



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

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

08/12/2016

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd. Lle y mae cyfranwyr wedi darparu cywiriadau i'w dystiolaeth, nodir y rheini yn y trawsgrifiad.

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. Where contributors have supplied corrections to their evidence, these are noted in the transcript.

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

Trudy Aspinwall	Uwch Swyddog Rhaglen, Prosiect 'Teithio Ymlaen' Achub y Plant Senior Programme Officer, Save the Children's Travelling Ahead Project
Nick Batchelar	Cyfarwyddwr Cymdeithas y Cyfarwyddwyr Addysg yng Nghymru Director of the Association of Directors of Education in Wales
Martin Dacey	Pennaeth Gwasanaeth Aml-ethnig Addysg Gwent (GEMS), Gwasanaeth Cyflawni Addysg De-ddwyrain Cymru (EAS) Head of Gwent Education Minority Ethnic Service (GEMS), Education Achievement Service for South East Wales (EAS)
Gill James	Gwasanaeth Addysg ar y Cyd Consortiwm Canolbarth y De Central South Joint Education Service

Dr Chris Llewelyn	Dirprwy Brif Weithredwr a Chyfarwyddwr Dysgu Gydol Oes, Hamdden a Gwybodaeth, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Lifelong Learning, Leisure and Information, Welsh Local Government Association
Helen Morgan-Rees	Pennaeth Canolfan y Dwyrain, Ein Rhanbarth ar Waith (ERW) Head of Eastern Hub, Education through Regional Working (ERW)

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

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Clerc Deputy Clerk
Michael Dauncey	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Gareth Rogers	Clerc Clerk

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

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

[1] **Lynne Neagle:** Good morning, everyone. Can I welcome you all to our committee meeting this morning? There have been no apologies for absence. Are there any declarations of interest, please? No. Okay, thank you.

**Ymchwiliad i'r Grant Gwella Addysg: Plant Sipsiwn, Roma a Theithwyr,
a Phlant o Leiafrifoedd Ethnig—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 3
Inquiry into Education Improvement Grant: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller,
and Minority Ethnic Children—Evidence Session 3**

[2] **Lynne Neagle:** Item 2 this morning is an evidence session on our inquiry into the education improvement grant. I'm really pleased to welcome Trudy Aspinwall, who is from Save the Children's Travelling Ahead project. We're really pleased that you could join us this morning. Thank you very

much as well for your very comprehensive paper, which you provided in advance. If you see Members on electronic devices, it's just because some of them prefer to have their committee papers on iPads and things, rather than like me—very old-fashioned.

[3] If you're happy, we'll go straight into questions. Can I just ask you just to say a few words about your project, specifically what it does with young people in relation to education?

[4] **Ms Aspinwall:** Yes, certainly. So, I co-ordinate a project called Travelling Ahead, which is hosted by Save the Children. We've been running for about six years. The project very broadly supports the rights and participation of Gypsy and Traveller children, and more recently we've been working with some EU Roma Gypsy young people as well. Really, we take our lead from the issues that are important to young people. So, whilst we don't particularly lead on education, education is an issue that young people bring to us and have consistently done so, really, since the project began—in fact, before the project began.

[5] So, what that would look like is one of the recent pieces of work we did 18 months ago, which was a piece of peer research with young people who went out and spoke to other young Gypsies, Travellers and Roma around Wales about their experiences of education. They developed a questionnaire, which got filled in by about 70 children and young people. From that, our kind of core group of peer researchers then came up with a list of recommendations, really, around some of the key issues that they thought needed addressing to improve their experience of education. We've used that—it's been published as a small booklet, and we've used that with young people in their local authorities to talk to education and policy makers about the opportunities to make education more flexible. Interestingly, we were doing that piece of research just as this decision was made. And one of the things that young people were looking at was the way in which the Gypsy/Traveller education grant was being used, and by the time they'd finished the research there was no Gypsy/Traveller education grant. So, we had to kind of change our approach a little bit then.

[6] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Just for the committee, can you just say a few words about how you feel things have changed since the decision to amalgamate the grants?

[7] **Ms Aspinwall:** Okay. Well, I think that's one of the challenges, really—

that we've raised a lot of concerns about the decision to amalgamate the grants. In terms of what's changed, obviously there's no Gypsy/Traveller education grant. We know that that means there's no longer a per pupil ring-fenced grant that works for young Gypsy, Roma and Travellers in Wales. In terms of what's changed in terms of services and things, it seems to be very varied, but it's also very difficult to track because we're really in quite early stages.

[8] Certainly, my impression is that, initially, the regional consortia and local authorities were very concerned to safeguard the services that they had, and some of them, in fact, sort of ring-fenced within their own budgets the provision for the Gypsy/Traveller grant, which is where my knowledge is, really, rather than the minority ethnic achievement grant. That may well have continued, but I think one of the key difficulties for us is that we're aware there really is no tracking mechanism. So, it's very difficult to give hard evidence and, obviously, I really welcome this opportunity and the process that you're going through, because I think, for me, we've been unable to get answers, in a sense. I'm not saying that all the services have been cut and they've all gone and that's the end of that. What I'm saying is that we're very concerned that those services won't be given the priority that they were before, that they will be against a background of general cuts, that they will not be prioritised and they will not be safeguarded.

[9] We do have concerns that there are increasing numbers of gypsy and traveller children whose families are opting to electively home educate them, for a variety of reasons—less support available at school and also general education policy around things like super schools, where small local schools, both on a primary level and on a secondary level, are amalgamating, or new schools are being built and some of the relationships that have been built up over years for gypsy and traveller families with staff at those schools—often mainstream staff but sometimes specialist staff—are being weakened and parents are not happy to send their children to bigger schools where they don't have that relationship. So, there's a variety of things going on, and it really feels like it's a really bad time to take away a focus and a priority from gypsy and traveller education services.

[10] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Hefin.

[11] **Hefin David:** So, to clarify, do you think it was a big mistake to amalgamate the grant into the EIG?

[12] **Ms Aspinwall:** I'm not convinced there was evidence there that meant that that was the right thing to do. I don't think there was a proper review of what was working and what wasn't working. I think the Welsh Government have said in their equality impact assessments, 'Well, we didn't need to consult because it's not a change of policy, it's just about how we use the money', but then in the narrative they actually talk about the fact that their view is that the previous grant and the work that it supported wasn't really working well enough, so they think schools should be made responsible. But just saying that in the equality impact assessment doesn't make it happen, and so I think it's too early to say whether it's a big mistake, but I'm unconvinced there was evidence that was in the best interests of this group of children and young people to make this decision.

[13] **Hefin David:** Okay. Accepting that, doesn't it give a little bit more flexibility to local authorities that might have specific local needs, though—not having that ring-fenced grant?

[14] **Ms Aspinwall:** Well, it may do, yes. I mean, I'm not an education expert, so it may well do. But I was reflecting on this question, really, and I'm not sure what was inflexible about the bespoke grant before. It was used in a very flexible way across Wales—each local authority used it differently. Some local authorities used it for additional support in schools, some had a centralised traveller education service, and some people had specialist support and units within schools that turned into family learning centres, for example. So, local authorities had a lot of flexibility on how they used that grant, but the important thing was it was used specifically for the benefit of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. And because we don't have any mapping of how the EIG is being used, then I wouldn't be able to comment on whether greater flexibility has had any benefit or not yet.

[15] **Hefin David:** Well, you said that lessons should be learned from the amalgamation of the grants in your written evidence. So, what specifically—I know you've highlighted that in your evidence, but can you elaborate on what those lessons should be?

[16] **Ms Aspinwall:** Well, I think one of the issues about the decision, for me, was that it was kind of hidden. It wasn't very open and transparent; it was a decision made as part of the budget agreements, and it was only really in the equality impact assessment that accompanied that that there was any detail about what that actually meant. Then there was also the issue around Welsh Government saying that there was no need for consultation with any

stakeholders, because it didn't affect anybody and wouldn't have any impact on anybody, and then they talk about this negative impact in terms of equalities. My belief is that those lessons are around the way in which decisions are taken, really, and the understanding of Welsh Government about the impact of the decisions that they take on the lives of children and young people.

[17] **Hefin David:** Okay. That's very helpful. Finally, you've said in the evidence you just gave us that it's too early to say if it was a mistake to do so—'too early to say' were the words you used. Are you therefore saying that you're not necessarily advocating a return to the old system, but to improve on what we've got?

[18] **Ms Aspinwall:** I think we would like to recommend that there should be some element of ring-fencing within the EIG for Gypsy and Traveller support work in education. I'm not unrealistic enough to believe that we're likely to undo that decision entirely, but I think it's really important that Welsh Government monitor the effect that the decision is having on the provision of support, and then subsequently on the outcomes and achievements of Gypsy and Traveller children and young people. If Welsh Government came back and said, 'Well, okay, we'll reinstate it', then I would be very pleased, but, you know, it wasn't perfect before as well—there were issues about the way it worked before. One of those issues was that, often, a lot of the responsibility was put and taken by Traveller education services for relationships, attendance and achievement with Gypsy and Traveller children, and schools didn't take that responsibility. In a sense, I do think that that balance should've been looked at. But I think that should've been done before this decision was taken. Just to say that schools have to take more responsibility just isn't going to make it happen.

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

[20] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Good morning. So, you don't feel you're in a position to tell us that there actually has been a negative impact yet.

[21] **Ms Aspinwall:** I don't think we're in that position, because the EIG has no direction to it. My project—there are two of us who work in it, and we don't have the resources to do a piece of research with every single local authority in Wales around the funding streams for all their different pieces of work. Obviously, I know you saw Dr Brentnall last week and he's got some quite compelling evidence around the financial impact.

[22] Anecdotally, in terms of services, we work very closely with a lot of Traveller education services, and we wouldn't be able to work with the number of children and young people we do if we didn't have that working partnership with those Traveller education services. There's one local authority where the long-established centralised Traveller education service has moved from three people to one in this last year, where the local authority did start a consultation on this, saying, 'We've got to make cuts and you have to lose either your primary or your secondary school support.' Now, they've not clarified to me why that is, you know, whether that is because there was less money allocated from the EIG, and they've not been clear with me on why that is, but what we do know is that that service hasn't been safeguarded.

[23] I think I said in my evidence, though, that there is evidence that local authorities are being flexible and using it very differently. One local authority said that they'd had their resources added to when a school had complained that they didn't have enough support to work with a group of newly arrived Gypsy and Traveller young people, and so, actually, the local authority put in two additional part-time teaching assistants. But there is a sense, more and more, particularly with this move towards schools taking the responsibility, that the good practice, the strong relationships and the trust and understanding that's been built up over many years by these specialist services, which were almost all centralised, are being eroded.

[24] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Thank you for that. You referred to a reduction in services or potential loss of jobs. That seems to contradict what Estyn told us last week that services have remained static.

[25] **Ms Aspinwall:** Sure.

[26] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Now, given that you're telling us that, really, we don't know, because we don't have the information—

[27] **Ms Aspinwall:** I think you can say that we don't know.

[28] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, would you challenge Estyn on that decision, then? Would you feel that, actually, they're not in a position to come to that conclusion as well?

[29] **Ms Aspinwall:** Yes, I guess I would. I watched Estyn's evidence and I

had the sense—. Their last focused inspection on the provision of education for Gypsy and Traveller children was in 2011, and at that point I think they were revisiting their 2006 inspection, and at that point they found that only one out of the eight recommendations that had been made had actually been implemented by either schools or by Welsh Government. Now, a few more of those recommendations have been implemented by Welsh Government around things like data collection since then, but fundamentally they found, in 2011, that schools were not delivering in the way that they should be. I'm aware that, obviously, they inspect provision within mainstream schools and they refer to, I think, the Pontypool school, which we work really closely with and is a really excellent example. But I did have a sense that they don't have an overall picture and haven't actually looked closely at an updated view on what is happening for Gypsy and Traveller pupils.

[30] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, do you have view as to when you think would be the right time to look at the potential impacts of the changes?

[31] **Ms Aspinwall:** We're in the second year of the EIG now and I think one of our recommendations would be that, going into the third year, Estyn could actually look at and revisit the provision of education for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people, and that they do that in consultation with children and young people and their parents as well, because they will actually get a very different view about what's happening. And let's not forget that lots of children are actually not in school, and so you can inspect as many schools as you want, but you're not talking to those children who are being electively home educated or who are, perhaps, just currently not in school and not registered, one way or the other. So, I think that two years into the EIG is quite timely to be looking at asking Estyn to undertake that kind of review, yes.

09:45

[32] **Llyr Gruffydd:** I'd just be interested to hear your view about the way the regional consortia and local authorities are now using this money, and, of course, the requirement to delegate 80 per cent to schools. How is that changing the product or the offer or the service that's being provided?

[33] **Ms Aspinwall:** I find the regional consortia quite difficult to engage with in the sense that Welsh Government, after some months of us raising issues, then redirected us to regional consortia business plans for detail as to how the EIG was being spent to benefit Gypsy and Traveller pupils. I really

struggled to find any information. The business plans seem very top level and there's no mention, really, of any specific groups, and certainly no mention of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people in any of those business plans, I think—well, certainly in the ones that I last looked at. I'm not an educational professional, so I'm not invited to those decision-making meetings, and so, again, I'm not fully equipped to comment on how they are—. I know you have the regional consortia representatives coming in later and I know some of them share some of our concerns. Some of them will be able to give you a very different view on what's happening.

[34] But I think that the issue around the allocation to schools is a really interesting one, because obviously—I don't know how aware the committee are about the different places in which Gypsy and Traveller children may live. So, the majority of Gypsy and Traveller families live in houses now, for example, but there's still a highly mobile population who may be travelling for work or for other cultural reasons, or who may have access to no secure accommodation at all and may be moving around the county or the country and, maybe, being regularly moved and evicted. As you can imagine, keeping education as a priority is quite difficult for those children and for those parents. That's really where schools—you have some schools that might be close to a site, for instance, particularly primary schools, that have a very strong relationship with the families and it makes absolute sense for most of the resources to go to that school, but you might have a bigger local authority, for example one that doesn't have any council-run accommodation, of which, obviously, we still have a lot in Wales—there are still a lot of sites that are needed in Wales—where families are being moved around the county and then move in and out all the time and, actually, for schools to keep that relationship, that connection and that support going, that's just not possible, because one day they might be here, and another day they might be there and the next day they might be over the border.

[35] But, actually, the centralised services were able, particularly through their long-established relationships with families, to keep that contact and work really hard to, for example, get children back to their home school, even if maybe they're pulled up on a piece of land on the other side of the city. So, I'm not saying that all Gypsy and Traveller children are moving around; they are not. There are a lot of children who are in secure, long-term accommodation and are in mainstream school, and they've been to the same school and they're doing really well, and then it makes sense, on the whole, for that school to have the majority of support resources, if that's needed. But there are a lot of families who are not in that position, and it really

doesn't make sense for schools to have it.

[36] It's also not work that schools are necessarily very good at, as well, because it's resource heavy. It needs long-term relationships, and it requires having the ability to be quite tenacious in really offering the education offer in as many creative ways as you can to families who've got other issues going on. There are some schools who are fantastic at that, with all sorts of groups of children, but there are a lot of schools that aren't and for whom an ever-changing population of Gypsy and Traveller pupils are not their No. 1 priority. Let's face it, we know the low attendance levels and we know the low achievement levels. They're not a group of children that all schools will find easy to include in their education provision, because actually they impact—despite the Welsh Government's data collection plans—they do affect the school's reputation in relation to attendance and attainment figures. I think that's an issue. Schools won't often say that, but we've had examples of schools refusing to take children on roll because of the fact they haven't been in school for a long time, for example. They say, 'We can't really help them catch up now'. Effectively, they know they're not going to get their five A to C GCSEs. It's not common, but it definitely happens.

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

[38] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Julie.

[39] **Julie Morgan:** Yes, thanks very much. You mentioned several times this morning and in your introduction how important it is to hear what young people are saying and to consult with parents in terms of making plans. It was just very interesting to hear that you were actually doing a survey at the time this decision was made. Are you able to tell us, or give us a flavour, of what young people do feel about the education that they are receiving?

[40] **Ms Aspinwall:** Yes, certainly. I think, as I've already said, the children and young people that we work with have lots of different experiences of education, ranging from fantastically positive experiences with young people achieving great things, down to children and young people who haven't been to school since they were 10 and who don't have basic literacy skills, don't have any vocational training, don't have any kind of links with the outside world, other than maybe their own families who they might be working with. We have experiences with children who were bullied terribly at school because of their ethnicity and we have experiences of young people who were at schools who deal with that issue fantastically, and who can name

only one teacher who they ever thought was negative in their approach to them. So, it is really varied, but what's interesting is that, even those children who are at mainstream school, all of the children and young people have said that they don't believe schools have an understanding of their culture and of their experiences. They don't really see themselves reflected in the schools. There are a couple of exceptions to that with quite exceptional schools that work with large populations of local Gypsy and Traveller families, but I think that's absolutely consistent regardless of whether children have a good experience of school or a negative experience, or any experience of school. I think that is really quite key in terms of some of the things that need to change.

[41] I've made a note of some of the recommendations, in a sense, that children and young people came up with from the research, because I think they best illustrate, really, the things that are most important to children and young people. The first one is pretty much what I say, really, which is that

[42] 'Teachers in school need to try and understand our culture and how we work with our families',

[43] and actually the tension that there is for children and young people when they come into teenagehood and young adulthood—for some, not all, families where there is a tension around family need for those children and young people to work within their communities, and a tension with education. Schools really need to be able to work with that and understand that young people are having to make some big decisions themselves and deal with quite complex conflicts in their own lives as well.

[44] Young people all think that teachers and other education staff

[45] 'should have training on understanding Gypsies, Roma and Travellers to help us achieve our best.'

[46] Their third top tip, really, was:

[47] 'Find a way to build relationships between our families and schools to break down barriers and increase our participation in education.'

[48] Because young people recognise that, whilst there are barriers from schools, in a sense that the formal education system does throw up barriers for lots of different groups of children and young people, also there are

barriers within their own community in terms of parental experience and anxieties and therefore attitude towards education. They want help from the education system to engage with their families, to really help their families trust education and help their children access it.

[49] They say:

[50] 'If we are being bullied or experiencing a hate crime, there must be a teacher or adult who we can talk to and who can help us report things if we need to.'

[51] **Julie Morgan:** And that doesn't happen.

[52] **Ms Aspinwall:** In 'Travelling to a Better Future', I believe there's a recommendation that every school should have a named person who is the key link for Gypsy/Traveller families and for children, and that isn't the case. There are some schools that do, and they tend to be the ones with a proactive Traveller education service probably based there. But no, that isn't the case and, similarly, it's been quite difficult to get information about bullying, other than anecdotally directly from children and young people, because local authorities don't collect the data, nor do Welsh Government. It's at a school level, so you literally have to write to every single school to ask about the numbers of bullying incidents or hate crime incidents that have been reported by Gypsy, Roma or Traveller children. So, it feels there's a sense that, with something that children and young people say is happening to them a lot, it's really difficult to track that, and I think that's something that we should address.

[53] Children talked about making sure

[54] 'we have access to up-to-date equipment and access to computers and the internet if we don't have it at home to help with our homework.'

[55] Now, obviously, this affects lots of groups of children who don't have the resources in their household to have computers and who may not have internet, but for those of you who've been on to and visited many of the Gypsy and Traveller sites around Wales, and certainly any families who are living on an unauthorised site, the idea that children can go home, log on to the school computer and do their homework is a fairy tale. It's just not accessible for the children and young people who we work with. And young people feel at a real disadvantage when they go into school and they're not

able, and their parents aren't able to support them in that.

[56] Something that's very consistent is really about the relevance of education and access to much more vocational courses. There are lots of children and young people we work with who are very academic and who are doing really well on academic courses and hopefully will go on to do more like that, but there are lots of children and young people who feel that what feels most comfortable is to do something vocational, and actually their parents feel that as well. And for me, that's an opportunity to engage with those families. They feel that they don't get access to hands-on courses like building and hair and beauty through school. They also identified in their research that they wanted at that point extra funding put in place to support them in school, because they recognised that there was a very different picture all around Wales. Some of their peers had specialist teachers based in their school who were there to support them day in, day out, stick up for them, help them with their homework, and help talk to their families. In another school, they're on their own and there's nobody particularly to talk to in relation to Gypsy and Traveller issues. What they really wanted was enough money for every school to have a Gypsy and Traveller worker who they felt could understand them. There's a big sense of not being understood and not really being acknowledged and recognised, I think, within the schools.

[57] They also talked about—for those children who are at home and not being educated through mainstream schooling, they wanted to be able to access trained tutors. Interestingly, in some local authority areas, resources are spent on putting basic skills tutors into local Traveller sites, for instance, for children who are electively home educated. And in other local authorities, there is no engagement with EHE children and they get no resources from the local authority.

[58] **Julie Morgan:** Is that a group that's growing, did you say?

[59] **Ms Aspinwall:** Sorry?

[60] **Julie Morgan:** Did you say earlier on that the home-educated group is growing?

[61] **Ms Aspinwall:** Well, we believe so, but again, getting data is very difficult. When you look at what Welsh Government collects, and the numbers in the data for Gypsy, Traveller and Irish Traveller children over the last three

years, there was no year that was more than single figures—6 or 7 for the whole of Wales. But if you look at the Welsh Government's research that was carried out on engaging with families, the researcher did a survey of Traveller education services around who was engaging with EHE children, and it was more like 99. And then, of course, not all—there will be children who are EHE who are not registered as such, if you like, as well.

[62] **Julie Morgan:** There seems to be a really good, comprehensive list of recommendations there—very sensible recommendations. Did that go to anybody? Was it sent to any—

10:00

[63] **Ms Aspinwall:** Yes, it was sent to local authorities, to education leads. It was sent to—. I think one of the difficulties we had was because of the change in the grant, it was actually quite difficult to—. I mean, it was sent to Welsh Government officials that we were engaging with at the time about this, saying, 'Look, these are the kinds of things that young people are saying they need; can we have any reassurances that the education improvement grant might pay for some of these?' But, of course, some of them happen already; the point is that it's very piecemeal. And, of course, all of them have been consistently recommended before, both by young people—. The first piece of research I did with young people around this issue was in 2006, and they said exactly the same thing then. Some things have improved for young people, and some things haven't improved much. Estyn's recommendations were very good. The 'Moving Forward—Gypsy Traveller Education' guidance that we have from 2008 has some really good stuff in it. The issue is that schools and local authorities are not implementing them.

[64] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you very much.

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

[66] **John Griffiths:** I wanted to return, Trudy, to monitoring. Basically, I think the position is that if we move to a system of non-hypothecation for local government, then it's very important that outcomes are expected from expenditure and delivered. Obviously, it's very important to know whether those outcomes are being delivered or not. And I think from your evidence and what you've said already today, you've got considerable doubt as to whether the arrangements in place are robust. Would you be able to point

the committee in the direction of any outcome measure or framework that specifically measures outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children effectively at the current time? Or is it your view that there doesn't seem to be anything effective in place, either by the Welsh Government or regional consortia?

[67] **Ms Aspinwall:** Obviously, previously under the old grant—again, there were issues around the old grant—but, clearly, because it was a ring-fenced per pupil grant, then Welsh Government actually collated the numbers of children that local authorities were working with, and their attendance and attainment at certain levels. Because it was a bespoke grant, then there was a way of sharing practice around what worked best, looking at things like distance travelled rather than just academic outcomes because, obviously, if you've got children who've not been to school at all or who are going to school very intermittently, they may or they may not achieve their level 2 qualifications, but, actually, they may go to school for the first time ever, or they may go on to an FE course. None of those were actually being very well recorded before.

[68] My understanding now is that with the loss of the grant, the EIG has no set of outcomes framework associated with it. We raised concerns with the Minister and with Welsh Government at the time around the loss of the ring-fencing and the worries over the loss of focus. We were told specifically that an outcomes framework would be developed in time for the EIG, and then would be developed for year 2. I think the words of the Minister that I've got down here were,

[69] 'We expect these outcome measure to explicitly encompass both minority ethnic and Gypsy Traveller learners. While we have not ring fenced specific amounts within the overall grant, we will continue to be very clear that the needs of these learners must be addressed discretely.'

[70] All I can say is that, as far as I'm aware, there is no set of outcomes framework that has been developed. Now, that's not to say that within regional consortia they don't have their—. They will, of course, have their own plans and their own prioritisation, but as a lay person, if you like, looking at those business plans and talking to Welsh Government, there is nothing in place. I think that the Cabinet Secretary when she was here answering questions around the budget said very specifically, 'The EIG—we don't give directions, so you can use it how you want.' So, my understanding is that there are none.

[71] In addition to that, from anecdotal conversations with Traveller education staff working directly with children and young people, a number of people have said to me that it's not so much the loss of the grant, because at the moment they've kept most of our service on, for example, in one area, but the trouble is there's no outcomes framework and we don't know what we're doing with it. I've had that conversation with three people in different areas of Wales, who basically say, 'We don't have any targets.'

[72] **John Griffiths:** So, Welsh Government's view, I think, is that regional consortia should be putting these arrangements in place, Trudy, so what would you like to see regional consortia doing? Would you point the committee to any particularly effective approaches that the regional consortia should be taking or is it a matter for them to come up with something and then for that to be examined?

[73] **Ms Aspinwall:** In a sense, 'yes', because I think the difficulty is that it's all a bit invisible at the moment. So, unless you are a member of the regional consortia, then there doesn't seem to be, either at a local-authority-regional-consortia level or a Wales-wide level, any mapping of what we currently have, any evidence review of what works or any suggestions about the kind of outcomes framework that could be shared across regional consortia. I think there's a big disconnect between those decision makers and planners and what children, young people and their parents are experiencing on the ground.

[74] So, I think, for me, it would be more about transparency and about an openness from the regional consortia to engage with the experiences that Gypsy and Traveller pupils are actually having. There are some very positive experiences, but there are some very negative ones and there's also a failure in some areas for education provision to be provided at all to some children and young people. We're obviously into year two of the grant. I'll be really interested to hear from the regional consortia what they say, because it's really been very difficult to—people haven't refused to give us the information, it just doesn't appear to be there, you know. So, I think we would like more of a process of engagement, really, and discussion about what we're going to do about the inequalities in education for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people, and an acknowledgement that that is the case.

[75] **John Griffiths:** Okay. If we move on to data collection, Trudy, I think

you've already said that that's a problematic area as well—your evidence also stated that. In terms of the results of inadequacies in data collection, in terms of resource allocation and the sorts of standards that we'd want to see, would you want to elaborate on that at all, beyond what you've told us already?

[76] **Ms Aspinwall:** I think it's quite crucial, really. It's almost like, if you can't be counted, you don't count, and you can't allocate resources to children and young people that you don't know are there. So, this isn't a new problem. We know that it's been a perennial issue. Welsh Government's 'Travelling to a Better Future' strategy document highlighted that back in 2011 and acknowledged that the way in which it was showing up was within education, which is that the pupil level annual schools census data data collected by schools showed a much smaller percentage of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children than Traveller education services were working with through the grant. That was quite significant, I think. Schools had 1,600 children across Wales and the Welsh Government figure that year was 2,400 or something. So, in a small population of children and young people, that's quite a significant difference.

[77] But, whilst you had that bespoke grant with specialist staff who knew families and who knew children and young people, who were targeting and working with and approaching those families, then there wasn't such a big issue. But once that's gone, I would query how local authorities are counting the number of children and young people that are Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, who may need—not always, but may need—particular bespoke support. I just think that is the real issue.

[78] There are recommendations across the UK for the police, for health and for education to improve the data collection around Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people, but I think one of the reasons for it is that families struggle to have confidence in self-identifying. I think that's improved a lot, but if I can just quickly read you something from somebody that I heard speak a couple of weeks ago, called Lisa Smith, who is a Romany Gypsy woman and also vice-chair of an education organisation that works with Gypsy, Roma and Travellers. One of the things she talked about—. She said:

[79] 'A question that I would say nearly every Traveller parent asks themselves when their child is ready to start school is shall we be open about our ethnicity? Shall we tick the Gypsy/Roma or Traveller of Irish Heritage

ascription box on the school data sheet? What will be...for the best? If I tick the box will it mean my child will have a better educational experience or will it mean opening them up to potential discrimination.'

[80] I think that that is still an issue, really. Obviously, the Traveller education services, with their generally very positive relationships, then would identify families, and families would identify to them in a way that they wouldn't to schools. I think that that remains an issue in terms of data collection.

[81] The other area, which is difficult, is that it is such a small group of children and young people. We know that, at one point, there were at least 2,400 children in school—primary and secondary—across Wales. That, in itself, would have been an under-representation as well because there'll be Gypsy and Traveller children in other provision, or not in provision at all. But, you know, that's still a tiny proportion of children. In a sense, I feel that it's such a small group of children and young people, we could have kept the grant. It was only small. Actually, it was the only one that was specific.

[82] But in terms of data collection, I think that, for me, it's an issue of you can't effectively allocate resources if you don't know how many children and young people there are in your schools or outside of your schools who may need work in terms of outreach work or engagement work. But, actually, it's not going to happen. If you're not registered at school and you're not registered as Gypsy/Traveller, you wouldn't have got the old grant. But now, I don't think you have much chance, really, of getting any resources allocated to you as a child who may need support in your education.

[83] **John Griffiths:** Okay. If I could move on very quickly then, Chair, to equality impact assessments. I think you told us earlier, Trudy—and, indeed, in your evidence—that at the time of the introduction of the education improvement grant you didn't feel that the process was everything it should have been in those terms. Are you aware of anything that the Welsh Government has done since the introduction of the grant to make sure it's aware of the impact on learners? Are you aware of anything?

[84] **Ms Aspinwall:** I'm not aware, no, which doesn't mean to say that there isn't something in place. Given that I was quite a regular correspondent with officials about the impact assessment process, I would hope that if they had put something in place, they might have let us know. I think that would be our recommendation, really. You probably all read the evidence, and we were

quite appalled, really, at the inadequacy of the equality impact assessment and the children's rights aspect of it as well, which I, quite frankly, thought was embarrassing for a country that prides itself on being the first to bring children's rights into the law. It literally listed two articles of the UNCRC and said that the EIG would support them. That's not an assessment. Even if you're new to the process, you can see that that's not an assessment.

[85] My sense is that the impact assessment should inform decisions and not just ratify them afterwards. We know that the assessments were at least partially completed afterwards, and certainly published well after the decisions had been taken. So, our sense is, really, that within those impact assessments, they should have set out some concrete steps to mitigate the negative impact, which, to be fair, they did acknowledge. They said there may well be a negative impact, but they used very general statements, such as 'Arrangements will militate against this. The impact will be negligible.' There was nothing that said, 'So, what we'll do to make sure that there isn't a negative impact is this'. It also didn't say, 'We will revisit this in a year and review whether or not there has been a negative impact.'

[86] For me, I think those are the kinds of things that can still come into play now, really, which are revisit the equality impact assessment and the children's rights impact assessment, and have respect and reflect the evidence that there is and the concerns of stakeholders, which included not just me, but other third sector professionals and education professionals—some of whom you'll be seeing this afternoon. Nobody was offered a meeting. Nobody was given anything other than these very general reassurances that this was the best way forward. None of the concerns that people raised were reflected in the equality impact assessment. I think they ignored the evidence—or at least the evidence from stakeholders—that they did have, and that's a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010, and I really don't think that's acceptable. But they can put that right, in the sense that they can begin now to monitor properly, because I do think it is an issue around equalities—very specifically, actually.

10:15

[87] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. We've got a few areas we still need to cover, so can I appeal for brief questions and brief answers, please. Darren—briefly, because I do want to bring Oscar in because he's been waiting.

[88] **Darren Millar:** I just wanted to follow up from John's question, if that's

okay. So, in terms of the Equalities Act, of course that doesn't just apply to Welsh Government, it also applies to local authorities and the regional consortia acting on their behalf as well. One of the things that the Welsh Government has said, which is useful, you know, to increase the funding that's being allocated for Gypsy/Traveller children—the cash that goes to schools through the pupil deprivation grant. That's being doubled in this financial year. That's a significant sum of money—about £400,000—if it's spent specifically on those Gypsy/Traveller children. That's in addition to the previous pupil deprivation grant and anything else that's being spent on Gypsy/Traveller children. Is that being monitored? Because that's what the Welsh Government are saying is mitigating the impact of the reduction—or it seems to be what they've said.

[89] **Ms Aspinwall:** Yes, we did raise concerns about this because, per se, there's not necessarily a direct link between your ethnicity and your free school meals status. We know that—and I think Welsh Government statistics have said—probably 70 per cent of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in schools are eligible for FSM. But our sense was that—. We know that the pupil deprivation grant—. Again, there's not a clear direction about how it should be used. My understanding is there was an evaluation quite recently—last year, or—

[90] **Darren Millar:** Yes.

[91] **Ms Aspinwall:** —which didn't look at specific ethnic groups or any particular cohorts. We did some work at the time around a range of policies and programmes to assess the extent to which Gypsy and Traveller children and young people were benefitting, because we do feel that they get missed from a lot of programmes in many ways, and we were unable to find any specific examples of the PDG being used to tackle the specific barriers that Gypsy and Traveller children and young people may come across because of their ethnicity and culture. Now, that isn't to say that those young people and children wouldn't benefit from other PDG initiatives that were aimed at other areas of difficulty they might have, in relation to deprivation or anything else, but schools don't really use it to tackle those specific barriers. And also, to my knowledge, it's not being monitored. We had an independent researcher who talked to Welsh Government and some local authorities about, 'Well, can you give us some examples?' and nobody could. Sorry, there was one local authority that had done something with Communities First with match funding, but there's not been an explosion of PDG-funded activities that have mitigated the potential loss, to my knowledge.

[92] **Lynne Neagle:** Is it on this Michelle?

[93] **Michelle Brown:** No—[*Inaudible.*]

[94] **Lynne Neagle:** All right. I'll bring Oscar in then, Michelle.

[95] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you, Trudy. I think you've covered most of the question I wanted to know, but the fact is, you've mentioned a couple of problems with the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children and ethnic minority—the need for culture and faith training, relationships in families and bullying and education. There are a lot of areas that you've covered. If you want us to recommend something to the Welsh Government, what do you actually need us to tell them to make the difference in the education of these children—to get attainment like ordinary children in the classroom?

[96] **Ms Aspinwall:** Okay. Well, I think, firstly, I'm really interested to see the outcome of this inquiry, in the sense that a lot of the questions we've been asking—you know, the witnesses from regional consortia and then, of course, the work that the Cabinet Secretary and the Welsh Government themselves—. I think if we know that there are certain things in place—for some of our concerns—then we may be happier about the new arrangements. But, I think, for me, one of the main issues, really, is that there is a lack of strategic lead, and a lack of current policy and guidance that is updated and relevant that schools follow. Because we have a situation where the guidance that Welsh Government developed, which was good, in 2008, and we know that Estyn were saying, and we know that schools were saying, 'We won't implement that, because it's not in keeping with current inclusion thinking.' So, I think we need an update and we need a policy and strategic lead on updating and reviewing where we're at with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller education, because they have the worst outcomes of all children, and there should be a strategy to address that. So, we need that and that needs to include involving children and young people and their experiences in that.

[97] The other recommendation around revisiting the equality impact assessments and children's rights impact assessments and having that on an ongoing basis—. I think an outcomes framework is definitely needed. I don't think it's acceptable to have, 'You can use it in any way you want and you may or may not be including Gypsy, Roma or Traveller children in that.' We

do have concerns that it needs to reflect the kind of education and the educational experiences of children and young people and not just at GCSE level. So, for me, that might almost come a little bit further in terms of some of the outcomes, but I definitely think we need to monitor the impact of the EIG on service provision. And I think that Estyn should follow up with an inspection of what that provision is. I've probably got lots more, but maybe we'll write to you again, once we've—

[98] **Mohammad Asghar:** I'm very interested in the IT availability to Traveller children. I'm very concerned because in Wales we are not fully connected yet and these Travellers and all this IT—. They might have a big difficulty in that area. You emphasised that one area where the EIG has got no direction—that put me on some—. We'll have some other time to discuss that.

[99] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Michelle.

[100] **Michelle Brown:** I just wanted to ask, the previous grant structure—did that help local authorities and schools to actually persuade Traveller girls into education and keep them in education? And has that changed at all?

[101] **Ms Aspinwall:** Yes. There was a whole variety of work that happened under the previous grant, and, certainly, improving girls' access to education—. Although, teenage boys' access to formal education is often very poor as well, because they're more actively out working with their families. But, yes, certainly, it's something that Traveller education services would work on and that schools would work on in relation to providing really good role models of young women who'd gone through a formal education, but who hadn't then left the Gypsy/Traveller culture. And it also allowed schools and Traveller education services to put on engagement activities, which were comfortable for girls, that were female only. That's often really important. Something that schools don't always recognise, without training, is that, actually, young male teachers working with young women may not always be acceptable. It does vary, of course.

[102] But that hasn't changed—. I'd say, because of the general background of cuts, that things were changing already, in a sense—you know, there already was less and less money to do the more creative work that actually engages children and young people and families in education. But, certainly, under this new system, if it's going to schools and there's a secondary school there and there is a cohort of young women on a site across the road,

which is an actual situation in Wales, and none of those girls are at school—they all went to primary school and none of them have gone to secondary school—I can't see the EIG paying for that school to do that work to engage those girls in education, unless the school really wants to do it, in which case, of course they can. The good thing about it, apparently, is that it's very flexible, but there's nothing in the EIG that says, 'These are some of your targets'—you know, engaging young women in school, for example.

[103] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you very much. We've come to the end of our time, so can I thank you very much for coming this morning and for answering our questions? I wondered if it would be possible for you to supply the committee with the survey that you referred to with the young people and their responses.

[104] **Ms Aspinwall:** Yes, certainly.

[105] **Lynne Neagle:** I'm sure we'd all find that very useful. You will be sent a transcript of the session this morning to check for accuracy in due course, but thank you very much for your time, we do appreciate it. Thank you.

[106] **Ms Aspinwall:** Thank you for your time as well. Thanks.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:25 a 10:26.
The meeting adjourned between 10:25 and 10:26.*

**Ymchwiliad i'r Grant Gwella Addysg: Plant Sipsiwn, Roma a Theithwyr,
a Phlant o Leiafrifoedd Ethnig—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 4
Inquiry into Education Improvement Grant: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller,
and Minority Ethnic Children—Evidence Session 4**

[107] **Lynne Neagle:** We will move on, then, to our second evidence session this morning with the regional consortia, and I'm really pleased to welcome Gill James, Helen Morgan-Rees and Martin Dacey to our committee this morning. Thank you very much for coming, and I know that you've all provided papers in advance. Can I just start by asking you—I know that you've all got slightly different roles and that you're here in different capacities today—to say what your specific role is? And then maybe you could tell us a little bit about how you are using the money from the EIG and specifically whether the money for Gypsy, Traveller, Roma and ethnic minority children has gone up or down in your area. Do you want to start,

Martin?

[108] **Mr Dacey:** Yes, okay. My name's Martin Dacey, I'm the head of the Gwent education minority ethnic service—it's known as GEMS. We operate across the five local authorities of Newport, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Caerphilly and Monmouthshire. We are fortunate that there's been a historical link between the five authorities from the days when they were unified as Gwent, hence where our title comes from. We support English as an additional language learners across those five authorities. Historically, under the ring-fence model, there were service level agreements with the four other authorities, because, effectively, GEMS is hosted by Newport, and that service level agreement arrangement has continued up until this point through the changeover to the EIG. We also support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners within Newport, and we are a centralised service. We've maintained that central status, so there is no delegation or devolvement to schools within our model. All of the support staff, the bilingual teaching assistants and the specialist EAL teachers are, effectively, line-managed by myself. My line manager, then, is the assistant head of education within Newport and then, ultimately, his line manager is the chief schools officer for Newport.

[109] Effectively, we run a model whereby we analyse our own EAL data, which we obtain from the schools. We assess the level of linguistic need within the schools and then we allocate support twice an academic year to our schools across the consortium. One of the questions will be, 'Why don't you use pupil level annual schools census data?' Well, we don't use PLASC data, because, in the past, we found that to be reliable, but, ultimately, in terms of an introduction, we allocate out to schools from the central resource.

[110] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you very much. Helen.

[111] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** I'm Helen Morgan-Rees, I'm here to represent ERW, which are an alliance, really, of six local authorities: Carmarthenshire, Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Powys, Ceredigion and have I left somebody out? No, I think that's it. So, ERW act as an alliance, and directors work together in terms of allocating EIG. They come up with their own formula, after Welsh Government have allocated to that consortium. So, I'm here to represent the view of all the directors within the consortium and, once they've agreed that that formula is the right one for delegating or apportioning EIG, then that is delivered to each local authority. It's up to the local authority then to decide

how to spend in respect of Gypsy/Roma/Traveller pupils and minority ethnic pupils. In most cases, that level of funding has been protected and maintained by directors within their local authorities.

10:30

[112] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Gill.

[113] **Ms James:** Hi. I'm Gill James and I'm an achievement leader in Cardiff local authority. My title is 'Achievement Leader (Closing the Gaps)'—it's got an 's' on it now. When I applied for the job, it was just a gap. So, one of my roles is to oversee the ethnic minority and Traveller achievement service within Cardiff, and I was asked to come to represent our consortium, which is composed of the Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr, Bridgend and Cardiff.

[114] Our consortium, when the funding stream went through the education improvement grant, agreed to take out the previous minority ethnic achievement grant allocation and the Gypsy/Traveller pot of money, and that has come to each local authority. Obviously, it has had the cuts, but we in our local authorities have the power to do whatever we're going to do with the money, and make those decisions. Now, in each local authority it's used in different ways. Obviously, in Cardiff we have a big pot of money for minority ethnic achievement—just under £4 million. In the other local authorities, that's a much smaller proportion of money. In Cardiff, we had a big restructure. We are giving, now, just over 70 per cent of the money to schools. We did that by delegation of the staff that we had within the service, but we still have a central service for ethnic minority achievement. We divide Cardiff into six areas. We have a closing the gap officer who oversees the work of the minority ethnic and English as an additional language achievement within those areas, and we have a new arrivals team so that we can respond to increasing needs at different times across our city. As well as that, we have the capacity to do project work with schools.

[115] In terms of the Gypsy/Traveller pot of money, we've maintained that centrally. It's a much smaller pot of money, and we have the same service provided for our schools in Cardiff.

[116] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you very much. We'll go to questions from Members now. John.

[117] **John Griffiths:** Martin, did you say that, in your arrangements, the money doesn't go to schools in the way that is envisaged by Welsh Government, which I think is a requirement of at least 80 per cent?

[118] **Mr Dacey:** Under the EIG.

[119] **John Griffiths:** Yes.

[120] **Mr Dacey:** Under the EIG in total there's the requirement, but, in terms of the minority ethnic achievement grant, as it's a centralised model, it comes through to the Gwent education minority ethnic service and then we allocate the staff out then to schools. So, they, effectively, spend their entire working week in schools.

[121] **John Griffiths:** I see. Okay. I just wonder if I could pick up on an answer that Helen gave, which was that I think you said, Helen, that, since the new arrangements have been in place, levels of spend have, in most cases, not been reduced, but presumably then there are some that are not within that—

[122] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** Yes. Swansea would be an example where the level of funding has been maintained, and, in Neath Port Talbot, for example, there'd be a slight cut because of other resource pressures in that authority.

[123] **John Griffiths:** Okay. So, it's not a universal picture. So, what sort of guidance and conditions, then, do the consortia apply in terms of the use of the resource?

[124] **Mr Dacey:** Do you want me to answer that?

[125] **John Griffiths:** Any of you.

[126] **Mr Dacey:** Okay. I'll start. Obviously, we're a centralised resource, so we have quite clear guidance around the use of specialist staff, and they are all specialist staff. It's twofold, really. Through our service level agreements with the greater Gwent authorities it's clear that the specialist teachers are there to build capacity, to advise, to guide staff, and to provide direct support to learners as well through the formula allocation. Also, we have regular meetings with senior leaders within the schools, particularly—. You know, you have to understand the context we're operating in here, if I can just go off track slightly, in the sense that, in Newport, we have two of the

three most diverse schools in Wales. We have Pillgwenlly Primary School and Maindee Primary School, where, effectively, nine out of 10 of their children are EAL learners. So, their demographic is comparable to a school in Hackney or Aston, or any of the most diverse schools in the UK. Obviously, when we move then to the Heads of the Valleys, the likes of Rhos y Fedwen, it's an entirely different picture there. So, naturally, by virtue of the formula allocation and the indicators that we use in our new arrivals database, et cetera, we obviously provide far greater teams to those larger schools. But what we do have then is the ability to share the good practice that is clearly evident in Newport and the experiences in Newport with those schools with growing numbers. So, an example of this is that the person who is senior, the most senior member of GEMS in Pillgwenlly primary, is also the senior member of staff for Caerphilly local authority. So, her role there, the good practice that is implemented then at Pill, is effectively, then, utilised—elements of it; the most appropriate parts are utilised, then, within Caerphilly. And so our links with the local authorities—Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire, Torfaen—are utilised through termly meetings with them, through team meetings, where they're hearing about the work on the ground; there are regular meetings, then, in the bigger schools in Newport to make clear the types of work that are undertaken and also to monitor the effectiveness of it.

[127] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** In terms of ERW—

[128] **Lynne Neagle:** Before you come in, can I just say, Martin: has there been any reduction, then, in either resources or staffing in GEMS?

[129] **Mr Dacey:** There was a reduction the year before last to the EIG in total, which you're all aware of.

[130] **Lynne Neagle:** Yes, but, locally, has there been any reduction?

[131] **Mr Dacey:** And then there was the reduction, then—the initial year. Last year, the funding remained the same as the year before. So, what SEWC were saying—what the south-east Wales consortium directors were saying—is that there was the motivation there to maintain GEMS, because they could see the generic need across the authority.

[132] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Thank you. Gill.

[133] **Ms James:** I think the key is that they are historical data now. We

haven't had a massive cut; we've had increasing numbers of children with English as an additional language, and that hasn't been reflected in our funding going forward, because they are historical data that are being used.

[134] **Mr Dacey:** I can tell you, in a four-year period, from 2012–16, I undertook some data analysis for our director, and, effectively, we've had a 23 per cent increase in category A children—they're new-to-English children. Are you all familiar with category A? We've had a 52 per cent increase in category B learners in that period in time, and a 21 per cent increase in category C learners in that period as well.

[135] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Thank you. Helen, have you got anything to add?

[136] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** Can I comment on resource and then answer John's question?

[137] **Lynne Neagle:** Yes.

[138] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** In terms of resource, it's not just about the money, it's about the loss of staff through uncertainty about the grants. So, I think that's true in all cases.

[139] **Mr Dacey:** Yes.

[140] **Ms James:** Yes.

[141] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** We've lost staff because they're not sure about the certainty of the service, the prioritisation of the service, the status of the service. So, staff in Swansea, for example, have been reduced from 66 full-time equivalents to 44.

[142] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Thank you.

[143] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** In answer to John's question around the guidance provided by the consortia, ERW provides broad guidance in line with Welsh Government's 'Qualified for life' objectives, which are four objectives around teaching and learning, the improvement of leadership, pedagogy and an engaging curriculum, and also ensuring that those children in schools are included in all of that. So, it's very broad-brush guidance that we provide. Presumably, in each local authority, they've maintained their own monitoring and evaluation of their own element of the EIG in terms of GRT and ME

pupils.

[144] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Hefin—. Sorry, John.

[145] **John Griffiths:** Just very briefly, Chair. You say 'presumably'. So, you don't actually know that that's the case.

[146] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** No, the consortia don't monitor that.

[147] **John Griffiths:** That's left up to the individual local authorities.

[148] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** Yes. We monitor on a quarterly basis in terms of the EIG, in terms of literacy and numeracy and other priorities, and the existing mechanisms of accountability and monitoring within local authorities feed into that. But what we're seeing a lot of is more talk about teaching and learning pedagogy, the development of leadership, rather than what happens to these pupils in particular.

[149] **Mr Dacey:** Our model is slightly different to that, if I can interject there, because we have, as I say, termly meetings. So, three times a year, we meet with the nominated lead officer for each of the authorities. We also then have an additional meeting where all of the nominated lead officers meet with myself to analyse the situation across the locality. So, we discuss things along the lines of the Syrian relocation programme, which is now affecting all authorities. This is a significant change now, because Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire, Torfaen and Caerphilly never had asylum seeker children in great numbers, other than spontaneous arrival unaccompanied asylum seekers, so, for them this is a shift.

[150] The thing that is also common to those four authorities is Polish migrancy. They all have, I would say, a significant number—a significant number by their standards, not compared to Newport, obviously, but they all have a commonality in that Polish migrants have been attracted into those parts of Wales due to the manufacturing sector and the agricultural sector in Monmouthshire. So, clearly, there are commonalities here, and we address those and look at school-to-school ways forward through the school improvement model, and an analysis of the supported learner data as well.

[151] We cannot underestimate—. If nobody takes anything else away from this, what I would like people to understand is that we cannot underestimate the challenge for authorities who have never had this type of child before.

Unaccompanied asylum seeker children and refugee asylum seeker children present with a unique set of challenges and issues. It is absolutely essential you have the expertise then to go in to help upskill those schools when faced with that—essential.

[152] **Ms James:** I've just become chair of the minority ethnic local authorities across Wales and we had our first meeting two weeks ago, and certainly that was the message from all local authorities. They were concerned about the uncertainty of the funding going forward when they had increasing numbers of children coming from different routes, and that was certainly something that they really wanted to raise. And not knowing how much you're going to get from year to year makes it very difficult to plan in terms of staffing, and that is an issue. When Helen said about staff leaving, it's because if they feel they can get a permanent job in a school, they're much more likely to sustain work for a long time, and we're losing that expertise from our service because of that.

[153] **Lynne Neagle:** Was it on this, Darren?

[154] **Darren Millar:** Well, sort of, but not—

[155] **Lynne Neagle:** I'll bring Hefin in then, and bring you in in a sec.

[156] **Hefin David:** Can I just ask: isn't it the responsibility of the consortia to provide that certainty? Gill, you said—

[157] **Ms James:** Yes, I guess—. From Welsh Government, I presume that we haven't had that certainty long-term given to the consortia. I can't really answer that question, to be honest. I don't know if you can from the consortia background.

[158] **Hefin David:** You said loss of staff because of uncertainty of service. Isn't it the responsibility of the consortia to provide certainty?

[159] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** Well, once the money is delegated to directors and local authorities, it's within the local authority's gift then to decide how they want to have a sustainability model in terms of funding. But it's very difficult if the total amount of the EIG from one year to the next is reducing. So, it's very difficult to project. We don't know how much EIG, or if it will be EIG in April, that we'll get, so it's very difficult to project into the future and to have a sustainable plan.

[160] **Hefin David:** But, within the EIG, is it not possible to build based on formula in allocation that provides a little bit more certainty than currently exists?

[161] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** Yes, there is flexibility, and that's why the EIG was created in this way. Those grants were subsumed into one in order to produce that flexibility. However, the word 'grant' is the clue—it's a grant, it's not a three-year type of funding—so, there's an element of uncertainty. There's an element of dwindling resource but, certainly, local authorities can look at their own particular needs, and they are different in our consortium, and decide then how best to match the resource according to the priority, and, in this particular case, those children that are vulnerable.

[162] **Hefin David:** Martin, do you want to comment on that as well?

[163] **Mr Dacey:** Yes. There is flexibility within the EIG. The issue of the longevity of the grant was the case when it was ring-fenced. There was never a commitment for longer than a year as to what the funding would be. Theoretically, then, yes, you could move funds from other elements of the EIG to prioritise this issue but, obviously, the question then raises its head: what happens to the other elements? Is 14 to 19 in that? It's an incredibly important pot of money. The foundation phase is in that. There are 11 funding streams that have been subsumed into the one grant, effectively. So, there are dilemmas wherever you look, aren't there? Because those grants existed as individual grants for a reason initially, didn't they?

10:45

[164] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Llyr.

[165] **Hefin David:** Can I just quickly—

[166] **Lynne Neagle:** Very quickly, then.

[167] **Hefin David:** Just regarding the formula and the reliability of data, how do you know that the data you get is reliable?

[168] **Mr Davey:** In our instance, if I answer—

[169] **Hefin David:** Because you—

[170] **Mr Dacey:** Yes, I raised it, didn't I? Effectively, we have tried to go on the PLASC data that we've received. Unfortunately, we have seen that that is unreliable for a myriad of different reasons. We could probably spend the rest of the meeting discussing why it's unreliable—but, it's unreliable. So, effectively, this is time consuming, it is, but, what we do is we go direct to schools ourselves and we work with them to update on a school level the WAG language stages and the key information to do with language background, ethnic codes, those types of things, and then we create our own databases.

[171] We have huge turnover in Newport, as an example, so we have children constantly coming and going. This is an issue with PLASC. We have children, effectively, under the old model, the ring-fence model, who were never captured because they might arrive in May and then they'll be gone by November. We've supported them for six months or whatever it is, but they've never actually been recognised in the funding mechanism. So, we run our own databases for each authority, for each school, and then, when we come to allocate support against the former allocation, we do so by the number of WAG language stages each individual school has against the amount of time we have, in net, in terms of our support staff.

[172] We are faced with difficult decisions to make at the service level because, as I'm saying, we're seeing huge increases in the number of children. We know now that these unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are coming. I'm being led to believe, in Kent, they are more than half Eritrean. Finding a Tigrinya speaker is going to be a challenge for anybody—I've tried. So, you're always having one eye on the now and where we are in terms of the situation, in the here and now, but also looking down the line at what is coming, trying to forward plan, which, as has been said, is difficult given the uncertainty around the funding.

[173] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** In terms of the data, it has to be unreliable because there are fluctuations. We've heard about immigrants coming in and changes in the area, so it's only as good as the day it was captured. So, that data is probably unreliable on that basis, because of people coming into the system.

[174] **Mr Dacey:** Some 450 new children arrived last year into south-east Wales. So, that's basically a school, mostly category A.

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

[176] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Yes, can I just pick up on the sustainability of the provision that's there at the moment? We've established that there's an increased demand in terms of numbers. We know what the trajectory of funding is, in terms of the £12 million drop compared to the previous grants and £8 million less this year and £1 million less next year. You've mentioned that that causes a great deal of concern for employees. You mentioned Swansea—a third less working there now because of the uncertainty. Clearly, there's a dilution in quantity maybe in terms of what's being provided against the demand, but what about the quality? Surely that suffers, because if you have different people turning up from one week to another to provide this service, then that impacts the level of quality of provision?

[177] **Ms James:** Certainly, in Cardiff, that's why we went for delegating staff about capacity building in schools. Obviously, some of our schools are 95 per cent minority ethnic EAL pupils, and they're the experts really. They have the capacity within their schools to meet whoever comes over their threshold. That's why we did a delegation of our resources to schools so that they had that resource at the point of contact. But, you do need to keep staff back. We have new arrivals going to schools that haven't got that ethnic mix and who need to have that extra support and they have the support of our closing-the-gap officer to actually do training. We've developed an audit to see which areas the school needs to branch out on to actually improve the practice in their school and the provision to increase their capacity. We are always going to have a diminishing resource, aren't we? It's about thinking differently and that's how we feel that we're doing it in Cardiff, by actually skilling our schools up to meet the needs within the school context.

[178] Plus, we're doing a lot of school-to-school sharing good practice. We've got some lovely projects going on in schools, as I know Newport have, where schools are sharing what they're doing to build the capacity with each other.

[179] **Llyr Gruffydd:** You mentioned that there were some of these pressures in place under the previous grant system. Is it worse now, do you think, than it was previously?

[180] **Ms James:** There's no difference. Our consortium has given us the money, and we're just carrying on in the local authority as we were before. But it's that extra risk, I guess, that authorities are feeling in terms of coming through that consortium route. It puts an extra—perhaps—layer of risk going

to that funding.

[181] **Lynne Neagle:** Helen?

[182] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** Can I answer in Welsh, please?

[183] **Lynne Neagle:** Yes, of course.

[184] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** O ran yr adnodd ariannol yn lleihau a'r angen yn cynyddu, mae'r angen i weithio yn y modd y mae Gill wedi'i ddisgrifio yn hynod o bwysig—y gwaith rhwng ysgolion. Dyna un o'r amcanion yn y ddogfen 'Cymwys am Oes' gan Lywodraeth Cymru, ond beth sy'n bwysig yw bod y consortia yng Nghymru yn cydweithio, efallai, i rannu'r arfer yma i sicrhau bod diffiniad eglur gyda ni o beth yw gwaith o ysgol i ysgol sy'n effeithiol, yn enwedig yn y cyd-destun hwn. Felly, mae rôl glir gan y consortia i sicrhau ein bod ni'n cydweithio a'n bod ni yn caffael ac yn dal y wybodaeth honno am yr arfer orau yn nhermau gweithio o ysgol i ysgol.

Ms Morgan-Rees: In terms of a reduction in financial resources and the demand increasing, then the need to work in the way that Gill has described is extremely important—the school-to-school work. That's one of the objectives of 'Qualified for Life' by the Welsh Government, but what's important is that the consortia in Wales do collaborate to share good practice and to ensure that we have a clear definition of what effective work looks like in schools, particularly in this context. Therefore, the consortia have a clear role to ensure that there is collaboration and that we do acquire and capture that information on best practice in terms of school-to-school working.

[185] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Ond a gaf i ofyn, felly, a ydyw Llywodraeth Cymru yn rhoi rhyw ganllawiau i chi o safbwynt y modd y dylech chi fod yn defnyddio'r arian hwn?

Llyr Gruffydd: Can I ask, therefore, does the Welsh Government provide you with some guidance in terms of how you should be using this money?

[186] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** Mae'r Llywodraeth wedi rhoi amcanion eithaf eang o ran 'Cymwys am Oes'. Pedwar amcan sydd yno. Mae disgwyl wedyn bod pob darn o'r grant hwn yn cael ei drin o dan yr amcanion hyn. Felly, mae'r gwaith yr oedd Gill yn

Ms Morgan-Rees: The Government has provided some broad-ranging objectives. There are four objectives within 'Qualified for Life'. The expectation is that every section of this grant is dealt with under those objective headings. Therefore, the

cyfeirio ato—gweithio o ysgol i ysgol—yn sicr yn un o'r pileri, yn un o'r pedwar amcan, ond nid oes canllawiau pendant, nac oes.

work that Gill referred to—school-to-school working—is certainly one of the pillars or one of the four objectives, but there aren't specific guidelines, no.

[187] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Felly, beth rwy'n ei ofyn yw, a ydyw'r hyn yr ydych chi yn ei gael gan y Llywodraeth yn ddigonol? Neu a ydych chi'n teimlo bod angen mwy?

Llyr Gruffydd: Therefore, what I'm asking is whether what you are having from the Welsh Government is sufficient, or do you need more?

[188] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** O ran canllaw?

Ms Morgan-Rees: In terms of guidance?

[189] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Ie.

Llyr Gruffydd: Yes.

[190] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** Byddai'n ddefnyddiol, rwy'n credu, i gael ychydig yn fwy, yn enwedig os ydym yn ymdrin â phlant bregus yn ein cymdeithas ni. Mae'r disgyblion hyn yn grwpiau penodol iawn o ddysgwyr, o ran y Sipsiwn a'r grŵp arall. Felly, mae'n bwysig bod yna ganllawiau sydd yn perthyn iddyn nhw ac yn berthnasol iddyn nhw.

Ms Morgan-Rees: I think it would be useful to have a little more guidance, particularly if we are dealing with vulnerable children in our communities. These are very specific groups of learners, in terms of Gypsy communities and the other group. So, it's important that there is guidance in place that is actually for them and relevant to them.

[191] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Martin, have you got anything to add?

[192] **Mr Dacey:** Yes, I do. In terms of whether I see there being a greater risk—back to the question a while ago—under the EIG, I do. I think the funding should be ring-fenced. I think it says a lot about the priority and the status of this funding. I watched the sessions last week with Jonathan Brentnall and Estyn. In short, what Jonathan Brentnall said was, 'Yes—yes absolutely, to all of it.' As to what Estyn said—we haven't got a lot of time, have we? So, ultimately, yes, there does need to be ring fencing because it says a lot about the status and the priority of this work. As I said before, this work is absolutely essential moving forward because of the rate of increase we're seeing, and because of the issues we're seeing in other parts of the world that, Brexit or no Brexit, will impact upon Wales.

[193] Do I think there is enough guidance coming from the Welsh Government on this issue? No, there should be more. I think, from my point of view, a central service across the consortium, for us, is absolutely essential. I can exemplify that by saying that Blaenau Gwent, as an authority, had its first Afghani unaccompanied asylum seekers last year into a very rural part of that authority. I was able then to allocate an experienced teacher from Maindee—a very diverse school in Newport—to go there to advise and to help build capacity. I was also able to allocate a Pashto and Dari speaker—a bilingual teaching assistant—to go there to communicate between the young people and their carers, who weren't proficient in Pashto, because it's not easy to find a foster parent who speaks Pashto and Dari, believe it or not. I was also able then to engage between the school and other agencies because these children were very vulnerable, for all the reasons we've outlined. They'd never been to school, really, before—inconsistently at best; they weren't literate in any language in particular; they were very, very new to English.

[194] So, having that central resource, with the people upskilled and with the expertise to go into that school and to give those learners the best start that we can possibly give them is absolutely imperative. That's why a central model is so valued by South East Wales Consortia, it really is. The understanding of how emotive it is and how important it is for young people from vulnerable families, where maybe the parents don't speak any English, maybe the children speak very limited English, to have someone come in and be able to support in those early stages just to help them settle, if nothing more, is vitally, vitally important. We engaged with a Lithuanian family recently—there were a lot of issues they had brought from Lithuania—in one of our Catholic schools with a very, very limited number of EAL learners historically, and the mother was in tears over this because she felt that someone was valuing her opinion and allowing her to communicate meaningfully with the school.

[195] The question was raised, I think last week, to Estyn: how do you break the back of this issue around Black Caribbean underachievement? That query was raised. I suppose you could mimic that question about a number of other minority ethnic groups. We have a large number EU Roma in Newport, for example, and you could ask the same question there. The answer to that is straightforward—it's relationships with communities, with families to build trust, because the EU Roma—and I don't doubt a number of other minority ethnic communities—due to the experiences they've had in countries of

origin, or here, do have an issue with trusting of institutions. That is a fact and they'll tell you that. So, building relationships is key, and for them to see that they've got a stake in the education system in Wales is absolutely vital.

[196] So, with our Romanian Roma who are very new, we've had feedback from parents along the lines of, 'Well there was no point in sending them to school in Romania because nobody cared whether they were there or not. They were in classes of 70 or 80. They were basically put in special needs provision when there was no additional educational need'. What we're trying to say to them, in their own language wherever we can, is, 'Here you do have a stake in what goes on. There is value in your child going to school here. Come every day, please.' For some of them, they said 'Well, maybe three or four days,' and we said, 'No, every day. It's vital.' That group in particular started migrating west over 1,000 years ago, and they've faced institutional racism wherever they've gone. This is the first time, really, it's different. So, there are no quick fixes with that, but it does require resource, it does.

[197] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Julie, on this.

[198] **Julie Morgan:** Yes. I think you make a powerful case for ring fencing. Just to go to the Gypsy and Traveller community, obviously, they've been living here for many, many, many years; it's a long-established community. Do you think there should be separate ring fencing for that community?

[199] **Mr Darcy:** Yes, but I think that, within that community, there's a huge complexity as well, which I don't think is always recognised. As I said, within south-east Wales we have a large number of EU Roma, whose needs are very, very different from a family that travels around the country and resides in a caravan. So, I think there needs to be an acknowledgement of that—that there's a great variety, even within each community. There're huge differences between the Czech community and the Slovak Roma community, with massive linguistic differences for starters. There are huge differences between a Gypsy family who may reside in a house, but still see themselves as Gypsies, and a Traveller family, as I said, who reside in a caravan and travel around.

[200] Yes I do think there needs to be that acknowledgement, because the needs of those children, in some respects, is very acute. In others, it isn't. I was talking to a Gypsy mother recently, who said to me, 'There should be no need for your service, because all the children should be fine and able to get on.' I said, 'Well I'll hope for one day that I haven't got a job then,' because it

would be brilliant, wouldn't it. But, for the here and now, where children have been out of school, where language is an issue, our services are essential. But to answer your point in short, yes, I do.

[201] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you. I just wondered if I could just ask Helen, as you gave this figure of 66 to 44, have you got those figures for provision for the Gypsy and Traveller service?

[202] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** No, I don't. I'm sorry, I don't have those figures to hand.

[203] **Julie Morgan:** Could you let us know that?

[204] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** Yes, I can do. Yes.

[205] **Julie Morgan:** I know, when this grant was first announced, there was quite a big fuss in Swansea about it.

[206] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** Certainly. A degree of flexibility, having spoken to colleagues—and this is only anecdotal evidence—is useful for Gypsy/Roma/Traveller pupils to an extent. What's important, really, is the status and prioritisation and inclusion element. So, flexibility can be handy in the case of those particular learners, because of the nature of their culture and living.

11:00

[207] **Julie Morgan:** I just wondered whether, when the grant was changed, some of the long-standing relationships that have been built up with staff, which is obviously key to a lot of this work, had been broken. You don't know about those figures.

[208] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** No, I think they've been maintained and there's been a careful eye kept, really, in local circumstances, to ensure that the right level of funding resource in terms of staffing is there to meet the need, as it changes throughout the year. I know of one local authority that's added another member of staff in year; they found the resource to do that, because there was some flexibility around the grant.

[209] **Julie Morgan:** So, in your consortium, there's been no drop in the—. I know that, initially, all the staff in Swansea were given notice, I think—I don't

know whether you remember this—and then they were re-employed. So, you say there's no reduction in service for Gypsy/Traveller children.

[210] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** I can't confirm that today, I'm sorry.

[211] **Julie Morgan:** Okay, that's fine. If you could let us know.

[212] **Lynne Neagle:** Yes, if we could have a note on it, it would be really helpful. Oscar.

[213] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much indeed, Chair, and thank you, Martin. I declare an interest to the Chair: my office is in Maindee and I'm very closely associated—*[Inaudible.]* So, there are 30-odd languages spoken in these schools and we all know about it. The fact is, the funding was reduced last year by £12 million. This year, it's £6 million and the year after, it's nearly £1 million. So, I know that funds are strained for ethnic minorities, Gypsy/Travellers and others. Asylum seekers, I'll say openly now, are coming to different areas in south-east Wales and you're handling them. Have there been difficulties with integrating minority ethnic experience into the school system in general?

[214] **Mr Dacey:** Have there been difficulties in—

[215] **Mohammad Asghar:** In integrating minority ethnic into schools in general. Are they having difficulties? Are schools having difficulties? Are there enough teachers, for example?

[216] **Mr Dacey:** In recruiting them, yes. I see what you're saying. Obviously, schools really like GEMS staff, so when the grant comes up, we have got the staff who speak the languages from the minority ethnic backgrounds, and as has been alluded to earlier, they can be incredibly attractive propositions to schools. In terms of GEMS—and I can only speak from GEMS, because that's the service that I line manage—the vast majority of our employees are from minority ethnic backgrounds. That's a fact. So, where staff are lost, it tends to be staff to other sectors, potentially, as well, if there is uncertainty around job contracts, et cetera. We do tend to lose those with minority ethnic backgrounds, which is a concern, because I know, in general in education, there is an issue around the number of professionals from minority ethnic backgrounds. So, we certainly don't want to lose ours.

[217] I can't comment in terms of the school population in general and

whether it's diversifying or not, but I can say our service certainly is, and what that means is that, on the ground, we have a greater level of diversity in schools within south-east Wales than we've ever had before from our point of view. We offer more languages than we ever did before, but that's by virtue of the fact that so many of our employees are multilingual—they speak three, four, five or six languages. So, as I said to our headteachers yesterday, 'Let's be nice to them and try and keep them fit and healthy, because they are absolutely essential to what goes on in the schools.'

[218] **Mohammad Asghar:** Finally, do ethnic minority grants encourage parents and guardians to take an increased interest in their child's education? Is the shift in the perspective greater if their child is granted a specific award as opposed to the generic education improvement grant?

[219] **Mr Dacey:** In terms of the specifics of how we engage with parents, I alluded a little bit to that earlier, but I'll go further, because you raised Maindee; that's your locality. Obviously, in Maindee, we have a significant presence, day to day, within our team mix of experienced teachers, and then bilingual teaching assistants. We operate a process there whereby, every morning, we have what they refer to as a GEMS person or a Maindee person, because they have their own bilingual TAs as well, being on the door to engage with parents at that point, and after school as well. So, there's basically daily engagement there with parents in terms of how things are operating at school level. Also, what we find is that our bilingual teaching assistants are essential within parental consultations as well, so that parents are very clear as to how their learners are progressing and the things that they can do to support them. Because we have feedback from a lot of parents and they've said things along the lines of, 'Well, I don't speak any English, so I can't help with the reading.' So, what we've advised them around things is, 'Continue to speak your home language to your children. Talk to them about their education experiences in your home language.' Through our ability to communicate with them through their own languages, we're able to tell them how their learners are progressing in terms of the national curriculum and also the language acquisition records we keep as well. So, having that fluid resource means that—say, for example, you could have a secondary school whereby they have an Urdu-speaking parent who comes in for parental consultation. The child might be doing perfectly fine, but the parent is struggling to communicate; we can draft the person across to support them with that consultation.

[220] **Lynne Neagle:** Gill.

[221] **Ms James:** Certainly one thing—providing ESOL classes for parents is something that needs to be considered in terms of funding from Welsh Government. Parents need to be able to support their children, and in terms of inclusion into Welsh society, they need to be learning the language, and we're seeing that as a barrier to things moving forward. Just to say that some of the moneys need to be used for things like the awareness raising of the Prevent agenda. Our staff are training schools on that and the 'Getting on Together' agenda. It's very important that we're looking at communities getting on together. They're becoming increasingly diverse, and we need to be doing that area of work as well. It's not just about the learning in the classroom.

[222] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Helen, have you got anything to add?

[223] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** No, not to that.

[224] **Lynne Neagle:** Go on then, Oscar.

[225] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you, Chair. One thing I want to ask the three of you, really, is about what the education system should teach youngsters—those who are in this country or who come from other countries—about Britishness. I think, in those areas that you just mentioned earlier, it's getting a bit economical there. It's not enough. Children still have a very close link with their own families—

[226] **Lynne Neagle:** I think that's probably too big an issue for this morning.

[227] **Mohammad Asghar:** No, but this education system must make sure that children start from there and then they learn, very quickly, everything after.

[228] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay.

[229] **Mr Dacey:** I agree it's about establishing a firm baseline.

[230] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Michelle.

[231] **Michelle Brown:** Thank you, Chair. Do you monitor the outcomes of how the grant is spent by local authorities? How do you monitor them and

what outcomes are you seeing?

[232] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** In ERW, the grant spend, as I said earlier, is monitored on a quarterly basis, but each local authority, in respect of these particular elements of the EIG, have their own measures and outcomes. But, obviously, we measure the outcomes in terms of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and their achievement or attainment in school across the key stages. So, that's measured and then each local authority has their own performance management, scorecards or whatever they have to use to hold people to account for the effective spend of that element of the grant.

[233] **Michelle Brown:** How effective do you think the grant is in improving the life chances of Traveller children?

[234] **Mr Dacey:** Do you want me to answer the first question?

[235] **Michelle Brown:** Anybody—

[236] **Mr Dacey:** Can I answer the first question? And then I'll come to the second one. In terms of monitoring the effectiveness of the money—that is the question, isn't it—what we do is monitor, in conjunction with the education achievement service. Everybody is aware that now there are school improvement consortia working with each of the authorities, so we work closely with our education achievement service to monitor the end of key stage data by WAG language stage and also by ethnic group, as well. We're waiting for the data for this year.

[237] The other thing that we then do with that information is liaise with the education achievement service, and they're creating different project work involving headteachers with a more school-to-school model. So, now, at the moment, there are seven headteachers involved in this within the Newport area, and what is focused on is where there are issues around achievement or attainment and how schools can support each other. The school improvement model is something that is working across a variety of themes in education at the moment, which has commenced.

[238] The other thing that we do is look at the minority ethnic attainment at local authority level within the five authorities, to ascertain whether there are any particular issues there. So, off the top of my head, last year, there was a bit of an issue with key stage 4 Polish in—I won't name the authority, but there was. So, we were able to look at the resource there and allocate the

support appropriately. So we're using some of the end-of-key-stage data to target the allocation effectively, to try and address some issues around attainment.

[239] The other thing that we use is our language acquisition records. There's a big difficulty here that I wanted to raise today, because end-of-key-stage data, for the reasons I've outlined, and the reason the question is asked, are obviously vitally important. But the problem we're finding is that a number of children we're currently supporting can be disappled because they're under newbie status, which is with them being two years in the UK. Again, I don't know if colleagues are aware of this. So, effectively, their results don't necessarily have to count, as such, because they're still classed as newbies, but effectively we're still supporting them because they're so needy. So, effectively we use something called a language acquisition record, which is an interpretation of the five-stage model given to us from Welsh Government in terms of language acquisition, and we chart the progress, term on term, against that assessment tool.

[240] **Ms James:** Certainly in Cardiff, we target resources using our end-of-key-stage data. I have to say, I think the group of ethnicities from Welsh Government needs updating, and they've recognised that. We're working together with the local authorities to update the list. For example, Syrians aren't a category. We've got Syrians coming through the schemes now, and if people are going to be asking for data, wouldn't it be sensible to have them highlighted? I think it will be an 18-month process, but we're on that journey to actually update that list with all the local authorities across Wales. But yes, we use the end-of-key-stage data to then make sure that we're targeting the groups that need the additional support—for example Czech Roma—to improve their outcomes.

[241] **Michelle Brown:** Can I just ask one more question? What guidance have you given in respect of projects to encourage Traveller girls to remain in school and to complete their education?

[242] **Ms James:** Obviously, from a Cardiff perspective, we've had a historical trend for girls electively home educating from the age of 11. We're doing a lot of work on that. We've got several projects going at the moment to try and encourage that turnaround. Last year I think we went up to 80 per cent that did transfer to high school. We do a lot on transition. We're starting some projects in year 5 now to increase that transition and shift that trend, because obviously the best place for these young people is in school. If

they're out of school during their secondary age, and then they want to return into some kind of education later on at 15 or 16, it is difficult for them, obviously, because they've missed out significantly. So, we're trying to work earlier, to work with the parents and work with the young people to reverse that trend in Cardiff.

[243] **Mr Dacey:** I would endorse everything that's been said there, and I would also say that site visits are essential, having spoken to families, to build trust. When we started focusing on this particular transition—year 6 to year 7 is an issue, because when you speak to parents, there is a lack of trust around secondary or a concern or anxiety around secondary and what will be experienced there. We were having feedback along the lines of 'We'd like to see people come to the sites and come to us and value our background', so certainly a lot of site visits again to build up that trust and a lot of work to try and prepare young people and parents for that move into year 7. It is a significant change for any child.

[244] **Lynne Neagle:** Helen, have you got anything to add?

[245] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** Yes, just in respect of Michelle's questions around outcomes and life chances, what the consortium does, what we do in ERW, is we employ challenge advisers who challenge schools on a pupil level, including groups of learners, and that challenge then looks at the provision for those pupils to ensure that they achieve the best outcomes possible. What could develop further in terms of consortia working is the closer relationship with the experts in the field within the services. I think there is a place for challenge advisers to work in greater partnership with the experts around this table, and I think that's something we could develop in future.

[246] **Julie Morgan:** Just one quick question.

[247] **Lynne Neagle:** Briefly—yes, go on.

[248] **Julie Morgan:** You mentioned secondary school education. What percentage of Gypsy/Traveller children are now in secondary education, as far as you're able to say, in Cardiff, for example?

11:15

[249] **Ms James:** Well, I know this year it's 76 per cent, and that equates to very small numbers. I think there were four young people who didn't transfer

to high school this year. So I think what Martin says is the key: we go to the sites, we're developing those relationships, but it's not just the add-on service, it's the schools making those relationships. So we're taking the deputy head from the schools to meet the parents on the site, because it's the relationship with the school that is going to get those children into school. They feel that they've got bad relationships with a particular high school, and that is the barrier to them transferring, so the more we can do to get that relationship improved, the better.

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

[251] **Darren Millar:** Thank you. I'm a little confused this morning; I thought we were going to be hearing evidence from consortia that there would be some similar approaches in the consortia. It's very clear that that is not the case. We've had some very different presentations, and clearly things are very different in Gwent to what they are in south-west Wales and very different, perhaps, to what they are in your area as well, here in South Wales Central. Can I just ask, what benefits does ERW actually bring to this whole process? The Welsh Government may as well give the cash directly to local authorities, mightn't it? I mean, you're just passing the cash on. What benefit are you actually bringing? It appears that the information that you're getting back is stuff that is being gathered by the Welsh Government anyway because the local authorities have to provide it. I'm struggling to see what benefit you having these grants and then distributing them, passing them on as a middle man or woman, if you like, is actually having.

[252] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** That's one way of looking at it. I think another way of looking at it is to consider the development of the consortia. Legally, we've only been an entity in ERW for two years. So I guess, as we develop, we can offer more in respect of these learners. But I think, going back to what I said about the challenge we provide to schools at pupil level, in terms of how they're providing for those children and ensuring they maximise the potential of those children, I think that has a great role to play and that's where the consortia come in.

[253] **Darren Millar:** So if I go to an individual school's minutes of governing body meetings, I can see evidence in there in terms of what your challenge officers are actually doing. But those challenge officers are having to be there for all sorts of other purposes anyway, aren't they?

[254] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** Yes.

[255] **Darren Millar:** And it will be down, very much, to the interest of that individual challenge officer, I suspect, in whether this is a priority for that particular school. If I'm honest, I'm very attracted to the Gwent model, okay? Because it seems to me that you've built up some resilience, you've got a team that is pretty stable, which is able to offer some—

[256] **Mr Dacey:** I would say that it's reasonably stable.

[257] **Darren Millar:** Well, okay, but it's able to offer some specialised services to especially those local authorities that might not see from one year to the next an ethnic minority individual in particular, and clearly you've got that expertise in terms of engaging with the Gypsy/Traveller community.

[258] **Mr Dacey:** I would be careful here, because I don't want to be as presumptuous as to say that what operates within SEWC is the panacea and some sort of utopia, because it really isn't. It's hard work every day. But equally, the other thing is, if you're a rugby fan, you'll remember—and I know I'm going off on a tangent slightly here—in Ireland, provincial rugby wasn't a problem, because historically they had a provincial model. We tried to put it in here and there were decades of difficulties. So, coming back to education, because historically in Gwent we had those relationships, it is more straightforward. It's not for me to say what would work in other parts of Wales, but if you have a historical model of working anyway, it does make life a lot easier.

[259] **Darren Millar:** Absolutely; I understand that, but what I'm concerned about is obviously that your model, which appears to be working very well, and presumably gives some economies of scale as well, why that isn't really being discussed by other regional consortia as an approach that they might be able to take.

[260] **Mr Dacey:** It may well be.

[261] **Lynne Neagle:** Gill.

[262] **Ms James:** We had a model like that in Cardiff, and we did the delegation model because it was so big in Cardiff—you imagine line managing 120 staff centrally. Basically, a lot of the expertise of the central staff was spent on line management and HR issues, et cetera. By delegating to schools and keeping still a significant service, but a robust service, it also

meant that the ownership of improving the outcomes went to the schools as well. It's a great model in Newport, I'm not decrying that, but we've got to have schools taking the ownership, not seeing that somebody's going to come in and make the difference, necessarily, but to do the improvement from within as well.

[263] **Darren Millar:** I can see that that is a Cardiff model, but—

[264] **Lynne Neagle:** Briefly now, please, because we're running out of time.

[265] **Darren Millar:** Okay. I think this is a really important area to pursue, actually, Chair. What is happening in those other local authority areas outside of Cardiff that are also in your regional consortia?

[266] **Mr Dacey:** And it doesn't diminish that the schools take responsibility; if you've got a central resource, it absolutely doesn't diminish that.

[267] **Darren Millar:** Because I think this gets to the nub of what we—

[268] **Ms James:** They're keeping their central resource because they can't—. The smaller the resource is, the more you have to keep it centrally because, otherwise, there is a danger it'll just trickle away. In Cardiff—obviously, bigger resource—we can delegate more and still keep a robust service because we've got a bigger pot of money to do that. And I think that in Cardiff, what we're doing is the best way. Newport have got their own model. You can't have one size fits all over the whole of Wales. Everybody has got to work within their capacity to do the best for the children in their area.

[269] **Darren Millar:** But we need to get some consistency as well, don't we?

[270] **Lynne Neagle:** In relation to the consistency, do you think it would help if we had an outcomes framework set down by Welsh Government for these groups of children, so you could deliver in a flexible way but which had set outcomes?

[271] **Mr Dacey:** Yes, but I'd want to see the specifics of the outcome framework, and who compiles that.

[272] **Ms James:** Yes, we need to be involved. The experts, not necessarily me, but, you know, I've got great teams of people and Martin has, et cetera, who need to be involved in that to create something fit for purpose, and not

too onerous. So, I think the reporting before was very onerous and unnecessary, but we do need to have something that is fit for purpose here.

[273] **Ms Morgan-Rees:** Can I just say that the design of services across Wales is determined by demographics largely, not by the regional consortia? So, I think it's important that we work together to see how we can work across the four corners of Wales to maybe influence an outcomes framework. That's where the role of the regional consortia comes in.

[274] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you very much. Well, we are out of time. Can I thank you very much for attending and for your evidence this morning? You will be sent a transcript of the session to check for accuracy in due course, but thank you very much again for coming. And the committee will now break until 11.30 a.m.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 11:22 ac 11:33.
The meeting adjourned between 11:22 and 11:33.*

**Ymchwiliad i'r Grant Gwella Addysg: Plant Sipsiwn, Roma a Theithwyr,
a Phlant o Leiafrifoedd Ethnig—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 5
Inquiry into Education Improvement Grant: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller,
and Minority Ethnic Children—Evidence Session 5**

[275] **Lynne Neagle:** Can I welcome everybody back and welcome Dr Chris Llewelyn from the Welsh Local Government Association and Nick Batchelar who's director of the Association of Directors of Education in Wales—

[276] **Mr Batchelar:** No.

[277] **Lynne Neagle:** No? That's what we've got down here.

[278] **Dr Llewelyn:** Yes.

[279] **Mr Batchelar:** I'm the director in Cardiff and I'm the lead director for the central south consortium—

[280] **Lynne Neagle:** Yes, that's what I was saying.

[281] **Mr Batchelar:** I beg your pardon; I misunderstood.

[282] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. If it's okay with you, we'll go straight into questions. Hefin.

[283] **Hefin David:** The removal of the ring fence around the grants has been a bit of a problem, hasn't it, for the Gypsy/Roma and ethnic minority students?

[284] **Dr Llewelyn:** Shall I go first? As you probably know, you've seen from our evidence, as an association, we would like to see all specific grants going into the settlement because we think it gives local authorities maximum flexibility to respond to local circumstances. It's based on the idea that—

[285] **Hefin David:** But it's not helping in these circumstances. That's the gist of my question.

[286] **Dr Llewelyn:** Well, it's a question—

[287] **Lynne Neagle:** Hefin, we can't interrupt.

[288] **Dr Llewelyn:** The association thinks that decisions about how services are run, managed and funded should be taken as close to the point of delivery as possible. Those people that are using services should have as much of a say in the way those services are run and managed as possible, and that local authorities provide the democratic framework that's close to local people and that is best placed to take those decisions. In this instance, I think what you're referring to is the point that the Gypsy/Roma element of the specific grant was, in effect, abolished and combined with the minority ethnic achievement grant element in the grant, which was, in turn, combined with a much larger grant.

[289] Now, the association's position was that, ideally, we would have liked to have seen all of that funding going into the settlement rather than being retained as one specific grant, albeit a large specific grant. But, we took the shift from having 14 or so individual grants to merging them into one grant as being a sign of the direction of travel. I think that the only way it would have worked effectively is if the terms and conditions associated with the whole grant had been relaxed as well, with a greater focus on outcomes rather than a focus on process, monitoring, reporting, audit and so on. There's a widely accepted assumption that, with specific grants, around 5 per cent of the value of the grant is lost through audit administration—the bureaucracy wrapped around the specific grant, which is one of the reasons

why the association thinks that the value, or the money invested through specific grants, is viewed as more effective than what goes into the settlement.

[290] **Hefin David:** You're conflating two issues there—the outcomes and the administration. There are two issues there, aren't there, that you've just identified?

[291] **Dr Llewelyn:** Yes.

[292] **Hefin David:** One of the—

[293] **Lynne Neagle:** Shall I bring Nick in first?

[294] **Hefin David:** Yes, of course.

[295] **Mr Batchelar:** Perhaps I could make two comments on your question. One is that in relation to the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller element of the grant—well, this is a separate grant—I think there's a case for saying that it's a relatively small number of pupils. They're an important subset of minority ethnic pupils generally. In monetary terms, it's a small amount of money. I don't think it's necessarily sensible to earmark a certain amount of money in that way. In terms of the overall position since, if you like, the de-ring-fencing of the minority ethnic grant, one of the issues clearly has been, on what basis, since the de-ring-fencing, the money is distributed to authorities. The central south consortium basically took the moment in time at which the grants were de-ring-fenced and have worked on that, with that as the funding basis minus whatever percentage reduction since then. The problem with that is that the population dynamic in this area is changing rapidly. So, as time goes on, there's less and less of a relationship between the amount of the grant—that's presupposing we can maintain the agreement across the local authorities to distribute it in the way it was distributed in 2013–14, I think it was—and the number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds in respective local authorities. So, those are the two points I think I could usefully add to that.

[296] **Hefin David:** Well, in the evidence from the WLGA, it was quite generic. It didn't massively focus on the issue of the inquiry, I didn't think. It was just about grants, really. But there was one bit that said, in paragraph 6:

[297] 'For this reason, the WLGA, by exception, supports the use of specific

grants or the ring fencing of revenue funding for specified purposes on the understanding that funding will eventually return to the RSG.'

[298] So, what does that mean?

[299] **Dr Llewelyn** What it means is that where the Government has got a particular policy initiative that it's trying to deliver, the use of a specific grant is seen as being an appropriate mechanism of ensuring the delivery of that initiative. Then, once it's clear that the initiative is delivered and is embedded, the funding can then go into the settlement rather than being a specific grant. Because of the point that I mentioned, the 5 per cent that is lost in administration is then gained. So, you gain the 5 per cent of the value of the grant.

[300] **Hefin David**: Okay. So, notwithstanding the fact that, then, you get local authorities doing different things—and in some of the evidence we have received, local authorities are doing different things all over the place—that challenge that you've identified, Nick, would then justify an approach taken with this kind of situation.

[301] **Mr Batchelar**: Well, clearly—and I was listening to your earlier discussion, 20 minutes ago—population demographics are significantly different in different parts of Wales. One of the jobs of local authorities is to respond to local issues. If you take the central south consortium as a case in point, where I'm the lead director for this year, there are big differences, and obviously the major proportion of the MEA grant for the central south consortium area comes to Cardiff. I think the wider point I'd want to make in relation to that grant and the questions about ring-fencing and hypothecation et cetera, are that, in the context we're operating in now in Cardiff, it's increasingly inappropriate to see a subset of pupils as needing special funding, special treatment, and teachers needing special skills. What I keep saying to headteacher colleagues, governors and anyone who'll listen in Cardiff is that we're living in a diverse city, which I think is a great feature of Cardiff and the wider region, then anyone who's teaching in a school or leading a school needs to understand how to work with diversity and is positive about diversity. So, the approach that we're taking is to invest more of the money in schools—you heard my colleague, Gill James, saying something very similar—so that schools are held to account, rather than relying on some kind of central provision that somehow compensates for something they can't do themselves. I think that's fundamentally the wrong approach to take in a climate where you have diversity and you're positive

about that.

[302] **Hefin David:** So, taking your word for it that Cardiff is doing great, what about the rest of the area of South Wales Central?

[303] **Mr Batchelar:** Well, the issues are different in different areas. We're in discussion, for instance, with the Vale about how we can work with them in a bilateral relationship to work with them.

[304] **Hefin David:** Do you cover Cynon Valley and Rhondda?

[305] **Mr Batchelar:** Yes, and the issues are very different in many senses, but, of course, young people will grow up to live in a diverse society, even if the home environment when they're actually at school doesn't have the kind of diversity that you see in some parts of Wales. So, I think all educators and all practitioners being comfortable with diversity, being positive about diversity, as a generation of leaders in schools who reflect the diversity of the population in Wales much more accurately than it does at the moment—.

[306] **Hefin David:** That's a very broad brush view though, isn't it? It doesn't really have the specifics.

[307] **Mr Batchelar:** Well, I think what I'm saying is that there is a danger in looking at the notion that we deal with the issues about promoting the achievement of one subset of pupils separate from looking at how we build a strong education system more broadly. So, broadly speaking, I think hypothecation of a grant, central retention via a specialist service is not the right way to address what I think is a more complex situation.

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

[309] **Lynne Neagle:** Julie.

[310] **Julie Morgan:** I accept it is a complex situation, and I think you're absolutely right to say that we want everyone in the education system at ease with working with diversity and being open and inclusive in the sort of areas that you operate in. But, wouldn't you accept that there would be certain groups who would need an additional input in order to ensure their trust in the education system, which may not be able to be done in the broad-brush way as you've responded to my colleague?

[311] **Mr Batchelar:** Yes. I think that's an interesting phrase—trust in the education system—because some of what's needed is building the relationship with the whole family, as well as working with the specifics of the children themselves. So, yes there is a case and, clearly, the right configuration of central and devolved functions between the local authorities, or indeed the consortium, if there is a consortium function in this area, and schools is quite a delicate balance. I know, Julie, you're aware that we've been rebalancing that in Cardiff and reduced the central team, and moved quite a number of people who used to work centrally into school settings where they've become embedded in part of a wider school team. I think broadly speaking that's the right approach, as long as that's balanced by some capacity that can be more peripatetic and therefore needs to be managed centrally.

11:45

[312] **Julie Morgan:** I think what I'm saying is that I'm echoing the evidence we were given earlier on about what Gypsy and Traveller young people felt about the education system, where they didn't feel that there was an understanding of their culture and they wanted more awareness training and they wanted—I think other evidence was given that they wanted people to come to the site to establish that trust that I'm talking about. I suppose I think the comments you were making weren't taking into account those additional things that are needed, as well as the acceptance of diversity that we hope all our staff would have.

[313] **Mr Batchelar:** I'd be pleased to clarify that. I think, particularly in relation to Gypsy/Roma/Travellers, because they are relatively small numbers, yes, there is a need for people who can gain and win and sustain the confidence of Traveller communities. So, some of our headteachers have those relationships through working, over time, very effectively, which is partly why we've retained a greater proportion of the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller grant centrally—I know that St John Lloyd primary school would like to have more devolved to them and that's a discussion we're having with them at the moment.

[314] **Julie Morgan:** And the last point really, you say, 'Well, it's a very small amount of money, so I don't really see it's necessary to ring-fence that'. Perhaps because it is a small amount of money it may be necessary to ring-fence it, because otherwise it's going to get lost.

[315] **Mr Batchelar:** It goes back to partly the question of trust but also crucially the question of accountability through control and prescription or accountability for outcomes. I am absolutely clear that there should be a real focus on accountability for outcomes and, obviously, some groups of pupils' outcomes, including some Gypsy/Roma/Traveller children, are very, very poor at the moment.

[316] **Julie Morgan:** I think they're the worst achieving group.

[317] **Mr Batchelar:** Yes.

[318] **Dr Llewelyn:** Chair, can I come in?

[319] **Lynne Neagle:** Yes.

[320] **Dr Llewelyn:** I agree with the points you make. The difficulty at the moment is that, in a sense, the grant is ring-fenced at the moment because it's part of the EIG, and the EIG does have specific terms and conditions, and, because it's a small element within a bigger grant, there isn't the flexibility there. So, the EIG, since it was created, has been cut in successive years and it's been cut by more than the revenue support grant in each one of those years. So, for example, had the grant gone into the settlement, then the funding wouldn't have been cut as much as it has by being in a specific grant.

[321] The other problem is, because the EIG has very prescriptive terms and conditions—and there's an asymmetry in terms of the grant because the big part of the money covers the foundation phase and the foundation phase has very prescriptive ratios—when the grant has been cut, inevitably, then, I think the burden of the cut has been felt by the smaller elements within the grant, which is where I come back to the idea of developing an outcomes framework. When the EIG was created, the hope was that we would have an outcomes framework that would have meant that the terms and conditions of the grant would have been a bit more flexible than they were. There has been progress, but there are still very prescriptive terms and conditions around it.

[322] So, in a sense, the situation is almost a hybrid. The MEAG and Gypsy/Traveller funding is still part of a ring-fenced grant and, as a consequence—. I've looked at some of the evidence that's been presented to the committee. I think there's a misunderstanding about how some of the funding works, but I can understand the frustration in terms of the

comments that have been made. In many cases, there's a consensus around the analysis, but people come to different solutions.

[323] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. I've got Darren then Llyr.

[324] **Darren Millar:** I have to say I'm very disappointed with your evidence. I was expecting, as the WLGA, that there would be a document here that gave us a good overview of what was going on around the whole of Wales in each local authority area and regional consortia, to give us a snapshot of what was being delivered in terms of the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller and minority ethnic children's educational support. Instead, we've had a very thin document that is simply making a case for this grant to be abolished and rolled into your revenue support grant. Can you tell us what we asked for as a committee, which was an overview? What's going on in different parts of Wales?

[325] **Dr Llewelyn:** Other organisations are better placed—it's not one of the things we do. We don't provide that kind of—

[326] **Darren Millar:** So, do you know what's going on across Wales, then?

[327] **Dr Llewelyn:** Well, we—

[328] **Darren Millar:** These are your members, aren't they? Presumably, you should know.

[329] **Dr Llewelyn:** We do know what's going across Wales, but we rely, as everybody does as well, on reports provided by Estyn. In terms of the submission we've presented to you, it is the view of the 22 authorities—the chief execs, the education directors and the finance directors. So, it reflects their views.

[330] **Darren Millar:** But this isn't an inquiry into grants management, with respect, okay. What we want to know is: what is being delivered on the ground? How are you helping to deliver top-quality performance and support for these particular groups of children that we are having an inquiry about?

[331] **Dr Llewelyn:** Our argument would be that the funding, and the way the services are funded, is a central part of how effectively the services are delivered, and that there is the possibility of using the funding more effectively in the current circumstances.

[332] **Darren Millar:** So, what would be different about the support? Because (1) you haven't given us a picture of the support, as I said, but what would be different about that support if this was rolled into the RSG?

[333] **Dr Llewelyn:** There would be more capacity in the system. Because the funding could be used in a more effective way, it would enable local authorities to respond more flexibly to the immediate circumstances that they face. I think, through your evidence and the earlier comments, it's emerged that the pattern of provision varies considerably across Wales, and the reason for that is because the circumstances vary. Our view on this is that it's the role of the Welsh Government and central Governments to set strategic direction and it's the role of authorities to interpret that strategic direction according to the local circumstances they face.

[334] **Darren Millar:** I appreciate that. I don't want a row with you about grants. I'm all for unhyothecation, okay. I'm not a fan of hypothecation unless it's absolutely necessary. What I'm trying to establish is: does the WLGA have an overview of what these services are like across Wales?

[335] **Dr Llewelyn:** So, in terms of are you asking us, 'Do we monitor these services across the 22 authorities?', then we don't.

[336] **Darren Millar:** Okay, thank you. You've got a role, obviously, which is across the consortia as well as within an individual local authority, and obviously you're helping to give evidence here on behalf of the WLGA, but, just in terms of your role within the consortia, we heard earlier on about some of the work that's being going on in Cardiff, and obviously you've given us a little bit more information as well. What's going on in Bridgend and some of these other local authorities that are also part of your consortium?

[337] **Mr Batchelar:** I think it would be fair to say that the consortium in this area, at the moment, doesn't have a particularly strong role in relation to the scrutiny of the two groups of pupils—well, there are many groups, but the two main groups are minority ethnic pupils generally and Gypsy/Roma/Travellers. Obviously, the bulk of the minority ethnic achievement grant that comes to the central south consortium ends up in Cardiff. So, the role of the consortium is largely about passporting money on to the local authorities.

[338] **Darren Millar:** That's obviously—I mean, it's different to the approach

in some other areas; I appreciate that. But do you think that the consortia ought to take a more proactive approach, and that there needs to be more consistency in the way that consortia approach these two particular groups of young people, particularly given that the consortia are supposed to be there to drive improvement, drive consistency, increase capacity, make sure that learning takes place from one local authority to the next? If you're simply passporting money on, you may as well not have a role at all and have the Welsh Government give the money direct, hadn't you?

[339] **Mr Batchelar:** I think there are some things that the consortia are well placed to do, and there are some things they are not well placed to do. I'm not of the view that anything to do with educational improvement is best delivered through consortia. In relation to the territory that we're talking about today, so, how well are our minority ethnic pupils progressing, and what more can we do to improve outcomes for Gypsy/Roma/Travellers and minority ethnic pupils, I think the key thing that consortia need to do, and, yes, do better than they are at the moment, is to make sure that the challenge advisers are extremely well briefed and professionally well-versed in what good practice looks like in working in a context of diversity, whether that's where the majority of your pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, or whether it's a case of a minority in a particular school. As a director, that's the key thing I'm looking for from the consortium: extremely skilled challenge and support that's well informed by what good practice looks like. That's variable at the moment, and I think that's the key thing to focus on.

[340] In terms of the pedagogic leadership, leading on teaching, working with English as an additional language learners, working with newly arrived communities—I don't think the consortia are the best people to do that. I think it's better if local authorities do that, partly because of the connection between the educational aspects of that work and the broader work of a local authority with communities in terms of housing, population movements—

[341] **Darren Millar:** So, you don't think that there's an opportunity here for those local authorities that are more familiar with the groups of people—the groups of young people that we're talking about here, ethnic minority groups and Gypsy/Roma/Traveller groups—in helping and supporting those local authorities, which might be neighbouring them, that are less familiar with those groups and how to support them. Because that's what the consortia have the opportunity to do, isn't it?

[342] **Mr Batchelar:** Yes.

[343] **Darren Millar:** And, in fact, it seems to be doing, from the evidence we've just heard, very well over in Gwent, for example.

[344] **Mr Batchelar:** I'm not going to comment on the arrangements there. As I think you're well aware, the consortium in this region is investing heavily in identifying schools that have good practice, and then resourcing them and providing them with a mandate to then work with other schools. So, that is happening in this area. So, for example, central south consortium is funding Fitzalan High School to do work that engages others in developing stronger leadership capability for leaders working in a context of diversity. And one strand of that work is to identify, recruit, retrain and develop more BME school leaders. So, yes, that model is working in this area, and there's potential for it to be developed further.

[345] **Darren Millar:** Yet what you've said is that you're simply passporting cash as a consortium to individual local authorities. So, how can you say that you have a model that is working in the same way as the Gwent model?

[346] **Mr Batchelar:** Well, in that respect, let me qualify my use of the word 'passporting'. The consortium is commissioning strong practitioners to lead on aspects of provision that can be accessed by other schools in the consortium.

[347] **Darren Millar:** Okay.

[348] **Lynne Neagle:** The Cabinet Secretary told us that the consortia were receiving the money and were going to monitor and manage how that money was delivered. Is that happening across Wales, Chris?

[349] **Dr Llewelyn:** They do have some oversight of how the funding is spent, but it's outside—strictly outside—the role of the consortia. The national model sets out the role of the consortia in relation to school improvement, and, in this instance, the national model doesn't cover the, doesn't deal with the, ethnic minority element in the EIG. And, in many cases, the individual authorities within the consortia are better placed to deal with those issues than the individual consortia. The consortia provide guidance in terms of the terms and conditions of the spending, but, because the circumstances vary so much between authorities, in many cases, those authorities are better placed. Where there are shared services—I know you've had evidence from

existing shared services—in many instances, they pre-date the current education consortia and are what, within local government, are referred to as ‘legacy arrangements’, which exist from the previous local authority structure.

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

[351] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, just to be clear, in passporting—and I know we shouldn’t use that word, maybe, but, in passing the money on, then—do the consortia actually provide any guidance to local authorities about how they should use the EIG specifically in relation to the groups that we’re looking at here, Gypsy/Roma/Traveller and minority ethnic children?

12:00

[352] **Mr Batchelar:** I’m afraid I can only comment from the point of view of the central south consortium. Broadly, the answer is ‘no’.

[353] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Should they?

[354] **Mr Batchelar:** I don’t think they’re well placed to do it. I think local authorities are better placed to do that. And, certainly, the consortia, through the channels and networks, can be a vehicle for brokering the dissemination of that understanding of what good practice looks like. But, behind the conversation, I think there are some issues around who the appropriate accountable body is. Local authorities are the accountable body for the progress young people make or don’t make. We will end up with some confusions if the consortia are in a position where they’re acting as the accountable authority for the progress of young people in the authority; actually, the authorities are the accountable body.

[355] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, on what basis do you report back to the consortia for the funding that’s been passed on to you?

[356] **Mr Batchelar:** In relation to EIG as a whole, there is a process of signing off an agreement in relation to the terms of the grant. The reality is, and I think it’s appropriate, there is not, if you like, a micromanaged process of accounting for every element of the grant. I think that’s entirely right. I don’t think that would be the right way to configure the relationship between consortia and local authorities. Fundamentally, at the end of the day, local authorities, as with schools, should be held to account for the outcomes that

they secure with the global amount of resource they have available.

[357] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, am I right in believing that that doesn't happen at all at the moment, then? Because, surely, if you're saying that the outcomes that you need to report are the outcomes you achieve in relation to the money that you receive, whether we have a national framework or not, are you suggesting that you don't do that at the moment?

[358] **Mr Batchelar:** I'm not accountable to the consortium in that respect.

[359] **Lynne Neagle:** Chris.

[360] **Dr Llewelyn:** Yes, can I come in? The consortia are shared services owned by the constituent authorities. They delegate functions to the shared service, and the consortia provide those services for them. So, the relationship isn't one of the consortia holding the authorities to account, because the consortia are shared services owned by constituent authorities with functions delegated to them. In relation to the EIG, what happens at the moment is that, in each of the consortia, as far as I understand, they provide guidance that reflects the terms and conditions of the EIG as a specific grant, and then there is some information contained in there in relation to the assumptions about the different elements within the EIG. But it's not a relationship of holding to account, which is why, then, the 22 authorities would prefer to see the funding go directly into the RSG, rather than having a dogleg, if you like, where the funding goes from the Welsh Government to the consortia and then to the authority.

[361] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, how do you monitor any outcomes for Gypsy/Traveller groups in relation to the funding that's provided through the EIG? We hear from GEMS in Gwent that they look at annual results particularly for this cohort. In Cardiff, for example, do you do that kind of exercise as well?

[362] **Mr Batchelar:** Yes, in considerable detail; happy to talk to you about that. I'll answer in two respects: how do we do that in Cardiff and how do we do that collectively across the shared service of the central south consortium. So, in Cardiff—I've got the draft report here—I will take a report to our cabinet and our scrutiny in January that looks in detail at the performance of the pupils in Cardiff schools. That's got some quite detailed analysis of the performance of minority ethnic pupils that shows that, over the last three years, we've made significant progress in accelerating the progress made by

minority ethnic pupils overall, and that, by the end of key stage 4, aged 16, on the level 2-plus measure, the gap between minority ethnic pupils and white UK pupils in Cardiff is 0.7 per cent on the level 2-plus indicator, whereas, understandably, at the end of foundation phase, it's -3.9 per cent. So, we're seeing a closing pattern. We could obviously speculate about the reasons for that. The report goes into some detail about the breakdown of the particular group, which highlights the very low attainment of Gypsy/Roma/Traveller pupils.

[363] In relation to the consortium as a whole, clearly the performance of pupils collectively and by sub-group is something that the directors in our regular meetings look at in some considerable detail. The managing director of the consortium attends our scrutiny meetings on a regular basis. In fact, she was reporting to scrutiny in Cardiff earlier this week, on Tuesday. So, there is a clear process of scrutiny of outcomes and that does include looking at the progress of sub-groups, including by ethnicity as well as by gender and other respects.

[364] One interesting feature that's clearly coming through is that a sub-group of pupils who are not making the progress that they need to make is some white UK pupils, notably free school meal boys. There is a clear emerging trend of that group of pupils in some parts—certainly in Cardiff I know it well—making notably less progress, and many minority ethnic pupils making extremely good progress. So, for instance, in Fitzalan, if I can comment on that school again, we've seen almost no difference at all between the attainment of free school meal and non-free school meal pupils at age 16 this year, whereas the impact of poverty is particularly acute with some white UK pupil groups.

[365] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Okay. Aan I just ask about the national outcomes framework, then, because clearly you, I presume, would be very much in favour of having that?

[366] **Mr Batchelar:** Yes.

[367] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Now, promises have been made in the past, and references have been made in the evidence we've received, of Government committing to this. Are you aware that any work is ongoing still or is it something that's fallen off the radar, do you think?

[368] **Dr Llewelyn:** Can I come in? When the EIG was set up, it was on the

understanding that there would be an outcomes framework, but the truth is—although, in terms of our discussions with Welsh Government, they have been very positive, and I think that the DfES, the department dealing with it, has been very receptive—it has proved to be a difficult discussion, and over the two years, I think the truth is that we haven't made significant progress.

[369] I think the attempt at developing an outcomes framework is the right one, especially at a time when public spending is being squeezed in order to get as much value from the investment as possible. I think there needs to be a greater focus on outcomes and less on process and structure. But from our point of view, the debate is ongoing and I think that this committee inquiry will inform that debate going forward, because I think, having looked at the evidence, that the inquiry is very worth while. I think the evidence that's been provided is very interesting and I think it's thrown up issues in relation to how these range of services are funded, but also in terms of the policy direction as well. So, our discussions will be informed by the outcome of this inquiry. But it is an ongoing discussion.

[370] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Could you just give us an idea of some of the issues, then, because, clearly, it's taking longer than anyone would wish?

[371] **Dr Llewelyn:** On the—?

[372] **Llyr Gruffydd:** On the outcomes framework. Where are the sticking points?

[373] **Dr Llewelyn:** Simply the election, the change of Government, and the fact that we've got a new Cabinet Secretary—I think those are part of the reasons as well, because the policy direction is changing and is being developed. I think that that's been the biggest reason for the delay.

[374] **Lynne Neagle:** Oscar.

[375] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair. I think part of my question has been answered, but the second is: will minority ethnic children and Gypsy, Roma and Travellers as a group receive less grant under this new scheme? And will there be safeguards in place to ensure that they receive an appropriate amount of support annually from that?

[376] **Mr Batchelar:** Chris Llewelyn has already commented on the relative reduction in grant. Do you want to reiterate that point?

[377] **Dr Llewelyn:** Yes. In terms of the funding, then, it clearly has been cut. In the first two years leading to the creation of the EIG, I think there was a cut of around 10 per cent. There was subsequently a cut of 6 per cent. The cuts in the EIG have been significantly higher than the cuts in the RSG, which is one of the reasons I think we would have preferred to see the funding going into the RSG.

[378] I think, as well, there were unexpected consequences of merging one or two very large grants with a few small grants. I think that the foundation phase has had a disproportionate impact on the EIG because the terms and conditions around the foundation phase grant, and specifically the pupil-staff ratios, have meant that the cut in the funding inevitably fell on the other elements of the EIG. But authorities are working as effectively as they can to mitigate those cuts. One of the hopes that we had was that the burden of bureaucracy and administration around the grants would yield sufficient benefits. I mentioned earlier the 5 per cent figure. There's a widely accepted assumption that the value—something like 5 per cent—of specific grants is taken up by bureaucracy. At the outset, I think the hope of everybody in developing the EIG was that there would be gains. I think it's fair to say—and I think this is borne out by the evidence you've received as well—that it's not clear that those gains were there, but I think that that's not through the lack of effort on anybody's part.

[379] **Mohammad Asghar:** Is there any argument to be made for grants to be simplified into two main grant streams as opposed to one?

[380] **Dr Llewelyn:** Of the—[*Inaudible.*]—or more generally? I think the WLGA and local government generally have always argued for the streamlining of grants, and, as I've mentioned a few times, I think a greater focus on outcomes rather than on processes and structure. So, we would be very keen to engage in any discussion about reducing the number of grants and streamlining the processes around those grants as well.

[381] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Michelle.

[382] **Michelle Brown:** What sort of strategic guidance are you receiving from the Welsh Government on the objectives of these grants?

[383] **Mr Batchelar:** In relation to these two grants that you're looking at, essentially the same kind of specification about the purpose of the grants

that existed prior to them being rolled into the education improvement grant. Beyond that, not a great deal, and I'm not asking for more.

[384] **Michelle Brown:** Right. So, I take it, from that, you don't think you need more guidance from the Welsh Government, then. Can you tell me why?

[385] **Mr Batchelar:** Well, I think it's the same principle that we're just discussing in relation to schools. I think what's important at the moment is to identify where practice is strong, and then make sure that that practice is visible and is extended to other areas. I don't think that prescriptive guidance is the right way to improve outcomes for this group. I think we keep coming back to the importance of an outcomes framework. I think a focus on outcomes, simplification of grants, simplification of prescription about process and sharper focus on outcomes is the right balance in relation to proper use of large amounts of public money.

[386] **Michelle Brown:** Who sets the desired outcomes?

[387] **Mr Batchelar:** Well, that's part of the discussion that the previous question was exploring in relation to the move towards an outcomes framework that—

[388] **Michelle Brown:** Well, who actually sets those outcomes? Somebody somewhere should be actually saying, 'This is what we want to achieve using this grant and this is what we want to achieve from the education system.' Where's that guidance coming from, and where's that direction coming from?

12:15

[389] **Dr Llewelyn:** Can I come in? I think it is the role of central Government and of the Cabinet Secretary to set the strategic direction, but in discussion with other partners and taking account of local circumstances. In this instance, what we would hope is that there would be a discussion between the Welsh Government and authorities and other partners in terms of what the desired outcomes might be. Ultimately, it would be the decision of the Cabinet Secretary and the Government, but through consultation with the various partners—the people who have contributed to your inquiry today, and the ongoing inquiry. I think that the evidence that has fed into your inquiry has identified some groups that are clearly underperforming within the current arrangements, and I would expect any outcomes framework to look at that. We've mentioned the Gypsy/Roma community; there are other

communities as well that I know you've had evidence from—people who work from the Wales Centre for Equity in Education, from Estyn and others—so I think there is a consensus around where there is underperformance, and I'd expect the discussions around an outcome framework to take that into account as well.

[390] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. John, the last question.

[391] **John Griffiths:** I just want to return briefly to this issue of centralisation of service and resource compared to the original local authorities. We heard earlier that unaccompanied asylum-seeker children will bring particular issues in terms of education and, no doubt, other areas of service delivery. Local authorities that haven't had much of a history of diversity within their populations might find it particularly challenging. Do you recognise those issues, and is anything happening to address them at the moment?

[392] **Mr Batchelar:** Yes, dealing with unaccompanied asylum seekers is a big challenge, I must say. Obviously, we've got the initial accommodation hostel in Newport Road in Cardiff, so there's quite a lot of experience in Cardiff of working with such children. That requires very close collaboration between education and children's services and the Home Office and our housing functions. There is some exchange of practice and experience, if you like, between Cardiff and other authorities currently. I do think that poses a big challenge moving forward, particularly with the Syrian refugee settlement scheme. Authorities that perhaps haven't got much experience of working with such young people will find that they're facing some new challenges, so it's very important that the right kind of networks are established to support them in meeting those challenges effectively.

[393] **Lynne Neagle:** Chris—maybe on the rest of Wales, because obviously Cardiff has got different issues.

[394] **Dr Llewelyn:** I think it's a valid point, which is again why I think this inquiry is particularly timely and very useful. It's a very dynamic situation. Populations are changing in unpredictable and unexpected ways. Unfortunately, we're on the back of cuts in funding at the same time as demand for services is increasing as well. We know there is expertise within the system, and we need to try and share that more effectively. There's some consensus around the pedagogy, as it were, in this area, but there are significant variations in the way services are delivered because the

circumstances are different. But I think your point about trying to utilise the good practice that we know exists and develop that as effectively as possible is a challenge, and it's something that we need to focus on going forward.

[395] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you very much. Well, we've run out of time, so can I thank you both for attending this morning? We appreciate you coming. As you know, you'll be sent a transcript of the evidence to check for accuracy in due course. Thank you very much for your time.

[396] **Dr Llewelyn:** Thank you. Diolch.

12:19

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[397] **Lynne Neagle:** Item 5, then, is papers to note. We've got paper to note 7, which is a letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children in response to our letter on the draft budget. Paper to note 8 is the letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Education in response to our budget letter. Paper to note 9 is a letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport and the Minister for Social Services to the Chair of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, which has been sent to us for information. Are Members happy to note those? Okay.

12:20

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o weddill y Cyfarfod

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

Cynnig:

Motion:

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

accordance with Standing Order 17.42(ix).

Cynigiwyd y cynnig.

Motion moved.

[398] **Lynne Neagle:** Item 6, then, is the motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public for the remainder of the meeting. Are Members content? Okay, thank you very much.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 12:20.

The public part of the meeting ended at 12:20.