite of professional standards for teachers that they subscribe to, even though there are standards for schools to meet.

[110] **Alun Davies:** I hope that, taken together, the development of the registration system and the quality mark will provide imperatives to deliver the sort of standards that you are describing. But, you'll also be aware that there are national occupational standards, which are at a UK level, for youth workers, which do fulfil many of the demands that you've described—which I don't disagree with, by the way; I think they are perfectly fair and reasonable points to make. So, you've got a number of different interventions, both in terms of registration—the process of registration and ongoing following registration—and the occupational standards at the UK level, plus then the quality mark for the delivery of services. And, it is, of course, a quality mark that describes the delivery of services; it doesn't simply describe the organisation, it's about the services that the organisation delivers.

[111] **Darren Millar:** Wouldn't it be sensible to extend the remit of the Education Workforce Council to ask them to develop a set of professional standards for youth workers in Wales, as opposed to just not having that organisation own those professional standards in the way that other organisations, their peer organisations, across the UK do?

[112] **Alun Davies:** I'm happy to consider those matters, but, at the same time, Darren, I will say to you that a proliferation of these different structures don't necessarily deliver perhaps what we would agree we'd want to see delivered.

[113] **Darren Millar:** I appreciate that.

[114] **Alun Davies:** What I would want to see is a streamlined, effective system that recognises both the delivery of services of a particular quality and standard, ensures that we have a workforce and workforce planning that can deliver a workforce, and reaches the standards and the quality, but, at the same time, exists within the wider framework.

[115] **Darren Millar:** And, just in terms of extending the quality and improving the quality of the volunteer workforce, how do you see that being achieved? Obviously, with bigger organisations, they may well have

structures themselves that develop their volunteer workforce, but what about those smaller organisations that we talked about before that might be perhaps outside of the net that these bigger organisations are catching?

[116] **Alun Davies:** We will ensure that the quality mark, which was developed with the sector—it's not something that we're imposing—will allow different organisations to self-assess themselves. It won't be simply a matter of the Welsh Government imposing something on them. The role of the wider voluntary structure and voluntary sector is important in pushing up standards and increasing standards and quality as well. So, you do have the structures that we're establishing from Government, but also the structures that exist within the voluntary sector as well, which, I hope, together, will capture many of the organisations that you are describing.

[117] **Darren Millar:** Would you like to see local authorities opening up their training opportunities, for example, for youth workers to the voluntary sector and to some of these smaller organisations, so that they can help to equip themselves to do a better job?

[118] **Alun Davies:** That's obviously a matter for local government, how they would do that.

[119] **Darren Millar:** It's not something that you'd like to give them a steer on.

[120] **Alun Davies:** It's something that I'd be very content with, if local government were to consider it.

[121] **Ms Richards:** It's something that is actually already happening in certain local authorities—

[122] **Darren Millar:** But, not everywhere.

[123] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Just a couple of final questions on this section. Estyn said that they thought that the national strategy needed to be reviewed. What is your response to that?

10:15

[124] **Alun Davies:** We do keep the strategy under review, and clearly, we will be reviewing it at a time when we refresh the statutory guidance.

[125] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Just finally, how confident are you that the youth work sector is being fully taken into account in developing the Donaldson agenda?

[126] **Alun Davies:** My understanding is that it's fully involved in that work. The answer to the original question from the committee and your original question, Chair, was very much about the role of the sector in delivering not just useful and not just basic youth services, but actually, services that will enrich young people, enrich their lives and offer them life-changing experiences, in some ways. So, we're moving into a process, through Donaldson, of having education provided in a more comprehensive and holistic way, and I hope that the youth service and youth work will help deliver that. Certainly, my understanding is that that is already happening.

[127] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Michelle on procurement.

[128] **Michelle Brown:** Minister, a number of organisations have raised concerns about contracts being awarded to consultants in England. Can you guide us through the process for the procurement of those contracts? Were they advertised, generally, to the sector? Were invitations to offer services issued? How did the actual procurement process work?

[129] **Alun Davies:** Yes, I have noticed that criticism. I've asked officials to look at that, because we do follow very strict procurement guidelines, not just in this area of work, but in all areas of Welsh Government work. My understanding would be that organisations would be invited to quote from the Sell2Wales database. Certainly, when I've looked at this matter, most organisations that were invited to quote for the quality mark for youth work in Wales were from Wales. When we commissioned research into youth work in schools, of the 12 organisations invited to quote, nine were from Wales. So, certainly, my experience, again, is that those criticisms are not well founded.

[130] But in terms of our overall approach—and this is for wider procurement policy, which has been the subject of some considerable conversation over the years—we are seeking to ensure that contracts are available to organisations that are based in Wales, and this work is an absolutely essential part of that.

[131] **Michelle Brown:** So, have any contracts been awarded to consultants in

Wales?

[132] **Ms Evans:** Yes.

[133] **Michelle Brown:** There have. The majority of the people who—. You've just said that—. Where Welsh organisations were involved in this process and offered services, what were the criteria for awarding the final contract that saw that contract go to an English consultant? I'm not saying it was the wrong decision. All I'm trying to get at is what were the criteria for awarding the contract?

[134] **Alun Davies:** Clearly, that's not a matter for me. Sam, would you—?

[135] **Ms Evans:** The criteria were set for what was needed to deliver the contract. There was a requirement to provide the report in Welsh and to be able to communicate in Welsh as well as English when they engaged with stakeholders. Contracts have been awarded to Welsh organisations. For example, the Welsh language, when we looked at how youth work was contributing towards the Welsh language strategy—that contract was awarded to an organisation in north Wales. So, contracts have been awarded to organisations in Wales, and organisations in Wales have been invited to submit.

[136] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. We'll move on now then to look at funding issues. Julie Morgan.

[137] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you very much. I know, Minister, that you've said you don't want to interfere with what local authorities are doing, but there appears to be a very wide variation in the amount of money that they are giving to the youth services. It seems to vary a lot between each local authority. So, I wondered if you had any views on this variation.

[138] **Alun Davies:** Do I have any views? Overwhelmingly, my view remains that this is a matter for local government to take these decisions and not a matter for a Minister to intervene in. Local youth services are funded via a number of different sources, mainly the RSG—I think that probably represents about 70 per of the total available. But then you've got other funding sources from Welsh Government programmes, from the European structural fund and other sources within, perhaps, local government or elsewhere. So, you've got a number of different sources of funding. Taken together, the current estimate for the final financial year for which we have

numbers was that £36.6 million was being spent on youth services across Wales, which is considerably more than the notional figure that you'd see from the RSG that is published.

[139] **Julie Morgan:** So, that figure rises because the money's coming from other pots like Communities First or those sorts of bodies. I think the concern was expressed because it was the RSG that appeared to be very varied in the way that it was actually used. The examples given to us I think were RCT and—. Carmarthenshire spent 31 per cent and RCT spent 113 per cent, although the WLGA did give some doubts about those figures. So, I wondered, you know, sitting there as the Minister with the overall view of it, whether you felt that this was anything that you should explore.

[140] **Alun Davies:** I'm always very hesitant to intervene, or appear to intervene, or to seek to intervene in decisions that are properly a role for local government to take. I take the perspective that we want to strengthen and empower local government, and not diminish local government. So, I'm always very hesitant then to make value judgments on individual decisions. I'm not a person sitting in a chamber, wherever that happens to be—whether it's in Cardiff, Clydach Vale or Abergele, or whatever it happens to be—or Caernarfon. It's the easiest thing in the world for a Minister to give a view on the challenges facing local government, and also the particular circumstances of local government and of youth services within that area or region. It might well be, for argument's sake, that in one area you've got significantly high support from other sources, so the RSG would not be the only means of support there, and you'd have a lower proportion. In other areas, it might be different. But I really hesitate before second-guessing decisions of our comrades and friends in local government.

[141] **Julie Morgan:** Do you have any information—? You said about this £36.6 million. Do you have any information about how that breaks down between local authorities?

[142] **Alun Davies:** Yes, this is published information. I can provide that to the committee across the whole range. We do publish this information every year, and we are in the process of putting together the numbers for the current year for publication in, I think, two weeks. So, we'll be looking at that, and certainly if it meets the committee's timetables, then we can provide that to the committee as early as possible in the next couple of weeks.

[143] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. That would be helpful, but can I just draw your attention to the fact that the WLGA last week told us that—he didn't think the statistical releases were a useful tool to compare local authority spend, because he said that finance officers all had different interpretations of what to include, which was rather worrying, really. So, I would just be interested in your comment on that, because, clearly, we need to know that the information we're getting back is robust.

[144] **Alun Davies:** I accept what's said there, which is one of the reasons why I say I'm very hesitant to second-guess these decisions and to take a view on these matters. I think it would be useful, if we're in a situation whereby we're having discussions and debates, which I think are absolutely essential to have, about the overall structure, funding and delivery of youth services, that we are able to rely on the numbers we have available to us. If it is the view that the WLGA—that the numbers they are providing to us are not as robust as perhaps they could be, that's a conversation, clearly, I'll have to have with the WLGA.

[145] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. John.

[146] **John Griffiths:** I was going to ask you, Minister, about the well-rehearsed debate around hypothecation, because in taking evidence we had some discussion around whether there should be hypothecation of funding allocated for youth service provision by local authorities. But, of course, another alternative is the setting of outcomes that should be delivered, so it's not a matter of hypothecating funding and it would allow for a variety of delivery partners to provide those youth services. I wonder whether you might give consideration to the setting of outcomes that would have to be delivered by local authority areas to make sure that there is, perhaps, more consistency in youth services across Wales.

[147] **Alun Davies:** Setting outcomes by local authority area—I'm happy to consider that. Of course, the national strategy has some outcomes that probably aren't defined in the way that you describe, and certainly aren't defined on a local authority basis, in terms of the way forward, but perhaps that is something we can discuss when we come back to discuss the strategy guidance. I'm more attracted by the concept of outcomes than I am by hypothecation. I believe that we should be seeking to hypothecate as little as possible, that it's a matter for local government to take decisions in their areas and that it's a matter for local government to take the view that they understand the local area in a way that a Welsh Government couldn't,

wouldn't and wouldn't seek to, quite honestly. So, I'm more attracted by the concept of outcomes-based accountability than I would be hypothecation. If we are going to look at a national outcomes framework, then perhaps how we break that down into local areas could be something we could look at.

[148] **Lynne Neagle:** There is a consultation that's just closed on outcomes. Are there any emerging themes coming from that that would help us in our deliberations?

[149] **Alun Davies:** I can certainly write to the committee if and when we do identify those themes, but as you say, that consultation has just closed. It wasn't our intention to break down a lot of this to local government level, quite honestly, but if that perhaps helps us consider these issues of how we deliver these matters on a local basis, then perhaps we could consider that. But I would, again, be very coy—if you don't mind me saying so—about giving undertakings on that, because we haven't yet had time to consider the results of that consultation.

[150] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Llyr.

[151] **Llyr Griffiths:** I just wanted to ask a quick one about Erasmus+, which is an EU programme that young people in Wales, and the youth service generally, have benefitted greatly from. It was highlighted to us through evidence at a stakeholder event that, actually, you don't have to be a member of the EU to access that—you can actually buy into the service. I was just wondering whether you'd be willing to urge the UK Government, when the Welsh Government does have discussions with the UK Government about leaving the EU, to ensure that the UK remains involved in that programme and buys into it. Or, if not, would you be willing to consider the potential of the Welsh Government actually engaging in Erasmus+ post Brexit?

[152] **Alun Davies:** Yes, I would be. Clearly, it's the UK as a member state in this case, and a UK agency, that continues to manage and deliver the programme across the United Kingdom, but you're absolutely right in your analysis: you don't need to be a member of the European Union in order to access these services and I would certainly want to do that. I think one of the greatest strengths of the European Union has been that it's been able to break down borders, and to enable people to learn and understand other cultures in other countries with other peoples. I think one of the great advantages of our common European civilisation has been that exchange of ideas, views and experiences throughout the years. I think it would be an

absolute tragedy were we to lose that, and for young people to lose that option and that opportunity as well. So, whatever we can do to co-operate and to continue to have strong relationships with our friends on the European mainland is something that I would strongly support.

10:30

[153] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Can I just ask about Communities First? Obviously, we had the announcement yesterday about Communities First, which I know is going to be subject to external engagement, but Communities First is making a contribution to youth work funding—your paper says £0.9 million. Will you be having discussions with Carl Sargeant about how to retain the value that we've got for youth work from Communities First going forward?

[154] **Alun Davies:** I've already had conversations with Carl, obviously, in Government, prior to the announcement that was made yesterday. Clearly, Carl is leading on a review of how we deliver these different programmes, but I recognise the contribution that Communities First has made to youth services, which happens in my own constituency and my hometown, in Tredegar. I recognise that, and I know that that is something that will be foremost in people's minds at the moment. I hope, when we look towards how we set out priorities for our future approach to building resilient communities, that we will be able to look at how we talk to people about ensuring that we don't lose some of these youth services that are delivered in different ways. But, clearly, the announcement was made yesterday. As Members will be aware, I am even more coy about discussing other Ministers' priorities than I am about my own, sometimes. So, I would appreciate the committee's understanding that it's difficult for me to comment in any detail on that.

[155] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Hefin.

[156] **Hefin David:** Just regarding something that you said earlier about public service boards, which is relevant to some of the issues around funding—you mentioned the importance of public service boards in the monitoring and delivery of youth services. I raised that last week, and one of the responses was that youth services, particularly voluntary youth services, don't have the resources to engage with public service boards. I'm just wondering if you'd reflect on the effectiveness of public service boards engaging with youth services or the other way around.

[157] **Alun Davies:** Yes, I'm happy to reflect upon that. I think one of the themes that I've tried to emphasise in front of committee this morning has been the importance of local engagement, and that local structures should be the primary means by which we structure and deliver youth services. So, there may well be variations in different places as to how effective those structures are, and that's something that I recognise. It may well be that, in some places, that engagement isn't perhaps as powerful as perhaps it could be in other places. But I would say this also: the third sector does have a seat at PSBs, as you'll know from your own experience, and it's important how that input into PSBs is managed and structured from the voluntary sector point of view—that youth services and youth organisations are able to provide a strong input into it. Again—and it comes back to the point that Llyr made earlier—if there are specific examples of where that is not happening, then I would prefer to hear that. It's useful for Government to have examples of where there are failures and evidence of those failures, rather than to hear generalised conversations.

[158] **Hefin David:** But what I would like to work out is whether it is something that—. When CWVYS gave us evidence, was it something that they simply hadn't thought of, or is it something that they don't have the resources to do? I think that's what we're not clear on—well, I'm not clear on—and I'd like to get some clarification on that. It might be helpful for you to consider those things as well, given that public service boards should be key to the delivery of some of these things.

[159] **Alun Davies:** And it could be something that we look at in terms of statutory guidance. I accept that, but, again, from my point of view as a Minister, I work on the basis of evidence and examples of these things, and not on the basis of opinion, however valuable that might be in some circumstances, and it is important for me to take a decision that is based on an analysis of the facts, and not simply respond to different people's opinions at different times.

[160] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Are there any other questions from Members? No. Okay. Well, can I thank the Minister for his time and for attending this morning, and also thank his officials for coming? As you know, you'll be sent a transcript of the discussion to check for accuracy. Thank you very much. The committee will now break.

Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:35 a 10:57.

The meeting adjourned between 10:35 and 10:57.

**Trafodaeth gyda'r Athro Syr Ian Diamond ar yr Adolygiad o Drefniadau
Cyllido Addysg Uwch a Chyllid Myfyrwyr Cymru
Discussion with Professor Sir Ian Diamond on the Review of Higher
Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales**

[161] **Lynne Neagle:** Can I welcome Members back? I'm really delighted to welcome Professor Sir Ian Diamond to our committee today to talk about his review of higher education finance. We are really pleased that you've been able to join us. Can I also welcome Russell George to this item? He is joining us as Chair of the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee, so thank you very much for coming as well.

[162] Would you like to make some opening remarks, Sir Ian?

[163] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Thank you very much and could I just say how much of a privilege it is, first, to have been asked to take on this review and, second, to be here today. I'm looking forward very much to the discussions and debate that we will have.

[164] Could I also just start by acknowledging that this is not a review that I have done; it is a review that a team of 12 people—cross-party representatives—took part in and I have to acknowledge the incredible commitment of all members of the review? I also have to say that you in Wales have some fabulous civil servants who did some fantastic analysis. The statistical analysis that aided the review was incredibly good, I have to say, and we were supported in every way very strongly, so thank you very much to all of those.

[165] Could I just say in kick off that we took as our, if you like, short brief that we had to put together some recommendations for a system. Higher education is not student fees or research or anything else—it is a system, and a system that we believed had the opportunity to drive jobs and growth and social cohesion for Wales to provide opportunities for, largely, young people, but people across the age range in Wales, to benefit from higher education, to provide a system that was fair and that enabled people to access it whatever their background and whatever their economic worth at that time, and to have a system that enabled there to be a truly high-class group of universities in Wales. We judged that it was important that there

were very strong universities in Wales and that people should also, though, very clearly have the opportunity to study wherever they wanted to. We undertook a large consultation, and I have to say I was hugely impressed by the very large number of submissions, which came from right across the Welsh societal spectrum, and the way in which they all agreed that higher education was important for Wales, but at the same time there was variation in how it should be funded.

11:00

[166] The one thing that I think came right across from the very many consultations and discussion groups that we had was that the current system perhaps wasn't sustainable for all sorts of reasons. Therefore, we looked for a new system, and in so doing we listened. We listened very much to people from across the Welsh society but, in particular, I have to say we did listen to the student body. What the student body was saying to us was that it wasn't the fees per se that were necessarily the issue, because they could be paid back when the benefits of higher education were reaped, but it was actually the day-to-day living costs. I would urge colleagues to read an NUS Wales pamphlet called 'The Pound in Your Pocket', which I think is a really excellent piece of work. While we didn't base our recommendations solely on that, it was hugely influential.

[167] So, we recommend a move that goes to maintenance grants as a key element, but means-tested maintenance grants with a sense of universalism because that is what Wales has, in my view, rightly always led. And that those maintenance grants should have a clear rationale: a rationale of—for those with the lowest incomes—37 hours at the living wage for the 30 weeks of study. We believe that had some rationale. We also tried to have a fairly shallow means test, because we believe that what is euphemistically called the 'squeezed middle' is important to support. So, that was the basis for our starting point.

[168] I would commend to you also, though, our views on part-time, where we have tried to find a system that I think is innovative and exciting, and which will, I hope, incentivise part-time study. We have particularly tried to find a system that reduces any glass ceiling that might exist for students from disadvantaged backgrounds in taking post-graduate courses, because, increasingly, to benefit fully from higher education in some areas, post-graduate courses are really important. I've always been very keen in my own mind that we mustn't have that glass ceiling, and I think we've brought that

in.

[169] We have recognised that research is a real strength of Wales, and that research moving into the broadest sense of impact is also important, and we have made recommendations there that I hope you will find both imaginative, innovative and in the long term for the benefit of Wales.

[170] We listened also to a very impressive plea from the Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales that Wales was short of scientists, and so we have tried to bring a recommendation for a Welsh postgraduate research scheme, which will train a new generation of Welsh researchers in, if you like, the border between fundamental research and industrial research. We think that will be important.

[171] I should also say that we also believe that there is an enormous benefit for Wales in having good social policy and good links into the third sector, and we have made that as well. That's the basis of what we have said. I hope you have enjoyed reading it, and I'm looking forward to a conversation about it.

[172] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you very much for those opening remarks, and I know Members have got lots of questions on different aspects of the report. Can I just start with a general question? You've referred in your opening remarks to how this wasn't a review of finance; it was about the system. And you've also been very clear that this is a package that you expect to be accepted in its entirety; bits of it can't be picked off, or whatever. Would you like to expand on that, really, and how fundamental you think that is to the success of this report?

[173] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Thank you for that question. I should say that, rather than expect, I think I'd used the word 'hope', because I recognise absolutely that this is a Welsh Government decision. But, in hoping that it is accepted, I think, very clearly, higher education is not a sort of stand-alone bits and bobs. It does require for the student that you can flow through, sometimes having come from college, sometimes having come from school, sometimes having come from a period in work. It also requires at the highest level that it is informed by research. So, teaching standing alone would not be the quality it is as when world-leading scientists, as you have in Wales, are able to, if I may euphemistically say, leave the bench and go and teach, because that interaction and that, if you like, search for inquisitiveness and curiosity-driven education is so important.

[174] And so, bringing the two together—the research and the education—it seems to us was absolutely critical. It is also important that Wales will now, in my opinion, be the only place, certainly in the UK, where you could go into, say, college and end up with a PhD, having moved right the way through, and then contribute fully for the rest of your career to Welsh society. That would be a magnificent statement of a real commitment that the Welsh Government could make. But it is a system. It is a system, because it flows through different aspects, and it is always an integration of research and teaching, and research that, where appropriate, is having a real impact on society, on commerce, and on industry.

[175] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you very much. Julie Morgan.

[176] **Julie Morgan:** Yes. Can I declare an interest, because my husband is the chancellor of Swansea University?

[177] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** And what a fine university that is. *[Laughter.]*

[178] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you very much for the review that you and your team have done. I wanted to ask you about the move from the grant for tuition fees to loans. You've said already that it was highly influenced by what the students felt. Do you have any concerns about students leaving higher education with large loans to pay?

[179] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I think that's a really important question, and, certainly, we debated it at great length, and I think our view—well, I don't think; I know—was that it is fair for the individual and for the state both to contribute. I would say, also, that we don't know what the current level of debt is always, because, as we have heard very often, students are taking on debt to live, and often expensive debt through credit cards and things like that, and that can't be, if you like, the optimal strategy. I also heard in a presentation last week by Audit Scotland that, in Scotland, in the next couple of years, levels of debt will rise to over £20,000 on average. Now, that is not a million miles away from where we are in Wales.

[180] So, yes. Look, in the ideal world—you know, I benefited from a system that paid my fees and a maintenance grant. I feel very privileged, but we're not in that world now; we're in a different fiscal world, and we're also in a world where, perhaps, we think it is fair—and I do—that people who benefit

from higher education should also contribute to it. But it is so important that, in us being asked to contribute to it, it should not be a barrier to entry, and that's what we've tried to achieve, because it will not be a barrier to entry, because one only pays back one's fees when one gains the benefit from it.

[181] **Julie Morgan:** Did you have any evidence at all that students were put off by getting into large debts through the fees?

[182] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** We didn't, to be absolutely honest. Certainly, the evidence from England—where, I have to say, I think that debts are going to be significantly higher—is that there hasn't been a real decline in entry. The evidence from Wales or the submissions from Wales were very much that it was the living costs and the day to day that actually mattered, and that's where we have tried to find a way that helps, and to help most those people who most need that help.

[183] **Julie Morgan:** And a last question on the level of tuition fees: how do you think that's—? What views have you got about the level of tuition fees?

[184] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I think we need to have fees at a level that enables universities in Wales to be able to operate effectively. I do think that the level at the moment, as of now, is the right level. It is a level that enables there to be for universities the flexibility to, for example, bring in interventions to support widening access, or to bring in interventions around, for example, technology-enhanced learning. I think there are opportunities for universities, so I think the levels are about right.

[185] You will note that we also made it very clear that, for those subjects where the cost of teaching them is higher, then that should be, if you like, topped up. What happens in the future is clearly a decision for the Welsh Government. I observe two things: one is that the fee level at the maximum in England has increased recently, and I also observe, from running a university, that inflation impacts on you quite significantly. So, I do think that the levels are about right. However, I suspect that the Welsh Government will need to consider very seriously what those rates are in future.

[186] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you.

[187] **Lynne Neagle:** Hefin, on the tuition fee issue.

[188] **Hefin David:** Just to follow up on that, really, on page 39 of the report,

section 9.06, you state that your modelling for this report has been largely based on the £9,000 fee and current student numbers. Is that correct?

[189] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Sure.

[190] **Hefin David:** One of the things you suggest is that an inflationary increase of 2 per cent would cost an additional £24 million.

[191] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Yes.

[192] **Hefin David:** What would happen if these student numbers were to increase beyond that?

[193] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I think that's obviously a very, very good point. My own view is that if, at a time when the demography is not supporting an increase, one is encouraging more people to go into higher education, then that's got to be a good thing. So, my own view is that an increase is a good thing. Some of those numbers have been modelled—certainly, we also modelled, as you rightly say, what the cost would be for a 2 per cent inflation—simply on the grounds that it was going to be a couple of years before these recommendations could be brought into practice, and we wanted at least to give some evidence of what the cost would be.

[194] **Hefin David:** So, you're suggesting that there would need to be more money brought into the system should those numbers increase.

[195] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I think that's absolutely right, yes—no question.

[196] **Hefin David:** Okay, and would that then maintain the recommendations as you've got them, or would you start to spread things a little more thinly?

[197] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** No, my recommendations would be that we need—

[198] **Hefin David:** They stand.

[199] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Yes, absolutely. My own view, very strongly, is that a society like Wales—and I could give you a larger number of other countries, but, in a society like Wales, one needs a society with more

people with skills and fewer people with no skills. That's the future of Wales. Now, I would also say, very clearly, that not all those skills will need to be higher education. I am passionate about a broad range of skills being available, and we make some recommendations also in the report, just in a small way, about higher-level apprenticeships—something that I'm personally very, very keen on. So, I do think that, when I talk about skills, I am not simply talking about higher education. But what Wales needs, in my opinion, above all else, is fewer people with no skills.

11:15

[200] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Llyr.

[201] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Just picking up further on the level of tuition fees, really. You've already told us that you feel it's appropriate that £9,000 is the right level. Clearly, the Cabinet Secretary here in Wales has made it clear that in 2017–18 it's going to be £9,000. But we are facing a situation where we will see a divergence, I suppose, or greater divergence in years to come, between the level in Wales and the level in England. Clearly, the sector itself would have concerns about that in Wales. How do you believe the Welsh Government should address that issue in future?

[202] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Well, ultimately, the Welsh Government has to make what, I have to say, in my opinion, are difficult decisions around the allocation of its budget. I'm in awe of politicians and the way that they do make these difficult decisions, and they will have to balance higher education, and the opportunity for higher education, against other issues—that, to me, is clear—and also against, if you like, the amount of money that they have to disperse in the first place. It will, therefore, then be, in my opinion, for higher education to be able to demonstrate how brilliant in Wales it is, and why it deserves a fair slice of the cake. What I believe this set of recommendations does is provide the basis for a very strong higher education system that would be able to do that.

[203] **Lynne Neagle:** Darren.

[204] **Darren Millar:** I just wanted to ask about the general sustainability of these proposals. One of the tasks that your panel was charged with, Professor Diamond, was to come up with some solutions that would bring some long-term financial sustainability, because the costs were increasing exponentially over the past few years, and that was becoming a burden,

which, frankly, was unsustainable for the Welsh Government to continue to maintain. Yet, you have told press conferences, and you've told us as Assembly Members, that your scheme is cost neutral. I'm struggling to see where the financial sustainability kicks in.

[205] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I'm not clear that I was ever asked to save money. I am clear that I was asked to provide something that, in my opinion, was sustainable. What I believe the review team has done is provide a set of recommendations that has the benefit of really supporting a very strong higher education system in Wales, of providing individuals with the opportunity to benefit from higher education, and to do so without problem regarding their own economic background, and to provide some innovations that will benefit the economy and the society of Wales. That's a different place than where we were when I started, in terms of what Welsh higher education looked like, and that's why it's sustainable. I was never under the impression that I was asked to save money.

[206] **Darren Millar:** So, what changed between your interim report and your final report? In your interim report, you made it quite clear that you had concluded that the current funding levels—the current funding levels at the time that your interim report was published—were unsustainable. So, if they were unsustainable then, and you've recommended that they be maintained, how is that making them sustainable now?

[207] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** That's a very good question, and the answer is very simple. That is: they were unsustainable because they were not supporting a very strong higher education system, because of the way that large amounts of money were leaving Wales. What we've tried to do here is to find a way that is sustainable and that has the way of supporting a very strong higher education system. Let me make it very clear that, had we wished to reduce the amount, then sure, one could have done that. But, equally, in so doing, one would not have had as strong a system as one has. What I believe we've got now is a system that is sustainable, if you're prepared to spend the amount of money there is at the moment. It's not going to go up exponentially and it keeps large amounts of money in Wales that were not kept in Wales before.

[208] **Darren Millar:** Just one final question on this issue of sustainability. I've totted up the summary table of the cost of each of your recommendations at the back of the report in table 7 on page 68, and there is a saving, isn't there? It's about £48 million per year, which, over the course

of an Assembly is £0.25 billion. So, it's a substantial saving, isn't it, from your recommendation.

[209] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Well, we also—

[210] **Darren Millar:** It's true to say that the cost is the same, isn't it?

[211] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Well, actually—. But equally, what we also say is that the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales should have an unhypothecated amount that is able to drive interventions. So, yes, there are some savings in there and that flexibility exists there.

[212] **Darren Millar:** But that recommendation in terms of the higher education funding council is listed within the figures on the page, and even when you take that into account, it's still £48 million—worth of savings on an annual basis.

[213] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Yes, I take that point—

[214] **Darren Millar:** So, why did you suggest that it was going to cost the same, when there's a £0.25 billion saving over the lifetime of an Assembly?

[215] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** That would be for you to do those sums.

[216] **Darren Millar:** I've just done them.

[217] **Lynne Neagle:** Darren—

[218] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** My own view is that we have also pointed out things like inflation and things like increases in student numbers, which may impact or may not impact. What I didn't want to do was to give you something from which one would then start adding and adding and adding. So, we've made it very clear, not in the table to which you refer, which was a summary of, if you like, the baseline—and you're absolutely right with what you said. We've made it very clear, for example, the 2 per cent inflation, which is about £24 million, or a 10 per cent increase in costs—extra money. So, yes, it's around cost neutral, but that actual baseline, which is what that table refers to, does have a reduction.

[219] **Darren Millar:** Okay, thank you.

[220] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Michelle, on support for undergraduates.

[221] **Michelle Brown:** Thank you. Coming on to the maintenance costs—. Just before we go on to that, coming back to the point before, how much debt will the average student—a full-time undergraduate—come out of university with under your proposals?

[222] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Well, I think, all things being equal, £27,000 is what you would expect.

[223] **Michelle Brown:** Does that cover fees and maintenance?

[224] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** What we have said very clearly is that we believe that maintenance at the top level is enough to cover that, so that you wouldn't have extra debt from maintenance. What we have also said is that we expect families to contribute to the gap. We believe that is a fair thing to say. On the other hand, we have made a provision for loans, because we recognise that there are, for all sorts of reasons, places where families will not be able to contribute. So, if you like, the basic thrust would be that the level of debt would be £27,000, but, equally, I acknowledge there will be some people for whom that is less, and there will be some people for whom that's a bit more.

[225] **Michelle Brown:** Okay. I notice that the proposals include the introduction of a £1,000 non-means-tested payment. That seems to be regardless of the income level of the family.

[226] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Absolutely.

[227] **Michelle Brown:** Can you just explain what your thinking was behind that?

[228] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Sure, yes. I think there are, at this stage, let's be clear—. We'll move into philosophy, briefly, if I may. It's a debate as to whether everybody in society has some benefit from a benefit—in this case, the maintenance grant—then they feel part of society, and that's better for society. That's in many ways the spirit of progressive universalism, which has been part of Welsh Government policy for some time. That's where we were coming from—that there is a spirit of universalism in this maintenance grant, regardless of your background. For everybody, you get that opportunity to receive some contribution. So, for every member of Welsh

society, the state is contributing something and the individual is contributing something, but that contribution is very much moved towards those—there is much less contribution to those who can pay more.

[229] **Michelle Brown:** Okay. I just find it odd that somebody could be on a six-figure salary and their child will have a one-off payment. They'll have this £1,000, no questions asked. Is there any justification for it in terms of the costs of working out or means-testing something like this?

[230] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** No; really, to be absolutely honest, it very much is a question—. We took as one of our key principles that everybody should contribute and that the Welsh Government should contribute to everybody. Therefore, we have put in a system that has a small Welsh Government contribution to everybody, so that everybody is seeing that partnership. That's why I say we move into philosophy, because there's no algorithm that tells you (a) you should do this, or (b) that it should be £1,000 instead of £2,000 or £1,000 instead of £500. But, it was the view that the review took that that spirit of universalism was a good thing.

[231] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. John, on this.

[232] **John Griffiths:** Just in terms of the issue that those on substantial incomes will still get help from Welsh Government in terms of their children's higher education, I understand what you say about universalism and I entirely accept that, but there's also the issue of the means-tested element going up to a joint household income of £80,000, which I think surprised a lot of people in terms of that level being considered appropriate.

[233] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I think that's a good point. We certainly took a view as a review that one of the groups who often get missed in society is what has been called, sometimes, 'the squeezed middle'. And even if you have a reasonable income—not up to the £80,000; I'll come to that in a moment—and you have, for example, two children at university, it can be quite a stretch. We tried to find a system that would support those people—people who are often, if you like, missed out. So, that's why we tried to find a shallow trajectory to the means-testing. Yes, it does go up to £80,000, but at around £80,000, it's a little bit less; it's not huge, let's be clear. But, if you're at £40,000, which, if you've got two children at university, is difficult, then there is significant help from the Government, and we thought that that was the right thing to do.

[234] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Russell, on this.

[235] **Russell George:** How do you square the issue of, perhaps, a family that has a high income, but they're not in communication with their children? For example, Michelle talked about a family with a six-figure salary, perhaps, but the children may well be over 18 and not have a connection with their parents.

[236] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Well, we thought about that, and thank you for that question, because it's very helpful. We thought about that, and our view is pretty simple, and that is why we have allowed loans to be available up to the maximum grant for people in that situation. We actually talk about that situation in the report. So, it comes back to the answer I gave earlier: we believe families should contribute. We believe that that family you just described should contribute, but there are, in twenty-first century society, reasons why it isn't going to happen, and then we acknowledge that we need to have some kind of support to enable that person to be able to go to university, and that is why that would be done through a loan.

[237] **Lynne Neagle:** Oscar, on this.

[238] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you, Professor Diamond. I've had certain cases myself of people who are having this generous offer without means-testing, but their attendance at the college or university is very, very limited; they've never been to college before, and the money is there for them. I'm not saying it's a freebie, but some of them are definitely misusing the system, I can assure you of that.

[239] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I'm not entirely clear how it's possible to devise a system that is not absolutely foolproof from some kind of misuse. What I do observe is that drop-out rates in Welsh higher education are relatively low compared, certainly, to those in Scotland, and that the great majority of students take their academic careers extremely seriously and work very, very hard.

[240] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. If we can move on, now, to talk about the targeted support that you've highlighted in your report. I wanted to ask about young people with experience of the care system, and I very much welcome not just the suggestion that they should be given a full maintenance grant, but also the other flexibilities in there. I just wanted to ask: given the very small numbers of young people who've been in care who actually go on

to higher education, did you give any consideration to actually recommending that the Welsh Government should pay their tuition fees as well?

11:30

[241] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** We did discuss that, but our view is that this is something that, again, by getting to higher education—. And we do believe there needs to be more done, as we say—not just the flexibility for people to come in and out, but also real support from universities from day zero to helping them.

[242] But ultimately, hopefully, these students will benefit from higher education. They will then go into employment that will have a premium because they have a degree, and then they will be able, in exactly the same way as anyone else from whatever background, to pay off that debt. So, that was our ultimate view.

[243] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Can I just ask as well about people with disabilities? You've suggested that the Welsh Government should work with the Treasury to look at further assistance there. Can you expand on that?

[244] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Yes, we received some quite important, I thought, information from disability support advisers who said to us, 'Look, it's good, but this is something that we really need to find ways of supporting. The current disability allowance is not always enough for some people.' So, that's why we say, 'Right, let's get some real evidence for the Welsh Government on what should it be, and could the Welsh Government then speak to the Treasury about this particular area?' Because these are people, let's be honest—whether it's people with experience of care, whether it's people with disability—who are in many ways having a triple jeopardy, so we should be doing everything we can to support them. We believe very strongly that, where there is a disability, it benefits society in the short, medium and long run for much support to be given to those people to enable them to be able to overcome their disability and to contribute fully to society.

[245] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. John, on this.

[246] **John Griffiths:** Can we say, then, Professor Diamond, that what you've

proposed, if implemented, would be more generous to the groups that you've identified for additional help than the current system?

[247] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I think it would be. What we have not done is perhaps write it all down, for the very simple reason that some of it does need discussion, as I said, with the Treasury. But we believe it is a statement of the importance of enabling these, to use your words, targeted groups to really benefit from higher education and then to overcome whatever disadvantages they have had in their background.

[248] **John Griffiths:** Just briefly, Chair, did you consider any other groups that might—

[249] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Well, a group that we haven't mentioned thus far that we've mentioned also are students who are parents. Clearly, that's one we have looked at through the recommendations, and there's a really excellent piece of work that was done by two members of the panel, Sheila Riddell and Beth Button, which looks at how to support people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and that seems to me to be an incredibly important piece. We thought an awful lot about that and took an awful lot of evidence, and our recommendations are geared towards that.

[250] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. We'll move on now then to talk a bit about part-time provision. Michelle.

[251] **Michelle Brown:** I just wondered what your proposals were for supporting unemployed people into part-time education, because, obviously, because of benefits rules and things, they can't go full time, or it would be difficult, or they might have part-time work, or whatever. But say that you're unemployed, or say you've got a carer: what are your proposals to support them into—?

[252] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Well, I think there are two things. What we've tried very hard to do is to find a way to fund part-time that incentivises part-time. You'll see that what we have done is to have a system of, if you like, a contribution to the higher education institution that enables them to be able to charge a lower fee. The first point is that the fees will be lower for that person who is unemployed. The next point is that they would, of course, be eligible for the maximum grant. The third point I would make is that we have insisted that for the institution to receive that amount of money that enables them to have lower fees, they need to be teaching part-time

students in a way that is commensurate with earning while you learn. I think that's important, because, for many people—to describe the people you've just described—if you've got a part-time job, you don't need, if you like, your university study to be an hour here and an hour there; you actually want it to be, shall we say, two or three evenings or one or two evenings in a big block that you can get your part-time work around. So, in answer, very simply: one, you'd get the maximum grant, two, we've incentivised through lower fees, and, three, you'll be able to study in a way that's commensurate with part-time employment.

[253] **Michelle Brown:** Good.

[254] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Hefin, on this.

[255] **Hefin David:** I've already declared an interest as an associate lecturer at Cardiff Metropolitan University. Just this weekend, on Saturday and Sunday, I was teaching from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. executive MBA students—

[256] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** By the way, I just have to say, along with other universities in Wales, I think Cardiff Met does a fabulous job. I think it's a university that's really moved forward, and I look forward to how it goes under its new vice-chancellor.

[257] **Hefin David:** Well, I look forward to seeing the transcript of this meeting and sending him a copy. [*Laughter.*] I was employed by Cardiff Met for many, many years. The issue is, though, that those students I was teaching were fully funded by their employers. Is there a danger that, when employers see that the cost of fees is falling, or they receive the grant fee, the employers may reduce the amount that they fund as a result? Are we then, also, by lowering fees, partly subsidising the private sector?

[258] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I don't think we are. I think there's another way of looking at it: with a fixed pot and with things like apprenticeship levies flying around, employers might find themselves able to fund more, which has to be a good thing. No, I don't think that we're encouraging the private sector. What I do think we're doing is encouraging Welsh higher education institutions to be able to deliver part-time, and to be able to do so in a way—. If I may, sometimes, because of the financial challenges that have happened in recent years, if you like, the part-time has been—. I hesitate to use the word I was about to use, but part-time has been affected in order to fund full time. What we've tried to do is find a really strong, sustainable way

of maintaining part-time. For example, I do think the Open University in Wales does a great job, but it needs to be funded in a way that it can be sustainable.

[259] **Hefin David:** I point out I didn't actually agree with the premise of my own question, but, nonetheless, it's a question that's been asked. What I suspect, as you say, will happen is that the part-time numbers will actually increase and, therefore, the impact in the way I suggested would be negligible.

[260] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Thank you.

[261] **Lynne Neagle:** Oscar, on part-time students.

[262] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair. My question to the professor is very simple. You have been very generous; I was looking through it. Under the new funding arrangements proposed in your review, professor, the Welsh Government stands to save tens of thousands of pounds. Will this saving be reinvested in higher education, or will it be extra money that goes somewhere else?

[263] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** What we've proposed is a range of packages, and so, where the Welsh Government does save money, then it will be for the Welsh Government to decide whether it reinvests it in higher education or spends it on something else. At the end of the day, as to my previous remarks on the difficulty that politicians have and the respect I have for them in making those difficult decisions, it becomes very simply for the Welsh Government to decide where and how it wishes to spend the resource it has available to spend.

[264] **Mohammad Asghar:** Another thing is, on page 25 of this final report, the student number is 54,000 and the money spent is over £5.4 billion—£544 million, I suppose. But the number of students from 2012–13 increased to nearly 60,000, right, but the funding has gone up by £0.25 billion. It's £755 million—more grants have been given rather than loans, I think. Any reason?

[265] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Well, you have a tuition fee grant scheme, and the numbers to which you refer—I'd need just to check them—could be either just Welsh students, but not just students in higher education, and that could also increase because of European students as well.

[266] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Llyr.

[267] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Just very briefly, I think I'm right in saying that, even if you have a previous degree and you wish to take up another stint at studying something, you will have access to support. I presume that's happening because you feel that the workplace is very dynamic and people need to reskill, upskill and—. Was that the rationale?

[268] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I think that's absolutely right. There are two points that you make, both of which are entirely right. Increasingly, in many areas of work, it's a Master's degree that people need. We recognise that some people are able to go to university and spend four years there and come out with a Master's. For other people, it's a three-year Bachelor's degree and then it seems fair that they can then take a Master's. Particularly, it's those higher level skills that will really benefit their future, but also benefit Wales's future. I think that's incredibly important. That's, if you like, the upskill part.

[269] But we live in a world—. When I first started work, my father would've talked to me about a job for life. Now, I think we live not in a career for life, but, if you like, four or five careers. I think having that flexibility for people to reskill is going to be incredibly important, be that through a relatively short intensive period of full-time study, or through incentivising part-time study. That seems to me to be important for Wales.

[270] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. We move on now then to postgraduate issues. I've got Michelle Brown.

[271] **Michelle Brown:** From a personal point of view, extending support to postgraduates seems like a wonderful idea. I know I would've been very grateful for it when I was a postgraduate student. I'm just thinking about the finances. I mean, how much is it going to cost the Welsh Government to extend—

[272] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** We estimate £25 million for the cohort and I have to say, I think it's incredibly important. The reason I think it's incredibly important is that I personally have been passionate for some time that there can be, for people from a disadvantaged background, a glass ceiling when it gets to undergraduate. You manage to get to undergraduate, but then somebody says, 'Well, you need a postgraduate degree' but you've

got to pay fees, it's more time, it's hard. So, what we've said, again, is that this is something that will, if you like, break that glass ceiling and enable those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds to have access to a postgraduate taught programme and that that will, therefore, be of enormous benefit to them. I personally don't think—it's a lot of money, don't get me wrong, but I don't think it is an enormous amount of money to enable that to happen.

[273] I should also say that we recognise that universities fix their own fees for postgraduate taught programmes, and so we have said very clearly that it ought to be for the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales or whatever the designated body is called, to, if you like, monitor and to make sure that there is not a major increase in fees as a result of this programme.

[274] **Michelle Brown:** Assuming that this will be extended for all subjects, did you consider targeting specific subjects that perhaps we're in dire need of in Wales?

[275] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** We did have a discussion. The answer I would give would be that, if you like, state planning in that way is not always the best way to do it, because there are subjects that have a demand and one can encourage courses to exist, but there needs to be a demand for them. We did, though, note the work of John Furlong, with his teacher training review, and what he says about Master's courses, and we make a specific recommendation for support for the Master's programmes that he talks about in enhancing Welsh teacher training.

11:45

[276] **Lynne Neagle:** Hefin, then Darren.

[277] **Hefin David:** I can speak from the point of view of business and management subjects that there's a huge international demand, global demand, for these subjects. They're very lucrative for universities as well, given the fees that are charged. Could it be that universities are at teaching capacity at the moment with postgraduate subjects in such areas, and that an expansion would put a great deal of pressure on staffing, and that the higher education labour market might not be able to cope with such an increase in demand?

[278] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I hadn't thought of that, but let's be clear:

there is a demand, and that demand is only maintained if the quality stays high. There is nothing like a world of social media that, if the course is not being run properly, and if the staff are not able to deliver quality because there are too many students—that will soon lead, in my opinion, to a drop in demand for that course. There is also the case that, as a university, one would expect, in areas where there is increased demand, to be able to appoint new staff. Certainly in my own university, we spend a lot of time benchmarking the number of staff we have against student numbers to make sure that we are at a level that is enabling staff to have a fair workload. I think it's important that that is continued. It would then be for the universities—at the end of the day, the universities are autonomous bodies—to take a judgment on what they can deliver in a quality way and whether they are able to recruit the staff to be able to do this. I haven't seen universities pushed in that way. I have seen universities, and rightly so, say, 'Look, we don't want our business courses to get any bigger than this, for the following three or four reasons, and therefore we will stay at that level.' I don't foresee us having a situation where we couldn't, though, increase the number of undergraduates and postgraduates in Welsh universities over the next few years.

[279] **Hefin David:** I just feel that there are two issues: the labour market and the labour market providing the staffing. You suggest that this may not be a problem, but also the fact that international students are a big part of the system.

[280] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I think that's right. Let me say, though, that the one fear I might have about that labour market is that I observe that we will need to continue to recruit international staff, and that is something that higher education has been very, very good at. Many of the staff in Welsh universities will come from parts of Europe. Certainly, that's something that needs to be worked out over the next few years. With regard, though, to the, if you like, international students, yes, international students are an important part of higher education. I would want my students, whether they come from Tredegar or from, I don't know, Toulouse or from China somewhere, to be studying together because that interactivity between students from all over the world is a fundamental part of higher education. It's one of the reasons why I believe we should encourage more Welsh students to spend a semester somewhere else, because that benefits everyone. I take your point about international students and fees, but, equally, international students are not about fees. International students are about the kind of higher education that we want to benefit the kind of world

that we would want to get.

[281] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Darren.

[282] **Darren Millar:** Yes. I'm just concerned about the—. I welcome the fact that we've got postgraduate provision, absolutely, but you want to leave it down to the HEIs themselves, the institutions themselves, to set those fees for the postgraduate courses. To what extent is there a risk there that there will still be a barrier, a financial barrier, for people who want to undertake a Master's degree?

[283] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Well, I hope there won't be, and that's why I recommended very strongly that the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales should take a view on fees, and it would not be impossible for it to say, 'Sorry, we're not going to fund that course', and that would not be a place that a university would want to get into. So, I think there is a real conversation that would happen. A strong designated body, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, as it is called now, could ensure that fees stayed at a level that was attractive to the university and attractive to the student.

[284] **Darren Millar:** And why the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales? Why not the Government? I mean, the Government is the one that sets the fees for the undergraduate courses.

[285] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I take your point and, again, we move into this no-algorithm world, because there isn't an algorithm that says that an arm's-length body is the best thing. However, my own experience over many years is that an arm's-length body is good for Government and good for higher education because it enables conversations to be had with both sides that can be firm, frank and honest and work very well. So, I've always been, personally, a fan of the arm's-length body. I should declare an interest—I had the privilege to lead a research council for a while, and I found that that, if you like, pivot was something that was good for the universities but also, I believed, good for Government. So, I'm not in favour of it coming straight from Government. Of course—and it's incredibly important—there have to be good conversations and good relationships between Government and the funding council, and without that the system falls down very quickly.

[286] **Darren Millar:** Do you think HEFCW ought to have a role, then, in setting the undergraduate fees?

[287] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I think HEFCW should certainly advise the Welsh Government. At the end of the day, it's a Welsh Government decision and I think that HEFCW should clearly have a role in advising, but, at the end of the day, I do think that that particular decision is something that has to come from a Cabinet Secretary.

[288] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Llyr was your question on tuition fees answered earlier?

[289] **Llyr Griffiths:** Yes, it was.

[290] **Lynne Neagle:** And yours Hefin?

[291] **Hefin David:** Yes.

[292] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Lovely, thank you. Can I just ask a general question about the university sector, then? What were the main concerns that the universities raised with you during the course of the review, and how do you feel that your findings have responded to those concerns?

[293] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Well, I think there was clearly concern around sustainability, and I think we've addressed that in a way that—certainly the feedback that has come from Universities Wales has been very supportive. There was certainly concern about the need for unhypothecated research funding, based on the quality of the research that was done, and we have made recommendations there because each pound that the Welsh Government spends levers more funds and that was incredibly important for the universities. There were certainly some suggestions around the importance of universities as being drivers of local economies, and the interaction with industry, and we've made some recommendations there. So, those were the kind of suggestions that came. But, fundamentally, one of them was that tuition fee grants were leaving Wales and that, while I acknowledge the argument that students from elsewhere are coming to Wales, this was actually impacting on the ability of Welsh universities to be as strong as they were, and we've tried to address that in this approach.

[294] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Can we move on to Welsh language provision then? Hefin.

[295] **Hefin David:** Yes, on page 62 of the report. I was just really looking for

some elaboration on your recommendation on the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. It's a success—I mean, I've seen students benefitting strongly from Welsh language HE provision. Perhaps where the gap is is between school and HE, and building the link between the preceding level of education and higher education. I was just wondering if you could simply tell us more about your recommendation.

[296] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I'm with you: it's a success. I think step changes like those that were instigated through its existence take time. That's why we welcome the fact that there's to be, if you like, a kind of conversation around the way it moves forward. We recognise that the lecturers who have been funded thus far will now, if you like, come onto the books. I do think there are three things that I think are important. One is the one that you've already described and that is, if you like, getting that flow through from school. The second one is acknowledging that there are some areas, for example social care, where knowledge of Welsh is also going to be incredibly important as we move towards an ageing society. And, thirdly, I think we really do need to think through the way in which Wales can use what is called distributed learning, which is, effectively, that you can be in Bangor getting a lecture from Cardiff, but not in a kind of 1960s—watching—the-television way; it's a kind of interactive experience and the technology enhancement means that you're really there. So, I think there are real opportunities to move things forward over the next few years, building on a very good base. That's why I welcome the fact that there is to be that discussion. Those are the three areas that I think one needs—. Ultimately, there needs to be a demand. That's where your point about the flow through from school I think is important.

[297] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Llyr, then Darren.

[298] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Just very briefly, given that it has been such a success in HE, do you believe that FE would benefit from a similar approach?

[299] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I'm absolutely not qualified enough to give—. My judgment would be 'yes'.

[300] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. We'll move on now then to Llyr, followed by Michelle, on incentivisation.

[301] **Llyr Gruffydd:** I noted with interest the strong recommendation that you make that the Government needs to look at developing some sort of

incentivisation to retain graduates in Wales or to attract graduates back. What are the challenges, then, do you think, in terms of achieving some sort of debt alleviation, which you mentioned in your report?

[302] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I think there are a number, which prevented us, if you like, making firm statements and instead saying that we urge strongly the Welsh Government to take a view and to find out, one, the legal points that again need to be raised with the Treasury. Then, if I may say, there is what ended up as the Newport–Bristol question. You’re living in Newport and working in Bristol, or you’re living in Bristol and working in Newport. Question: are you back in Wales or are you not back in Wales? There’s an answer to that, and it could be very straightforwardly sorted out, but it is one that does need to be thought through. Thirdly, there is, if you like, the question of whether it’s as soon as you start to pay back debt, or as soon as you become a Welsh taxpayer—there is a whole set of questions like that that, because of the, first, legal issues, we said, ‘Well, it’s important that this is looked at and it’s important that we believe this is something that is an opportunity that Wales should take, but it requires further work and we urge you to do that quickly.’

[303] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Are you particularly wedded to loan cancellation, or do you think that there may be other ways that the Government could address this?

[304] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Well, certainly, there are a range of ways that have been used in some places. For example, one has seen, I think the terminology is ‘golden hellos’ for teachers in some subjects in some parts of the UK. I think I’d be clear in saying that we’re keen that there’s some incentivisation. Loan cancellation seems to be a good way, but, equally, it’s not the only way, and, again, that’s why we’ve used the words ‘incentivisation such as loan cancellation’ as a way forward.

12:00

[305] **Llyr Gruffydd:** And how quickly do you think the Government should move on this? Is it—

[306] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Well, I think it has to move pretty quickly, but, equally, if you think about it, let’s hope that any implementation of these recommendations can start in October 2018. Then, the first graduates will be in October 2021. That’s again why we felt it was fair to say ‘let’s get

on with this', for the very simple reason that you have a gap.

[307] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Thank you.

[308] **Lynne Neagle:** Michelle.

[309] **Michelle Brown:** Thank you. I think, in principle, you know, encouraging graduates to come back to Wales, to use their skills that they've learned in Wales, where Wales has actually made a contribution to their education, that's completely fair enough, but, if you work it on the basis of whether somebody's going to be employed in Wales, surely that's dependent, isn't it, on whether somebody's able to get a job in Wales, and what seems to be the experience of a lot of graduates is that it's quite difficult to get postgraduate employment in the correct fields in Wales. Or is your perception slightly different on that?

[310] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** It's not, and I take your point. But, equally, that's not a reason for not doing this, and if there was an increasing, if you like, pool of skills wishing to work in Wales, that might encourage the development of clusters of people in those areas. So, I take your point, but, equally, one has to start somewhere.

[311] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Russell George.

[312] **Russell George:** Thank you, Chair. Your recommendations: you recommend that the Welsh Government should establish 150 postgraduate research scholarships or bursaries. Now, I'm aware there's another academic report that is suggesting 646. I'm not quite sure why it's so specific, rather than 650. But how did you get to that 150 figure?

[313] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Well, the Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales gave evidence, and in that evidence suggested 600. Now, I don't know whether there's another piece of work that got to 646, and I don't know where that's come from. So, 600 was the number in the evidence that came to us, so we said, 'Let's kick off with 150', and then you do that for three years, that's 450, and then review. Because, at the end of the day, just coming straight in and saying, 'We'll have 600 and then stop', isn't a way, in my opinion, of building up strength and building up that cohort. So, doing it over a period of time seemed to be the best. But, yes, our starting point was around the same number.

[314] **Russell George:** And what criteria should be used, would you suggest, to decide those 150 places?

[315] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Sure. We are very clear that it should be a partnership, a partnership between industry, commerce, the third sector—or, indeed, the public sector, should that be desirable—the university and the Welsh Government. So, therefore, in many ways, there has to be a conversation between the potential industry/third sector/whatever sponsor and the university as to a topic that is important and interesting. And, you see, that's where, in many ways, if you like, the next benefit of this programme comes from, because it's those kind of conversations that can then lead to other things, be they other pieces of research or be they some contract work, that can lead to innovation. So, what we're trying to do here is not only get this new generation of researchers, scientists, for Wales, but also encourage the kind of conversations that will benefit the long-term innovation and commercialisation of research in Wales.

[316] **Russell George:** And, if I can move to another area as well, HEFCW provides £71 million to support quality research. How should that be used, or how could it be used, more strategically?

[317] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** What we say in the report is, firstly, that the allocation should continue to be on the basis of quality, and my recommendation would be that Wales should continue to be part of the research excellence framework—and I should say, in an aside, that I support fully support fully the recommendations in the recent report by Lord Stern on the future of the research excellence framework—and that, given the money, there then should be a report annually to HEFCW. It doesn't need to be—. We're not talking about a telephone-directory report, but there should be a report to HEFCW as to how that money has been used strategically. Now, it can be used strategically in all sorts of ways. It can be used to fund, if you like, the initial experiments from which a large grant from another funding agency can be made. It can be used to enable someone to visit an archive to kick off some research, or it can be used to actually fund some research. There are very many ways it can be used, but we did think it was important that universities were clear how it was being used, and clear to the Welsh Government how it was being used, and how it was benefitting the Welsh research effort, and hence Welsh society.

[318] **Russell George:** And you're suggesting a different model for allocating that—

[319] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I think that that's something that clearly would be for debate by the designated body or whatever, and I think that the current funding allocation is pretty reasonable. It supports the very best research with a premium in terms of weighting, and it supports, with more money, those subjects that are more expensive to do research in. I think it's done pretty well. What we're really saying is that, when you've got that research money, one needs to be clear, broadly, about how it is being used.

[320] **Russell George:** But you've got a different way of suggesting how that could be distributed.

[321] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Well, no—really, I think the way we suggest is broadly the same way as it is at the moment, through quality-related research. So, in other words, there is a research excellence framework, there will be one over the next few years, and that should be used to allocate funds over the next period of time would be our recommendation.

[322] **Russell George:** And, finally, Julie Williams, the Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales, is coming to a committee tomorrow that Hefin and I sit on. I wonder: did you consult on your recommendations and proposals with her? Was there a discussion with her?

[323] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Well, she gave evidence, and we listened very, very carefully to what she said, and I would expect that she will be able to find, if you like, if not what she said, but that we had listened. What we didn't do with any of the players was go back to them and say, 'We're thinking of saying this; is this okay?' because that would have moved away from the independence of what we were trying to do.

[324] **Russell George:** Okay.

[325] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Darren.

[326] **Darren Millar:** I just want to pick up on that issue and touch on FE, if that's okay.

[327] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Sure.

[328] **Darren Millar:** Just in terms of the postgraduate researcher numbers, the scholarships of 150, I can appreciate you got those figures from the chief

scientific adviser, but, presumably, they were just scientific researchers that the chief scientific adviser was commenting upon.

[329] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** She was talking about scientists, yes. We have taken, if you like, the Greek definition of science, and said that it should include a broader base. My own view is that, if this scheme is as successful as I hope it will be, then it will continue over time, and it is to Wales's great advantage in the long term that it has, or it will have, a cadre of very strong researchers across the piece. So, for example, I've mentioned a couple of times, in recent conversation here, the third sector. Actually having researchers who seriously understand the third sector, and the challenges the third sector have, and who are therefore able to impact on policy for the third sector, seems to me to be something that many societies could do with. I don't pretend that the numbers will be huge, but I do think that, when we talk about this scheme, it should go across the research base, and not be targeted solely to those in the natural sciences.

[330] **Darren Millar:** But, just to be clear, the only recommendation received is this 600 from the chief scientific adviser, and that's the one that you've matched; you've not expanded it on the basis that there'll be other disciplines outside of the sciences that other people might—

[331] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Sure. Exactly so.

[332] **Darren Millar:** You also said something very interesting, in response to Russell George there, that it would be up to, presumably, the Welsh Government and the Learned Society of Wales, if we read your recommendation, as to which courses in particular were funded, in terms of what might be interesting for them to fund. What about those subjects that might be less popular but of a great deal of interest to those people who might want to conduct research into them? So, theology—I don't know; there's a good example, perhaps.

[333] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** No, I think theology is—. In Aberdeen, where I work, we have a fabulous theology group who do fantastic research. Look, there are ways of funding research, but, equally, what we tried to do here was to find a research scheme that would, if you like, border on the balance between people who wished to fund it and who could see the benefit from funding it. Now, if there were a group—one thinks immediately of something like the Kirby Laing Foundation—who wished to fund theology research in that way, then surely that would be a partnership that one could

take a view on and take forward. I think there is an enormous amount of opportunity in all areas. I suspect that, in some areas, the numbers would be relatively small, compared to those, for example, in the natural sciences, but I do think it's important that we are entirely inclusive in the way that we think forward.

[334] **Darren Millar:** And then, just to move on to further education, if I can, one of the things that the review was asked to consider, of course, was student finance arrangements, which included maintenance support perhaps for FE courses in addition to higher education courses. There's not a lot in the report about FE. It touches on some aspects of FE and higher vocational training, but can you just tell us what consideration you did give to financial support for further education?

[335] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Sure. Well, basically, the part of FE that we were particularly asked to look at was HE in FE, and we formed a sub-group to enable us to have both representation from FE colleges—and we had three—as well as industries; Airbus were able to contribute. Also, we heard evidence from the University of South Wales, which has fantastic links with a set of colleges. And what we came to was: 'Look, it's incredibly important that there are good articulation arrangements between colleges and universities'. People need a flexibility of pathway. For some people, that first step might be into college. Their aspirations then change as they move forward, and they choose to go into university. We have to have a system that doesn't require that they have to start again. We have to have a system that allows them to flow through and to change their aspirations as they go forward. I was impressed with the extent to which that commitment exists. We also talked a lot about whether or not FE institutions should, if you like, have degree powers or should just work through another university. Clearly, that needs to be an opportunity over time to change. Certainly, a number of colleges expressed their great happiness with the current arrangements. Let's be frank: let's not break anything that doesn't need—. If it's not broken, don't fix it, is what I'm trying to say.

[336] So, in summary, we are clear that there need to be flows. We're clear that, potentially, the system that we've talked about should be eligible for people doing HE in FE, and there needs to be a dynamic system between FE and HE. It needs to be part of the same system, in summary. I think the other point that I would just make is that, particularly with the apprenticeship levy coming in, there are real opportunities to engage industry even more than it's currently engaged in the higher-level apprenticeships. I do think that we

need to be quite imaginative about higher-level apprenticeships. Too often, when people think about apprenticeships, they think, if you like, about technical-type subjects. I see no problem, personally, with a scheme of higher level apprenticeships in law or in accounting—in a whole range of areas where people may choose, where it's good for the company or the organisation, to study in that way. It seems to me we need flexibility.

12:15

[337] **Darren Millar:** In terms of the ability of FE colleges to award degrees, there is some ability at the moment, isn't there, with foundation degrees. So, students that are embarking upon a foundation degree through an FE college in Wales at the moment, would they be eligible under your scheme if it were to be implemented by the Government, because it's not clearly said?

[338] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** It's not clear. I believe they ought to be, but we need to, again, fine-tune how that works.

[339] **Darren Millar:** Okay, thank you.

[340] **Lynne Neagle:** Hefin, on this.

[341] **Hefin David:** Further education colleges can deliver validated Master's programmes, can't they?

[342] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Yes.

[343] **Hefin David:** I took your example of the University of South Wales as an exemplar, and I think that would be a really good model, but it is a standout model and it doesn't seem to be replicated everywhere. My contact with FE colleagues would have been on validation panels, and that's about it. So, how can we expand the University of South Wales model?

[344] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** I think there are two things. One, do you want to expand the University of South Wales model, or do we want to build a different validation model? And certainly, when Colleges Wales came and gave evidence to us, the person who was at that time the deputy—a guy called Greg Walker—chaired or was secretary to the sub-group that we put together, and they would say, 'There needs to be flexibility.' So, I think we should take the University of South Wales model and say, 'This is working very well; let us celebrate that; let's ask if there are other models that could

work in that way.' If not, we've put in a recommendation that there should be the opportunity for FE colleges to develop their own powers, and that's right and proper, too.

[345] **Hefin David:** Okay, thank you.

[346] **Lynne Neagle:** Are there any other questions from Members? No. Okay, well, can I thank Professor Diamond for coming this morning? It's been a really fascinating opportunity to listen to you, and I'm sure the whole committee has got a great deal out of it. We very much appreciate it. You will be sent a transcript of the discussion so that you can check it for accuracy, but thank you again for coming.

[347] **Professor Sir Ian Diamond:** Could I thank everyone on the panel? It's been a real pleasure to be able to discuss in such detail, and you've clearly all read it very, very well, so thank you very much. It's been a pleasure doing this work, and it was a pleasure to be here today.

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

12:17

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[349] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, item 4, then, is papers to note. Paper 4 is a letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport and the Minister for Social Services and Public Health, following up the meeting on 14 September. Are you happy to note that? Paper 5 is a letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children in response to a letter we sent on 15 September. Are you happy to note that? Paper 6 is a letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Education from the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee. This has just been sent to us for information. Is that noted? Great; thank you very much.

12:18

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42(ix) i Benderfynu Gwahardd y
Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to Resolve to Exclude the
Public from 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.

[350] **Lynne Neagle:** Item 5, then, is a motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public for the remainder of the meeting. Are Members content? Thank you.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 12:18.

The meeting ended at 12:18.