



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru The National Assembly for Wales

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

**Dydd Iau, 4 Mehefin 2015
Thursday, 4 June 2015**

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

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

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

Angela Burns	Ceidwadwyr Cymru Welsh Conservatives
Keith Davies	Llafur Labour
Mike Hedges	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Lynne Neagle) Labour (substitute for Lynne Neagle)
Janet Howarth	Ceidwadwyr Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Suzy Davies) Welsh Conservatives (substitute for Suzy Davies)
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Chair of the Committee)
David Rees	Llafur Labour
Simon Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Kate Cassidy	Cyfarwyddwr, Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi, Llywodraeth Cymru Director, Communities and Tackling Poverty, Welsh Government
Lesley Griffiths	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (Y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi) Assembly Member, Labour (Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty)
Martin Swain	Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr—yr Is-adran Plant, Pobl Ifanc a Theuluoedd, Llywodraeth Cymru Deputy Director—Children, Young People and Families Division, Welsh Government

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

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Marc Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk
Sian Thomas	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.34 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.34 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the Children, Young People and Education Committee. Can I say welcome back, Angela? It's lovely to have you back, and we're glad that you're with us again. We've got a number of apologies today, and a number of substitutions. We've had apologies from John Griffiths, Lynne Neagle, Aled Roberts and Suzy Davies. Mike Hedges is subbing for Lynne Neagle, so it's nice to see Mike again. Janet

Howarth is substituting for Suzy, so welcome Janet. I hope you find this committee a nice one to be on. Aled Roberts—we don't have anybody replacing Aled. Neither do we have anybody replacing John Griffiths, and Bethan Jenkins is trying to be in two places at once because of the heritage Bill, and will join us at some point. So, we're a very small committee, but, nonetheless, we're up to the task, Minister. There we go.

[2] Just the usual housekeeping rules: if you've got your mobile phones, or if you're using laptops, can you just make sure that the 'ping' is off? I always think it's my dinner's ready. So, if you could make sure that it's on 'silent'. We're not expecting the fire alarm to operate. If the fire alarm operates, we'll take our instructions from the ushers. Just for you to know, if we can get out through the building, this side, to my left, then we'd do so, and the assembly point is the Pierhead building. We operate bilingually, as you know, so it's channel 1 for translation from Welsh to English, and channel 0 is the floor language for amplification, should you need it. And I think that's about it, so I think we'll start.

09:36

Craffu ar Waith y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi Scrutiny of the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty

[3] **Ann Jones:** Minister, thank you very much for your paper. It's just your general appearance before our committee. So, could I ask you to introduce yourself and your officials for the record, and then, if you're happy, we'll go straight to some questions?

[4] **Lesley Griffiths:** That's fine. Thank you, Chair. Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty. On my right is Martin Swain, deputy director for—

[5] **Mr Swain:** Children, young people and families.

[6] **Lesley Griffiths:** And Kate Cassidy, who's director.

[7] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Thanks very much. We've got five areas that we want to try and put some questions around. The first one—. Well, the areas are child poverty family support, children's rights, play, national participation structures, and then some of your key priorities. So, those are the five themes that we're going to try and cover in the allocated time that we've got.

[8] So, if we can turn to the first one, which is child poverty family support, I've got a number of Members on this one—Keith, David and Mike, do you want to start the questioning on those? Thanks.

[9] **Keith Davies:** Thank you. Good morning.

[10] **Lesley Griffiths:** Good morning.

[11] **Keith Davies:** My question really is: there was the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, and as part of the requirement there, local authorities should have child poverty strategies. So, what measures have you undertaken to make sure that these actually exist, and that the local authorities operate them?

[12] **Lesley Griffiths:** Okay. Thank you, Keith. You're absolutely right: the Measure did place a duty on local authorities, and other public bodies, to develop objectives for tackling child poverty. Local authorities are able to discharge that duty through the single integrated plans. We've now, obviously, got the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015,

and that has a duty to set objectives that contribute to the eradication of child poverty, and that's discharged by local authorities through their local wellbeing plans. Each public service body will obviously produce such a plan. My officials are in the process of reviewing the single integrated plans and the associated annual reports, with a view to identifying how they're focusing on this agenda. They're also working to ensure that the draft guidance for public service boards includes a specific focus on child poverty, and the findings from the review of the single integrated plans will obviously inform that guidance.

[13] Also, the draft guidance on the development of local wellbeing plans will highlight the duties under the Measure, and outline what's expected of local authorities and other public bodies in relation to that. I will be going out to consultation on the draft guidance later this year.

[14] **Keith Davies:** Thank you. One of the issues, I think, from the evidence that we've received, is on school breakfast clubs. Apparently, some schools are now, because of the pressure on their staffing and on their budgets, moving away from school breakfast clubs. So, what should we be doing about that?

[15] **Lesley Griffiths:** Obviously, Welsh Government gives funding to local authorities to provide school breakfast clubs. There's a statutory time of 30 minutes, and that breakfast club—. The policy intention behind that was to provide children with free, healthy breakfasts. I think the childcare element of it was a bit of a positive spin-off, if you like. It's really important that schools recognise that that's what we require of them. It allows some parents, obviously, to drop their children off at school much earlier than they would otherwise have been able to. Again, we have statutory guidance for local authorities in relation to the free school breakfasts. As I said, it's 30 minutes. The principal aim is to provide a free, healthy breakfast. We do encourage—. If they want to, local authorities or schools can provide childcare outside of that 30 minutes, and it's obviously up to them if they wish to do so.

[16] **Keith Davies:** I think that's important—the third point you made about allowing people to go to a job. If the children are in school fairly early, then parents can actually proceed to take on a job.

[17] **Lesley Griffiths:** Absolutely, and, as I said, it's a positive plus, if you like, because the policy intention was to make sure children have the best start to the day with a healthy, free school breakfast. But, clearly, it does enable working parents, if they wish, to drop their child off earlier than they would be able to.

[18] **Keith Davies:** Thank you.

[19] **Ann Jones:** Okay. David.

[20] **David Rees:** Thank you, Chair. Can I just take that matter a little bit further? In my own ward, effectively, there's a headmaster apparently who's claiming that he won't be offering school breakfast clubs in the future, and this is going to be a school that's going to take in others that are closing, which means it becomes more important for people who are travelling. What power does the Government actually have to ensure that local authorities are meeting their obligation of providing these breakfast clubs, so that there's no option for anyone to say, 'I'm not doing it'?

[21] **Lesley Griffiths:** Well, not all schools do provide them and not all local authorities do provide them, either. The money isn't ring-fenced; if I remember rightly, it's in the revenue support grant. I'm sure it was Newport City Council that didn't provide any free school breakfasts. I'll ask Martin to—.

[22] **Mr Swain:** It is at the discretion of local authorities and schools. As you said, some of the headteachers decide to provide the breakfast clubs, and some don't. The funding is there. I think the case of Newport's interesting, because they are starting to expand free breakfasts now, but it's difficult when things are at the discretion of governing bodies.

[23] **Ann Jones:** Mike, on that point.

[24] **Mike Hedges:** Just on a technical point, surely the decision to provide or not provide free school breakfasts is the decision of the school governing body and not the headteacher.

[25] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, presumably. It must be something that I would have thought would be part of a—

[26] **Ann Jones:** I think the only part of this—and I know the Minister has a view on free school breakfasts—in your portfolio is about how free school breakfasts will impact on the poverty area and whether we're helping with in-work family poverty.

[27] **Lesley Griffiths:** And also the childcare.

[28] **Ann Jones:** And the childcare element. So, the sort of nitty-gritty of whether the local authorities should or shouldn't is not down to the Minister's—

[29] **David Rees:** No, but in my area, the example was because the schools that are closing actually do have areas of deprivation as well. That was an important area there.

[30] Can I move on to Flying Start, Minister? Previously, we've obviously heard from the previous Deputy Minister regarding the statistics on Flying Start, and he indicated that he would actually initiate the collection of data. The evidence we've received indicates that there's no statistically significant difference between Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas in terms of intended outcomes for children. Now, I'd challenge that, because anecdotally, I've heard from teachers, for example, who have said they can recognise the benefits of development in children who have been through the Flying Start programme, compared with those who haven't. But, how are we going to actually ensure that the evidence is available to demonstrate those outcomes?

[31] **Lesley Griffiths:** As with any early intervention programme, it takes years and years to build up that robust evidence that I think academics, for instance, would be happy with. You're quite right on anecdotal evidence, and since I've been in portfolio, I've visited many Flying Start settings where I am told constantly about the progress children have made—particularly, I would say, in relation to speech and language development. I recently launched some new guidance around speech and language, and that, I think, is the one area that is constantly given to me as an example about how the gap is being reduced with these children. It's something that I've discussed with officials, because, again, I've been asked many times about the evaluation and about providing those data, and I've looked at something from America that Martin showed me, and it takes decades, literally decades, in these very early intervention programmes to have those robust data. What our evaluation research suggests is that that gap has been closed between those who are living in disadvantaged areas and those who are eligible for Flying Start. So, it is very difficult to get those data for us to evaluate, and I absolutely accept that.

09:45

[32] I think there are other data sets that perhaps we can use later on. So, for instance, the foundation phase we can probably link in with the data to have a look at that also. I remember when I went to Pembrokeshire to a Flying Start setting, very early on—probably October time

last year—and I was told by a local councillor that the first cohort of Flying Start children had now gone to high school. And again, it was very clear the advantage that they'd had from being in a Flying Start area.

[33] We've also done interviews with high-need parents, and again we found evidence of the anticipated outcomes of those programmes. Again, social and emotional development along with speech and language are the ones that have been raised with me as being able to describe and demonstrate the progress. We've also had research that concluded that experience in the Flying Start programme has been life changing for some high-need families. Again, I think that really would support our wider evaluation conclusions that Flying Start does make a really positive difference to families. You could undertake research—I'm not saying you couldn't—but it would be incredibly expensive and I would rather put that funding into front-line services.

[34] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Mike, on this point.

[35] **Mike Hedges:** Does the Minister agree with me that the fact there's no statistically significant difference between Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas is a definition of success, because you're dealing with the poorest 25 per cent and you've brought them up to the average level? [*Interruption.*] Pardon?

[36] **Simon Thomas:** The evaluation doesn't say that, sorry. The evaluation is measured to take that into account, and I think the Minister would agree.

[37] **Mike Hedges:** Okay. My understanding, which is slightly different to Simon Thomas's, is that the evaluation shows that they are actually coming up to an average level. They're still at the bottom. The bottom 25 per cent are still the bottom 25 per cent, because Simon Thomas is saying that they have made no progress—they're still the bottom 25 per cent—which I don't think is what it's saying, but the Minister might have concern that it isn't saying the bottom 25 is the bottom 25 per cent, and it's also saying that they are moving them towards where an average child of that age should be. If we're dealing with anecdotal evidence, I know of no school in Swansea that doesn't want to have Flying Start. I know a number of schools are very upset that they haven't got it, and if people are saying in other areas of Wales they don't want it in their area, please can I put a plea in: 'Can we have it in Swansea?'

[38] **Lesley Griffiths:** I don't know of any areas that are saying they don't want it. I don't know if Martin knows of any areas. No. I agree, and I hope I've explained in my answer that whilst it is very difficult to have that robust evaluation this early—Flying Start has been going for seven years—it will take a long time to get that, but we do, I feel, have the anecdotal evidence to support the fact that this programme is absolutely right for what we want to achieve.

[39] **Ann Jones:** David, I'll come back to you.

[40] **David Rees:** Thank you, Chair. The anecdotal evidence is important, therefore, and we are seeing the development of children. I will use a specific example from my own constituency, and I might write to you later with some details on it. Flying Start is being withdrawn in an area of my constituency by Action for Children for various reasons. I've met with them and I've met with the local authority to discuss it and the concerns they have. One of the things that came out of that was: how do we ensure when somebody withdraws that a replacement is put in place, because these are some of the most deprived communities we have in Wales, where developmental aspects are critical to those children? And, also, how do we ensure consistency across different local authorities in Wales? Because what came out of that discussion was that there were clearly different ways in which a number of authorities

were sharing the money out between the strands, but also allocating the funding to those particular strands. So, how do we ensure consistency so that, basically, the communities aren't suffering because the local authority takes a particular view?

[41] **Lesley Griffiths:** I wasn't aware of the issue until you raised it with me, David. I would imagine the account manager—I would certainly hope the account manager—is aware of the specific issue that you've raised, and I've asked Martin to speak to the account manager and I will write to you about it. It's really important the provision then isn't removed. I think that the case that you've brought to me isn't about local authority provision.

[42] **David Rees:** It's local-authority funded, but it's Action for Children.

[43] **Lesley Griffiths:** Action for Children. So, it's really important that the local authority are then able to provide that provision locally. It has to be done within a certain area. As I say, I have asked Martin to look into that. I don't know if you want to add anything.

[44] **Mr Swain:** Yes. I wasn't aware of the particular issue and we'll look into it. Just in terms of the consistency issue, we issue very comprehensive guidance to local authorities about the four core strands and how it's meant to be delivered. So, we require specific ratios with health visitors and we require very specific childcare provision. The other elements of it are slightly more down to local need, so in terms of early language support and parenting support, you will get some variation. I think possibly the issue may be around the way in which local authorities fund other organisations that are providing the services. That is down to discussions between those local authorities and those organisations. We wouldn't get involved to that detail, but I think—

[45] **David Rees:** Can I ask how you monitor that to ensure that it's not disadvantaging areas?

[46] **Mr Swain:** We are fully funding local authorities to deliver to a cap number and we agree the areas that they operate in. If they are contracting with a provider to provide Flying Start and that provider is moving out, we would expect the local authority to put in place provision to ensure that there is continuity, absolutely. They're fully funded to do it and they would have to have some very, very strong reasons to be pulling out of an existing Flying Start area.

[47] **David Rees:** Okay. Thanks for that.

[48] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Simon.

[49] **Simon Thomas:** Yes, on the two issues in a way, not just Flying Start but the general interventions. Just for clarity, the reason I came across Mike Hedges' question to you was that my interpretation of the evaluation of Flying Start is that the no statistical difference between Flying Start areas and non-Flying Start areas means that that has been adjusted to take into account the places that the families and children started in the first place. That's not to say, of course, that early intervention doesn't work because there is plenty of international evidence of that. But what does concern me is that we've had—. You talk about decades, and of course, we haven't had decades of Flying Start, but we have had decades, or at least a decade and a half, of your Government having early intervention policies of one kind or another since the start of the Assembly. There has been work with families in crisis since that time, and it's been done in different ways, it's had different names, and it's been evaluated in different ways as well, which is one of the difficulties we have in scrutinising what the Government has achieved or not. In a similar vein, with Communities First, once it changed its nature, it became difficult to compare the new Communities First with the previous Communities First and what effect that's had. So, do you ever feel that you are reinventing the wheel, and that

perhaps you're holding back the tide, but you're not making much progress in the anti-poverty work that you're trying to achieve, and which I want to see effective? It seems to me to be struggling to prove itself.

[50] **Lesley Griffiths:** You do raise a really important point and one of the things I've done since I came into portfolio, as you'll be aware, is that we're aligning the outcomes framework of Communities First, of Flying Start and Families First. You're right; we do evaluate all these things differently. Communities First, I think, is a good example. It's been the flagship anti-poverty policy for 16 years now.

[51] **Simon Thomas:** It's been there from the start.

[52] **Lesley Griffiths:** It's been there from the start since 1999 and I think we need to be looking very, very closely at Communities First. Obviously, there's a commitment to the end of this Government term, but then I think we need to be looking if we need to do something differently. Just because it's been the flagship policy line—. I'm aware, obviously, that it was changed very radically when Carl Sargeant was in post. But, it is just so hard to provide that. I've got it with Supporting People now, because obviously, with my portfolio now including housing and regeneration, Supporting People is another programme that, again, is evaluated differently, and I think it's really important that we bring those programmes together. I don't know if Kate wants to add anything.

[53] **Ms Cassidy:** We have made huge efforts to try and improve the way that we can try and capture the results that are being achieved by those programmes, and that has allowed us to identify where programmes are actually trying to do similar things to help similar families and to make sure that that work is much better co-ordinated. So, we are collecting a lot more information now about the actual performance and the delivery that those programmes are achieving. So, we have changed things significantly from times when it was all very bottom-up, and without losing that element of bottom-up community involvement, actually being able to say, 'Well, this is the purpose. This is to lift people out of poverty; this is about jobs; this is about getting skills; this is about living a healthier lifestyle', and actually trying to capture that. So, it is quite resource intensive again to try to make sure that we do capture those data for all those programmes and pull it together. But the effect of doing that has been that programmes on the ground are working much more closely with each other; so, they've got a common idea of the sorts of things they should be focusing on, and how they should be working together and what their respective roles are. So, I think we're making progress in that sense. Obviously, you know, the general climate hasn't helped in the sense of lifting everybody out of poverty.

[54] **Simon Thomas:** I won't pursue too much now why Communities First wasn't doing that in the first place, across the board, as it perhaps should have. In specific terms, I'm pleased that you're saying that you're going to have more of a valuation in a similar way so that we can compare, but if you take the top-100 most deprived wards in Wales, which is the basis of much of this work, the top 20 and so forth have changed places, but we haven't had a significant number falling out of that top 100. We are still ameliorating the effects of poverty rather than trying to really empower those communities to get out of it. Now, some of this is about economic development and is beyond your portfolio, and possibly beyond the Welsh Government as well in some regards, but do you feel that you have now hit a winning formula, or are you still struggling to achieve that?

[55] **Lesley Griffiths:** The point that you make about winning, I think, is really important because the new data were produced, I think, in October and November, just after I came into portfolio. It was very apparent to me that there was very little movement, in the top 20 certainly. Because of that we have changed. There's always been—. Obviously, no government can do this on their own. You're quite right; we don't hold all the levers. We need

to work with UK Government and with all our partners in Wales. But equally, I think there needed to be a much sharper focus across Government. So, for me—and I'm going to contradict myself, probably—we now know there are more people who live in poverty who are in work than out of work. However, I still believe that sustainable employment is the best way of lifting people out of poverty. So, to sustainably lift them out of poverty, I think you need to have work.

[56] I have several advisory groups et cetera who advise me on tackling poverty. I also chair the tackling poverty implementation board. That was a very large board of senior officials. I've now narrowed it down much more, and every board meeting now is focusing on one topic. So, the last time we had education and the Minister came, whereas before it was just officials not Ministers. The Minister came, and you could drill down to make sure that his policies were absolutely linked into this tackling poverty agenda. To the next meeting, which I think might be next week, but certainly this month, the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport is coming. I'm not saying it's a winning formula, but I think it will have a much sharper focus to ensure that all policies are mainstreamed towards tackling poverty. You know, I've got it in my title, but it's not just down to me; it's absolutely across Government. The First Minister's taken a very sharp interest in this also. So, I think, drawing all this together, evaluating our policies in a much better way, I would hope that the next time we have the Welsh index of multiple deprivation, we will see some improvement. Poverty is so stubborn—I think that's probably the best word to use—and complex that we do need to make sure that we absolutely use every lever that we have as a Government.

[57] **Ann Jones:** I've got Mike and David before I come back to you.

[58] **Mike Hedges:** Would the Minister comment on this conclusion?

[59] 'It is possible that the lack of statistically significant difference between children in Flying Start and comparison areas could be due to pre-Flying Start differences; given the greater levels of deprivation in Flying Start areas it is possible that outcomes among Flying Start families started from a lower base. This is supported by further research undertaken by Swansea University using data linking on Key Stage 1 attainment levels'.

[60] **Lesley Griffiths:** I think I'll ask Kate to do that.

[61] **Mike Hedges:** It's a report you produced in 2013, if it helps you.

[62] **Ms Cassidy:** I think, Chair, that the Member is quoting the research on which he was basing his previous comments.

[63] **Mike Hedges:** Yes, I was.

[64] **Ann Jones:** David, and then Janet wants to come in. Once we come back to Simon, we'll move on.

[65] **David Rees:** Obviously, we are concerned here about the impact of poverty on children, but the impact of poverty on a community and where, in the community, Communities First comes in. That's where the children reside and operate, within all the schemes above—I understand that.

10:00

[66] I'm very pleased to hear you're actually pulling the Ministers in, but one of my concerns is they might be developing the policy, but the people who are delivering it are local authorities. We are seeing, in some of those deprived communities, impacts upon public

services, because of various issues and transportation, in particular, and some of those other issues that impact on people's ability to get to work to take them out of poverty. What does that task group, therefore, do with local authorities to see actually how they are delivering on the ground to improve the lives of people in those communities, to make Communities First work because of the changes they are making, and not to increase the difficulties those communities face because of the decisions taken because of the austerity cuts?

[67] **Lesley Griffiths:** It's not a taskforce; it's an implementation board that is made up of senior officials across Welsh Government. The reason for having the Minister come—. As I say, we have a different topic every time, so the next one is the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, and transport is one of the things that's been raised continually with me.

[68] I know we're straying out of child poverty, but you'll be aware—. If we think about it, most children live in poverty because their parents live in poverty. So, the two absolutely go hand in hand. We have the Lift programme at the moment, and the Lift programme provides 12 weeks' training and work experience for people who are long-term unemployed. One of the issues that's been raised with me when I've met with people who've been participants on the Lift programme is the transport. I met one guy who had to get two buses—I forget where he lived; I think it was up by Caerphilly—to where he was working at the Heath for his 12 weeks, and then he went on to successfully get a job. So, we've been helping with providing funding for that transport during that 12 weeks, but of course, when they then go on to get a job, which is fantastic and absolutely the outcome we want, there are difficulties. So, again, one of the reasons for having the economy Minister is not just to talk about jobs, but the transport element of the portfolio, also.

[69] In relation to local authorities, we do, of course, realise they're in very difficult financial circumstances, but again, we're working very closely with the Minister for Public Services. Each Minister is obviously responsible for any policies from within their portfolio, and they monitor it. For instance, Flying Start is in mine, and you've heard from Martin how we monitor that. So, it's about, again, working across Government to make sure that we're holding local authorities to account to make sure they are delivering on our policies.

[70] **Ann Jones:** Janet, you wanted to make a point.

[71] **Janet Haworth:** Yes, Minister. I'm heartened to hear about the links across other departments, because work can go on in one department and be totally frustrated by a lack of awareness in another. I think the transport point was well made there, showing that.

[72] I'm also interested in the comments about Communities First, Flying Start and Families First. I'm aware, from my own local authority, where I've been a town and county councillor, that these different initiatives generate a certain amount of confusion. Who is doing what? Is there any duplication? Because people are looking more closely at costs and where money is going, it's actually produced an element of competition and rivalry amongst initiatives that shouldn't be competing. They should all be focused on the one aim, which is to offset the effects of poverty.

[73] I think it also helps to explain why we're failing to have really good data on what the problem actually is, because these are the people working on the front line and they can tell us and describe that, and also getting some coherence around the outcomes we're seeking to achieve, and then monitoring them. I take the point that it can take years to see the fruits of these early interventions, but various things are being tried, and maybe it is time for some rationalisation and also some more objective and serious data gathering. That's where your arguments come from to say that you want to go on with something: because it's working.

[74] **Lesley Griffiths:** Okay. When I spoke about this sharp focus across Government, there's obviously always been a focus, but what I was very keen to ensure was that we weren't all working in silos. It was really important that, in relation to tackling poverty, we worked together. The thing that jumped out at me when I came into this portfolio was that, previously, housing and regeneration wasn't in the communities and tackling poverty portfolio, and I was really pleased and very reassured to see the work that housing, particularly, had been doing in relation to tackling poverty—housing associations in particular. That work was there, but I think, having brought the portfolio together, there is the opportunity then to really build on that.

[75] One thing: I mentioned I've got several groups who advise me, and I've just got together—we've just had our first meeting—a tackling poverty practitioner group. That is people out there, working on the front line, across all of the programmes: Communities First, Families First, Flying Start. I was very keen, as duplication was something that did concern me. Was that going on out there? I think I can safely say I don't think it is. I think I've been in post long enough now, and visited enough settings, to have been assured that we haven't had that duplication. Again, I haven't really heard of any competitiveness about it. If you've got a specific example that you can speak to me about, I'll be very happy to look into it, but one of the reasons for bringing the practitioner group together and having, I think, about 12 people on it, from all different backgrounds, across those three programmes—and there are people from DWP, for instance, so it's a really cross-cutting group, and we're due to meet again next month—was to ensure that there wasn't that duplication, and there wasn't that competition that you referred to. In relation to getting the data, I think aligning the outcome frameworks of those three programmes, and Supporting People, which is a housing programme, will help us in that respect.

[76] **Janet Howarth:** Thank you, Minister.

[77] **Ann Jones:** Okay, Simon?

[78] **Simon Thomas:** Thank you, Chair. I'll continue my debate in the Chamber with Mike Hedges. [*Laughter.*]

[79] **Ann Jones:** Yes, please don't do it across this table, because we need to move on.

[80] **Simon Thomas:** I'm interested in the statistics, not just the narrative about why they might be there. Suffice it to say that. One thing that does emerge from the various kinds of evaluations over the years, not just of Flying Start, but Communities First as well, and other family-based interventions, is the lack of engagement by fathers. Is that something that you've been able to pick out as a theme in the work that you do? Is it something that concerns you as a Minister? Are you, in your practitioners work, for example, focusing in some aspect on that? I know there are several aspects to this. It could be the father's absent. It could be that he may be the only member of the family working. Or it may be—and I think this is sometimes the case—there isn't an engagement there, particularly around the early years.

[81] **Lesley Griffiths:** It's not an issue that concerns me. I think the guidance we give to local authorities makes it very clear that we expect engagement of both parents. Again, I can speak anecdotally: I can think of several Flying Start settings I've been to where there have been fathers there who've engaged me. I went to a fantastic one in Blaenau Ffestiniog where, in fact, there was one mother there, but the majority were actually fathers. I think there were four fathers and one mother. So, it is out there. We've also got particular schemes—I think it's the Vale of Glamorgan that have got a particular scheme called Men Behaving Dadly, which I think is the title of it. [*Laughter.*] Another thing that I was really pleased to see: we had, in January, the inaugural Flying Start awards, Stars in their Lives, and one of the recipients of an award was a dad worker, if you like, from, I'm not quite sure—was it Swansea? He received

the award because of his work specifically in engaging fathers. So, I think our guidance is robust enough to ensure that we expect local authorities to engage with both parents, and certainly, out there, the anecdotal evidence is that is happening.

[82] **Ann Jones:** Keith and David very quickly, because we're now halfway through.

[83] **Keith Davies:** My question follows, Chair, from what Simon was saying there, because in one of the most deprived areas of my constituency, there's an integrated family centre. When I went along to the integrated family centre, there was an officer—she was from the Department for Work and Pensions—and the reason she was there was because all the family went there. When I was there, there were many fathers, if not more fathers than mothers there. They didn't want to go to the office of the Department for Work and Pensions and queue, so they went along to the integrated family centre. Now, how much support do we give to these integrated family centres, and how do they work with Flying Start and Communities First?

[84] **Ms Cassidy:** This is something that we've been working on with the Department for Work and Pensions for some while, and we've had those parent employment advisers working in integrated children's centres, often funded by Communities First, actually. So, it's an example of how the funding is joined up. That's the model, really, that we're looking to expand and roll out through the use of European funding.

[85] **Keith Davies:** Fine, thank you.

[86] **David Rees:** Just a quick one: I want to go back to something that, perhaps, Mike started off with. We've got issues in our areas—and I'm sure we all get it—where people want Flying Start, and they want to participate, but because of the postcode areas, they have difficulties. For example, I had a constituent who saw no problem with Flying Start—actually, her daughter benefited dramatically from the involvement—but because theirs was private rented housing, they moved, and those people tend to move more frequently than others, and she moved to an area that was just literally a street away from the postcode and therefore the sibling of the girl couldn't get any benefit. Are you looking at ways in which you can help people like that who are benefiting from Flying Start but, because of reasons that, perhaps, are nothing to do with them, they have to move out and go somewhere else that's close by but they're now outside an area, but they still have children who would benefit from the developmental element of Flying Start?

[87] **Lesley Griffiths:** Flying Start is geographically targeted, as you said, but local authorities do receive a small element of outreach funding so that they can deliver elements of the programme outside of the area. I think that's a really good example: if somebody moved out of the area, that provision could still be there. There is that flexibility with local authorities.

[88] The programme for government commitment, which you're aware of, is to double the number of children benefiting from Flying Start to 36,000 by the end of this term. We're well on target. I think the last figure I saw from a couple of months ago was 32,000 children are now receiving Flying Start. So, I'm absolutely convinced that we will reach that target of 36,000. That will be 25 per cent of children in Wales receiving Flying Start. We have to then look at what we would do post March 2016 in relation to Flying Start. Maybe we could look at that. When Flying Start first started, it was very rigid, wasn't it? But there is that element of flexibility now for local authorities, through the outreach provision, to be able to do that. I think it's about looking at new ways of working, also, with Communities First and Families First to make sure that we can successfully target the families and the children who really need it.

[89] **Ann Jones:** Okay? Right, I'm going to move on, because we're not going to get through all of the areas. Minister, can I just ask you when the Welsh Government intends to publish a response to the review of the Children's Commissioner for Wales? The review was published in December of last year.

[90] **Lesley Griffiths:** I'm currently looking at all the recommendations. I'm sure colleagues will be aware there were 40 very far-reaching recommendations with significant implications for the commissioner. You'll be aware we've got a new children's commissioner. Professor Sally Holland took up her post on 20 April. I thought it was right to have discussions with her. I've met her and started those discussions. As I said, I'm currently considering the recommendations, and I will be issuing a written statement before the summer recess to Members.

[91] **Ann Jones:** Thank you. We note that, on the compliance on the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, you're publishing a report later, or by the end of this month. We were going to try and fit in a session specifically on that when we've seen the report.

[92] **Lesley Griffiths:** I will be having a debate on that report on 30 June in the Chamber.

[93] **Ann Jones:** On 30 June. Okay, fine. Thanks very much for that.

[94] Can we move on to play? Mike.

[95] **Mike Hedges:** I actually am not a great fan of structured play; I think children should be allowed to play by playing. What discussions have you had with whoever the relevant Minister is about getting more third and fourth generation pitches? As the Chair knows, it's a great interest of mine—

[96] **Simon Thomas:** You'll have to ask Sepp Blatter that. [*Laughter.*]

[97] **Ann Jones:** He's gone now.

[98] **Mike Hedges:** He actually paid for a number in Wales. I think 3G and 4G pitches do allow children to play no matter what the weather. Certainly in my constituency, kicking a football is a very popular pastime for both boys and girls, and I'm sure the Minister finds it quite interesting as well. [*Laughter.*]

[99] **Ann Jones:** You can have one in Wrexham if you promise to put one further along the coast as well.

10:15

[100] **Lesley Griffiths:** Okay. Yes, I do have discussions with my colleague Ken Skates, who, I have to say, is really working very hard to ensure that his portfolio absolutely fits into the tackling poverty agenda. We're just about to do some joint visits. You'll be aware of Street Games, for instance, which is another fantastic initiative run out of Communities First. It is good to see other Ministers using the Communities First structure that we have there, because it's very well established now. So, I think it's really good.

[101] In relation to specific discussions about 3G and 4G pitches, I can't remember a discussion about that. I've held discussions with him about how we help both children from deprived backgrounds and their parents to participate more in sport and physical activity, because we know it's really important, but I don't think I've had any specific discussions about 3G and 4G pitches. But, I'm happy to do that if the Member would like me to.

[102] **Mike Hedges:** Please do.

[103] **Ann Jones:** We'd be interested to see what the review is; well, I would, anyway. David.

[104] **David Rees:** Just a short question on play. Clearly, the element is important and it is critical—whether it is 3G, 4G pitches or anything else—and important that we get our children out to have the ability to play. But, I'm also concerned about the facilities for children with disabilities in the play area. What specific funding allocations or proportions are you allocating to that particular area, so that all children, irrespective of their ability or disability, have access and are supported for play?

[105] **Lesley Griffiths:** Again, we give guidance to local authorities regarding their statutory duties in relation to play. It's up to local authorities to ensure that they provide for their local population and what their needs are. Is there anything specific?

[106] **Mr Swain:** There would be two specific funding streams that local authorities could use. So, we have in the last two years provided funding—around about £2.75 million over two years—for local authorities to implement the play duties, which, of course, could be directed at those kinds of projects. But, we also ring-fence an element of the Families First budget for families with disabled children, and, again, if a local authority determined that play was a priority and play facilities for disabled children were a priority, they could use that funding, and that is ring-fenced every year within the programme.

[107] **David Rees:** Do you monitor as to whether they do actually use it for play facilities?

[108] **Mr Swain:** We don't monitor specifically for play, but we monitor that it's specifically used for families with disabilities.

[109] **David Rees:** And do you monitor if any of that element is actually used in play areas or not?

[110] **Mr Swain:** We could provide you with details if it is.

[111] **Lesley Griffiths:** Can I also add, Chair, that we provide grant funding to Groundwork Wales and Snap Cymru to increase and enhance accessibility and quality of children's outdoor play experiences right across Wales, and that's specifically for children suffering high levels of deprivation, and disabled children as well. That's on top of the £2.75 million.

[112] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Angela.

[113] **Angela Burns:** Minister, I wonder if you've had any discussions with house builders as to how they incorporate play facilities in a useful and constructive way in new housing developments, because very often there's a very small patch given over with a swing and a slide on it, but actually that doesn't meet many people's idea of what useful play is for children. And Mike's quite right: you know, many children actually just need to go and be bored and play in a field somewhere, or on a bit of land. A lot of local authorities have sold off a lot of spare land for all sorts of different things. So, our ability to allow our children to play is diminishing. The rural children, I suppose, are slightly better off in that they can perhaps expand outside their small village, but they tend to be very lonely and a lot of those children are in rural poverty, and the ones in our towns and on these new housing estates simply don't have the room to go. Not every parent has the money to take them in a car and drive them somewhere to enjoy some kind of organised play function.

[114] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, that is a conversation that I've had with house builders. They're not intensive conversations, but one of the things I know I did raise with them was—. I mean, you're quite right—some children want structured play, and as Mike said, some just want spaces. I spoke to some play workers in Clwyd South, actually, and they'd undertaken a project around a new estate that was being built and there was going to be a play area provided, and they asked the children, 'What do you need?' And it was really interesting to see what the children wanted, because they didn't actually want a slide, a swing or a roundabout; they wanted a rope swing, they wanted trees. They were very, very specific—and this was asking the children themselves. And I think that's really best practice; it was fantastic to see. They'd got a big plan of the housing estate and they asked all the children to put post-it pads all over it. It was really powerful to see that. So, it's a conversation that I need to continue to have with the housing side of the portfolio as well, and certainly with house builders about the provision that they provide when they're looking to build new estates.

[115] **Ann Jones:** Can I just ask you, Minister: what are your future plans—mind you, that's probably coming under a later theme—or your future ideas around funding for Play Wales? The Assembly Government was one of the first to actually have a play strategy, highlighted around that, but it seems to have dropped slightly away from key priorities. I just wondered what your intentions are about future funding for Play Wales.

[116] **Lesley Griffiths:** When I came into post, they made a very good case to me to have some short-term funding to provide some very specific activity, which they're supporting us to do. For instance, they had policy input into the future generations Bill; they work with us with the local authorities. So, I gave them just over £401,000 in October, and that takes us up to March of next year. That's for very specific activity. Long-term, I need to be having that discussion with them. I do think they provide, certainly me, and the wider community, with very good advice. I've just mentioned two specific examples. They've helped us finalise the statutory guidance that we've given to local authorities on play, but in the longer term, those are discussions I need to be having with them.

[117] **Ann Jones:** Okay. And can I just ask about local authorities as well? Local authorities sometimes will just do the bare minimum. I think Andrew's point around housing estates, and certainly the point that Mike Hedges made about children being allowed just to have unorganised play, free play, seem to go off the radar in local authorities, and, yet, it is very much part of our play strategy. I just wonder how people like Play Wales can be seen as the experts, really—although the experts are the children who want to play—to help local authorities. We seem to be moving away from this and local authorities will use play settings, after-school clubs and so on, which is not really—. It's all about poverty, and I know it's all about keeping children in a safe environment while parents are working, but I don't think it fits very clearly with the play strategy. I was just wondering how Play Wales, and the people who are actually delivering as play workers, can be moved up the priorities of local authorities, basically.

[118] **Lesley Griffiths:** One of the reasons for giving Play Wales that short-term funding was to do just that. They will support local authorities in complying with the duty. I mentioned a couple of other examples that they've helped us with. There is a duty on local authorities to provide that secure play opportunity, sufficient play opportunities, and as you say, it's not one-size-fits-all. So, Play Wales have been assisting local authorities with that.

[119] **Mr Swain:** On the play strategy, in a sense, I think our policy on play has moved forward considerably from when we had the strategy and the implementation plan. I think the fact that we've legislated, as the Minister says—. And we've put out very clear statutory guidance around what we require local authorities to assess, and that includes all form of play, from free play, to structure play, to play provision, and also, picking up the house building point, the fact that they also need to take into account, when they're making planning

decisions, the requirements for play. Now, that varies across local authorities; I know that. We are very clear, in a sense, in our strategic approach to play because it's in legislation and statutory guidance.

[120] **Ann Jones:** Angela.

[121] **Angela Burns:** This is for Martin, which is just an anecdote that may be of interest to you when you're talking to these housing associations, or housing companies or builders. I had a bit of a dust-up with one particularly large one, and they said that when they are looking at their play element they're allowed to add in the grass verges as part of the overall percentage, and, therefore, as long as they came up to a certain square footage in comparison, it was a tick in the box. Now, to me, I wouldn't like to see my 10-year-old or my 12-year-old play on a grass verge, particularly in more busy, populated places. So, you know, there's loads of ways that these people wriggle around some of their responsibilities, and I include councils in this as well, because we all have neglected parks and things that can't be allowed because insurance is so heavy and they can't afford the insurance. So, I just ask you to be, perhaps, more alive to some of this pedantic interpretation of guidance.

[122] **Ann Jones:** Okay. I think that's more of a comment for you to take away and feed into house builders. And just for the house builders to know, it wasn't me who really started on them this time, because they seem to think it's me who has a downer on them. But, I think that some valid points have come out of that. Shall we move on, then, to national participation structures? Simon.

[123] **Simon Thomas:** Diolch, Gadeirydd. Fe wnaf ofyn yn Gymraeg.

Simon Thomas: Thank you, Chair. I'd like to ask my questions in Welsh.

[124] Mae pawb yn cofio, wrth gwrs, bod arian i'r Ddraig Ffyncci wedi dod i ben a'r penderfyniad oedd cael Plant yng Nghymru i gynnal cynllun newydd. Ers y penderfyniad yna, nid wyf i, yn bersonol, wedi gweld llawer o fanylion ar sut mae'r cynllun yna'n mynd i weithio ac, yn benodol, sut mae'n mynd i fod yn llwyfan cyfranogiad gan bobl ifanc er mwyn i'w lleisiau nhw gael eu clywed. A oes modd ichi ymhelaethu tipyn bach yn rhagor, erbyn hyn, ar beth fydd y cynllun newydd, ac ym mha ffordd y mae'n mynd i ymwneud â phobl ifanc?

Everybody remembers, of course, that Funky Dragon funding has come to an end and the decision was to have Children in Wales undertake a new programme. Since that decision, I haven't personally seen much detail of how that scheme is going to work, and, specifically, how it's going to be a participation platform for young people for their voices to be heard. Is there a way for you to expand a little bit more on what this new scheme will be and how it's going to involve young people?

[125] **Lesley Griffiths:** Diolch, Simon. Obviously, it's early days; it started in April. We funded the Children in Wales participation programme, Young Wales. It's a national and an independent platform. It's really important that children and young people's voices are heard in the workings of Government. The young people have met—they've had their first meeting—and decided on what subjects they want to focus on. What I want to see is hundreds of children participating in it, which I don't think was happening before. I've met with Children in Wales and made it very clear what we expect.

[126] I also want to see more children and young people from marginalised backgrounds being brought in. Children in Wales will be working with several organisations to help them reach out to different groups of people. For instance, yesterday, on a different subject, I was talking to somebody who represents Gypsy and Traveller children and was pleased to hear that they were being really brought into this project also.

[127] **Simon Thomas:** Diolch am y wybodaeth honno. A allech chi jest gadarnhau am faint o amser bydd y cynllun yn rhedeg? A yw'n cael ei ariannu am dair blynedd?

Simon Thomas: Thank you for that additional information. Could you just confirm how long the scheme will run? Is it being funded for three years?

[128] **Lesley Griffiths:** It's three years.

[129] **Simon Thomas:** Ocê.

Simon Thomas: Okay.

[130] **Ann Jones:** Sorry, Simon. Mike, did you have a point on this point?

[131] **Mike Hedges:** It is on this point. We have a lot of youth organisations in Wales. I mean, the best £3 I spend a year is on the Urdd, for example, which does talk to lots and lots of children. Funky Dragon had fewer people in Swansea active than we have youth members of one Labour Party ward in Swansea. It wasn't working. So, the point I'm trying to get at is: isn't there an opportunity to use some of the already existing organisations that deal with tens of thousands of children?

[132] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes. I mentioned in my answer to Simon that Children in Wales are talking to organisations that have those data and that background, and that's why I mentioned Gypsy and Traveller children, for instance.

[133] **Mike Hedges:** I didn't mean talk—. I was talking about working with rather than talking to.

[134] **Lesley Griffiths:** Well, yes, they are working with them.

[135] **Ann Jones:** Simon, sorry.

[136] **Simon Thomas:** Diolch. Mae'n amlwg y bydd yn rhaid inni edrych ar sut mae'r cynllun yma'n datblygu nawr a sut mae'n gweithio gyda'r Urdd a Ffermwyr Ifanc, er enghraifft. Yn yr ardaloedd cefn gwlad, mae Ffermwyr Ifanc yn cyrraedd llawer iawn o bobl ifanc, mewn ffordd nad yw unrhyw fudiad arall yn ei wneud. Ond, yr hyn sydd wedi cael ei godi gan rai yw'r ffaith nad yw hwn yn darparu senedd i bobl ifanc, fel yr oedd y Ddraig Ffyni. Beth bynnag arall am y Ddraig Ffyni, yr oedd yn ceisio bod yn senedd, onid oedd, a thrwy hynny yn ymgysylltu â seneddau pobl ifanc eraill ym Mhrydain a thu hwnt? A ydych chi'n meddwl bod yr elfen fwy ffurfiol cynrychiadol yna yn bwysig, neu a ydych chi'n meddwl, 'Wel, nid dyna yw gwaith y Llywodraeth; gwaith y Cynulliad, efallai, yw hynny'?

Simon Thomas: Thank you. It's obvious that we'll have to look at how this scheme develops now and how it is working with the Urdd and Young Farmers, for example. In rural areas, Young Farmers reach many young people in a way that no other organisation does. But, what has been raised by some is the fact that this does not provide a parliament for young people, as Funky Dragon did. Whatever else about Funky Dragon, it tried to be a parliament, didn't it, and through that engaged with other youth parliaments in Britain and beyond? Do you think that the more formal representative element is important, or do you think, 'Well, that is not the work of Government; it is, perhaps, the work of the Assembly'?

[137] **Lesley Griffiths:** I think the youth parliament model is not the only model for enabling meaningful participation of children and young people.

[138] **Simon Thomas:** No, but we're talking about two different types of participation, I think.

[139] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, we are; you're right. If you look at the Scottish model, for instance, that's done on a very similar way to what we're doing now. So, as a Government, we've got Young Wales. You'll be aware that the Presiding Officer is also getting a group together to look at the democratic side of the parliament, if you like. I think, across Europe, there is that split with the models that they've got. It is very difficult, because, clearly, there were lots of mixed views about Funky Dragon and I want to see more participation by children and young people.

10:30

[140] I want to hear what they say, and it's something I've spoken to the children's commissioner about. I think the model that we've got now—. Obviously, as I said, it's very early days, but certainly, just last November, there was a UK youth parliament, and I provided, I'm not sure if it was all of the funding, but I certainly provided significant funding to allow, I think, 21 children to go from Wales to participate in that. So, I think we need to ensure that that level is done, but a youth parliament is not the only way. I might ask Martin to say a bit more about the Scottish model, because I think that's a really good model.

[141] **Mr Swain:** Scotland is similar to lots of other countries in that it has a youth parliament that is, in a sense, linked to the parliament in Scotland, and then the Scottish Government, in a sense, our equivalent, will engage with children and young people through a number of different channels. I think Scotland will look at our model now with some envy, in a sense, in terms of the Government's engagement with children and young people, because we are now reaching out through Children in Wales and their partners into a much, much wider participation network. To pick up the point, the whole ethos of the project is about working with existing networks and youth forums, not creating something else, but there is a place, obviously, that the Presiding Officer has seen for engagement with young people in that part of the National Assembly.

[142] **Simon Thomas:** Rwyf eisiau parhau gyda hwn. Rwyf wedi edrych hefyd ar senedd pobl ifanc yr Alban, a gweld bod cydlynedd y senedd honno, y *convenor*, fel maen nhw'n cael eu galw, wedi bod yn ymgeisydd Toriaidd yn yr ymgyrch diweddar yn San Steffan. Felly, mae'n llwybr mwy ffurfiol, yn sicr, i bobl i fynegi. Hefyd, roedd y senedd yn cymryd rhan eithaf blaenllaw wrth ymgyrchu dros gyfartaledd priodasol yn yr Alban. Roedd rhan ffurfiol gan bobl ifanc yn y broses o ran dylanwadu ar benderfyniadau Senedd yr Alban.

Simon Thomas: I would like to continue with this. I have looked as well at the youth parliament in Scotland, and have seen that the co-ordinator of that parliament, the convenor, as they are called, has been a Conservative candidate in the recent Westminster campaign. So, it is a more formal route, certainly, for people to express. Also, that parliament played quite a prominent role in the campaign for equal marriage in Scotland. There was a formal role for young people to influence the decisions of the Scottish Parliament.

[143] A ydych chi wedi'ch bodloni eich hunan fod eich gwaith gyda Phlant yng Nghymru yn eich galluogi chi i gyflawni'r dyletswyddau sydd gennych chi o dan gonfensiwn y Cenhedloedd Unedig i sicrhau bod lleisiau pobl ifanc a phlant yn cael eu clywed gan y Llywodraeth? Yn gyntaf oll, a ydych chi'n hapus ac yn fodlon bod y dyletswyddau yn y Mesur sydd arnoch chi fel Gweinidog yn cael eu cyflawni gan y cynllun newydd yma?

Have you satisfied yourself that the work that you're now doing with Children in Wales enables you to achieve the duties you have under the UNCRC to ensure that children and young people's voices are heard by Government? First of all, are you content that the obligations placed on you as a Minister by the Measure are being met by this new scheme?

[144] **Lesley Griffiths:** As I said, it's very early days. It only started in April. Officials are working very closely with Children in Wales to ensure that that is the case. But, I think we've got to let it bed in for a little while. I mentioned that I met with somebody who is working with Gypsy and Traveller children yesterday on a different topic, but she actually came forth and said that she felt that the group that she represented had been engaged by Children in Wales, and that hadn't happened before. So, that was reassuring, but I can't provide you with absolute robust evidence this early.

[145] **Simon Thomas:** No, that's fair enough, but have you set targets for this new project in terms of overall numbers, but also in terms of those particular groups that, perhaps, weren't represented before? Do you have targets for them? Is that part of the plan?

[146] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, we do have targets.

[147] **Mr Swain:** Yes, the change in the grant process was very target driven. So, this was moving away from core funding organisations to saying, 'We want specific project targets'.

[148] **Simon Thomas:** And have those been published? Are they going to be published?

[149] **Mr Swain:** Well, I guess their initial plans are available. There would be no reason why we wouldn't make them available.

[150] **Simon Thomas:** I wonder if you could share them with the committee.

[151] **Mr Swain:** Yes.

[152] **Lesley Griffiths:** Absolutely.

[153] **Simon Thomas:** Thank you. The element that seems unfinished in this, therefore, is the more, if you like, formal representation. I'll put it to you like this: how do we as Assembly Members hear the voices of children and young people? We might have our own ways of reaching out in our own areas, particularly through schools, youth clubs, young farmers, as I said, and other elements, but that formal representation role between young people and us has been broken with the funding for Funky Dragon. It may be that that wasn't an appropriate role for Government anyway and maybe it is a role for the Assembly, as such, but are you having actual discussions with, for example, the Presiding Officer and the Commission around these issues?

[154] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, I am. I've met with the Presiding Officer, I think on two occasions, to discuss that. I think she's doing a piece of work around—. I think there's an event either this month or next month to do that. But, I think you're right, and we can go back to the Scottish model about being separate. I think what we've got now is the Government side having a very wide-ranging project, and we'll have the Assembly side. I think that's the right way forward.

[155] **Simon Thomas:** Os caf ofyn y cwestiwn olaf jyst ar y gwaith rŷch chi'n gyfrifol amdano ar hyn o bryd, sef gyda Phlant yng Nghymru nawr, ar ôl i chi rannu'r wybodaeth gyda'r pwyllgor byddwn yn gallu gweld beth yw'r targedau a beth yw bwriad y gwaith, ond a ydych yn bwriadu dod i'r Cynulliad, efallai ar ôl blwyddyn, ac adroddiad mewn datganiad neu ryw ffordd ynglŷn â beth sydd wedi'i gyflawni gan y

Simon Thomas: If I could ask my last question on the work that you're currently responsible for, namely with Children in Wales, after you've shared the information with the committee, we'll be able to see what the targets are and what the intention of the work is, but do you intend to come to the Assembly, perhaps after a year, and report in a statement or in some other way about what has been achieved by the new project?

project newydd?

[156] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes. I'd be very happy to do that.

[157] **Ann Jones:** Bethan, your point.

[158] **Bethan Jenkins:** Thanks. Apologies; I've been scrutinising the heritage Bill, so that's why I've not been here. I just wanted to pick up—and I'm sorry if you've said it—because I sit on the Petitions Committee as well and we have taken evidence. I would just like to understand in terms of the criteria that you gave in the application for Children in Wales. I think it was a massive missed opportunity not to have that participatory element—the hierarchical element, really—moving forward, because you now have a situation where there are council youth forums and nowhere then for them to go in that sort of—. Well, it shouldn't be hierarchical, but a pyramid-style system. They do feel—and I do feel—that that national Wales voice is severely lacking now. I would like to understand in each type of monitoring or moving forward, or learning from this new process, how that element potentially could be built into future grant applications if the Presiding Officer is minded not to set up the youth parliament that many of us have been campaigning on.

[159] **Lesley Griffiths:** I'll just take the second part of the question and then I'll pass to Martin about the criteria that were used last year. What Young Wales is aiming to do is to reach far more children and young people than previously. I have asked them specifically to work with groups that are marginalised. I mentioned before that somebody working with Gypsy and Traveller children told me yesterday for the first time that they had been engaged. That hadn't happened before. So, what we've asked Young Wales to do, as I say, is to work with people who are marginalised, work with people who lack confidence, work with people from disadvantaged backgrounds—the young people who are excluded or are in very challenging circumstances. I think that's what's sort of different from Funky Dragon, but I'll ask Martin to say about the criteria for the grants last summer.

[160] **Mr Swain:** We were very clear that it was a national participation structure and that what we weren't doing was removing the ability for local youth forums to engage into a national structure. What's interesting is that, if you think about how the project's priorities have been developed, they've been developed by young people from all local authorities across Wales. So, the first thing that the project has done is engage with local youth forums to say, 'How do we set our priorities?', and, 'We want to hear the voice'. So, they've actually been set by young people from those forums. I'm just interested, in the context of youth forums, about how much engagement there was with Funky Dragon when Funky Dragon was in existence. What we had as feedback on that project was that it was variable. So, in a sense, what we didn't do was stop the funding to Funky Dragon. We had a new process and we said, 'We want a real focus on participation, and we want a renewed and reinvigorated focus'. My understanding is that Children in Wales offered to work with Funky Dragon, but that wasn't taken up. So, I would question the effectiveness of what was there before. I think the new project is really starting to make progress on developing this agenda.

[161] **Lesley Griffiths:** If I can just add, Chair, just to reassure Bethan, there were 18 of the 22 local authorities' youth forums present at the launch at the end of March. There the young people discussed what topics they wanted to discuss. They included bullying, healthy relationships, including domestic abuse, sexual health, mental health, online safety, substance misuse, and the UNCRC. So, 18 of the 22 youth forums were involved, and they've come forward with this list.

[162] **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay. I think it's just about seeing how all those ideas can, as Simon suggested, be brought together nationally. I don't believe that that process is fully—. We haven't rounded it off with that national agenda. Of course, you can work with the

Commission, but that doesn't mean that you have to, in that sense. That's not built into the programme. But I take your point; I didn't feel that they were fully effective beforehand either. I had issues with the way that Funky Dragon worked. I want to give this time, but I think we are missing that national element at the moment.

[163] **Lesley Griffiths:** I'm not sure if you were here when I said I would provide the information that we had around the targets and the groups, but we're going to provide committee with that. As I say, it's very early days. It just started in April, but we're very happy to look at it and, as Simon suggested, make a statement or have a debate in the Chamber. But I think we need to give it a year, really, to see how it works.

[164] **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay.

[165] **Ann Jones:** Okay? If we can just very briefly move on to some of the other key priorities and the other issues from your paper. Minister, can I ask you to expand a little bit on your part of the paper that talks about, I suppose, young mothers or young parents? It's in paragraphs 30 to 33. You're going to look at engaging young parents to be able to get to—PaCE, I think, is the title. You're going to help them to be able to, I suppose, return either to some skills agenda or to some education that allows them to go to employment. Part of the issue, I think, is rural areas—transport in rural areas. I just wondered where you are going to base this pilot scheme. What areas are you going to use to base this on? I just have a worry that, if we pilot it in the traditional areas where we pilot, we're going to miss an opportunity to catch those people who are desperately in need. Teenage pregnancies are still a problem in some areas, and they're usually the seaside resorts, I'm afraid, because that's where they get the cheaper housing and they're able to sort of come down. So, it's about targeting that, really. Given that it's a pilot, I was just wondering how you're going to move that on.

[166] **Lesley Griffiths:** PaCE, which is parents, childcare and employment, is a project that I want to have up and running by July. It is difficult to expand too much at the moment, Chair, because we're having discussions with WEFO, which are going very well, but, if we've got it in place by July, I want full roll-out by the autumn. So it's not going to be pilots as such, because we know that concept is very well trialled and tested. There are a few areas that are sort of ready to go. So, if we get the funding, we can do it in July; I want those places to be ready—because they're ready to go, they can go. We can learn lessons very, very quickly, but then we'll have full roll-out by the autumn.

[167] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Because you talked earlier about a young gentleman who was helped on the Lift programme, but then he needed two buses and it becomes a problem when they find some employment. I was just wondering whether this project would be able to help those people. It's around where the childcare setting is as to where the person has to go and, often, if you're going across town—sorry—

[168] **Lesley Griffiths:** I'll sit a bit forward.

[169] **Ann Jones:** You don't need a spotlight, we'll just allow the sun to put you under pressure there.

[170] It's about the fact that, if the childcare setting is in place A, but to get to place A, the person has to get out of the house two hours earlier because of public transport then, basically, with all the best will in the world, they'll do it for a couple of days and then they'll find—or the child—. Or something happens and then it becomes too much of an effort for some people—or not too much of an effort; that's not the right word. It becomes problematic for them to sustain that. I'm just wondering whether there isn't any work that you could do around that before you actually start to roll it out because the worst thing that happens is you roll something out—fanfare—and then you find that, after a week, people are finding it very

difficult to access it.

[171] **Mr Swain:** Perhaps I could just give a bit more explanation as to how the programme will work. PaCE is going to be predominantly based around where we've got Flying Start childcare provision. It's not only for Flying Start families; this is available to any families living, in fact, anywhere in Wales because we'll be pan-Wales. What we have are over 300 childcare settings that we have invested in through Flying Start, and many of them are available and can be adapted for use over and above the Flying Start childcare. So, what we're trying to identify is that, where parents who we are working with in our programmes are saying, 'Childcare is the main barrier to us gaining skills or gaining employment', we will work with them through the employment advisers that Kate described to identify what their needs are, be that transport to get to a college—but where childcare is the main barrier.

10:45

[172] So, essentially, we'll remove that barrier and then work with other interventions to get them into skills and get them into meaningful employment. So, we are trying to use our infrastructure in a way that—. We know, as you say, Chair, it's a challenge when people have to go to college and it's 15 miles away and there's no childcare. We're trying to intervene there to remove that barrier.

[173] **Ann Jones:** What about rural areas and childcare settings in rural areas? That's problematic for people who have got their own transport. Often it's availability, isn't it?

[174] **Mr Swain:** We can look at other options, and, certainly in rural areas, we know that childminders are a valuable resource, but if we base it around our centres, we're able to work with them.

[175] **Ann Jones:** David then Simon on this, and then I'll bring Janet in.

[176] **David Rees:** It goes back to my question at the very start of the situation with childcare, Families First settings and Flying Start settings. Flying Start being removed is the issue, particularly if the possible alternative is actually in a different direction—two buses—to where the training or employment may be. So, when is this programme going to be rolled out, when will we be told it's starting, and how can we get these in place quickly?

[177] **Lesley Griffiths:** Well, I mentioned that we're having discussions with WEFO, which are going very well. The plan is to have the—'pilot' is the wrong word—the sort of pilot areas starting in July, because they're ready to go, and then there will be pan-Wales roll-out by the autumn.

[178] **David Rees:** And did you say that the pilot areas could be in the Lift areas?

[179] **Lesley Griffiths:** In the Lift areas, I think some of them are.

[180] **Ms Cassidy:** Communities for Work will cover that.

[181] **Lesley Griffiths:** I'll be launching that today—Communities for Work. I am going straight from here to launch that.

[182] **Ms Cassidy:** So, Communities for Work will equally work where childcare is an issue for helping people who are long-term unemployed back into work. Then that programme will equally operate in that flexible way to try to sort out their problems.

[183] **David Rees:** I can put a bid in to you now, to start with.

[184] **Ann Jones:** That's all right—I've already spent all the money.

[185] **Lesley Griffiths:** As I say, PaCE will be pan-Wales.

[186] **David Rees:** My other question is not on this topic but it's on another topic.

[187] **Ann Jones:** Can I just move on to Simon, and then I'll come back to you?

[188] **Simon Thomas:** This is still on the childcare aspect. Just to understand a little better how this interacts with DWP priorities and what's happening at UK level, we've seen recent Prime Ministerial announcements around significant investment in childcare, but only for families with two working parents. There might be a Barnett consequential of that, which presumably doesn't come with strings attached; you can decide how to invest it. But, nevertheless, there are ongoing difficulties, I think, aligning some of these policies with what DWP wants to achieve with some of these families. So, can you just say a little more about how you've achieved that, if anything, and how you might be looking to align better with whatever does come out from the Prime Minister's statement on childcare, as well?

[189] **Ms Cassidy:** Certainly, we're watching that very closely. In terms of what we're doing already in working with DWP, I mentioned the parent employment advisers working in the integrated children's centres and with Communities First. So, there's already an element of joint working and joint investment, and, obviously, I shouldn't give the impression that we're just funding DWP's own people. We're working jointly with them and jointly funding some of this work, so that's given us the experience of what works practically on the ground and how we can help people into work. In terms of what we do looking at what the UK Government's proposals are, what that means for Wales and what that might enable us to do, obviously we are watching that very closely and keeping in touch with DWP, and also colleagues in the Department for Education in England as well.

[190] **Lesley Griffiths:** If I could add, Chair, I met with the Finance Minister this week, so, as you say, if there is a consequential, we will be able to do what we think is right. Obviously, officials are looking at the childcare Bill, which is a very small bill, and clearly there will be a lot of challenges. You saw the press this week around the UK Government's proposals.

[191] **Ann Jones:** Okay. David.

[192] **David Rees:** Thank you, Chair. None of these programmes is actually delivered by third sector organisations. That's one of my concerns: whether they are finding difficulty in sustaining some of the services. What discussions are you having with the third sector to ensure the sustainability of those organisations to deliver these services?

[193] **Lesley Griffiths:** A very important point. I met on Tuesday—. The Finance Minister and I jointly chair the childcare stakeholder group, and sustainability is an issue that's of concern. It's about professionalising the sector also. They've got concerns about attracting people into the sector. It's not particularly well paid, for instance. So, again, we've got plans for the workforce, which we discussed with the stakeholders on Tuesday. There's a great deal of work going on around making the sector much more sustainable. You know, we work very closely with local authorities, but, obviously, it's up to local authorities to make sure they have that provision for childcare. You've mentioned rural areas—it's clearly an issue—people who work shifts—. There has to be that flexibility, which I don't think has always been there. But, it's about ensuring that you have all those elements coming into it, but the profession, I think—and it is a profession—. I think we need to raise the perception of the profession. I think we've done it with the other end of the scale, if you like, with the care sector. I think people now see the social care sector as somewhere they can go in and have a career and

professional development, and I think we need to do it much more at the childcare end as well.

[194] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Janet.

[195] **Janet Howarth:** Thank you, chairman. Just to return to the point about teenage pregnancies, within my own area I'm aware of an initiative supported fully by the county council, working through the health visitors and school nurses in, certainly, one comprehensive school, and I think that is being rolled out. Parents have been fully informed of this scheme. So, maybe looking at what the comprehensive schools are doing or not doing might be useful, and I can certainly give you information on that particular school—

[196] **Lesley Griffiths:** That would be an issue for the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Health and Social Services.

[197] **Janet Howarth:** It's back to you joining your links up again. On the geographical challenges of Wales, and I am particularly aware of that in north Wales, and locating childcare and so on, as we just discussed earlier, I wonder if any thought has been given to mobile locations. I've been aware as I've travelled around the country that I've seen a job centre on an adapted bus that travels round outlying areas. I've seen a play bus, which is very busy during the weekends providing parties, so it's a private concern, but, clearly, that facility could be available during the week. The geographical challenge has always been there across a range of services, and it seems to me that, if we could try—it's an alternative pilot to an urban setting, isn't it—an equipped mobile facility that we can take into these communities and you collect the children up and you go around, so you've got the childcare but it's kind of moving around. The investment in such adapted vehicles, of course, could be there not just for childcare; they could be used again for delivering other services that we might want to do. I know it's not a new idea. I met the women's royal commission many years ago, and apparently they were talking about this between the wars, so I just wonder if it's an alternative way of looking at a pilot that can meet the challenge of the geographical challenges.

[198] **Lesley Griffiths:** Sorry, the sun is dreadful.

[199] **Ann Jones:** I could say the sun's shining on the righteous.

[200] **Lesley Griffiths:** That would be an issue for local authorities, and I know there are some local authorities that do provide mobile crèches, for instance.

[201] **Bethan Jenkins:** Credit unions as well.

[202] **Lesley Griffiths:** And credit unions as well. Local authorities need to carry out childcare sufficiency assessments, see what gaps they've got and then, if they feel that a mobile would fill that gap, they could provide it.

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

[204] **Simon Thomas:** if this is the end, I have one last question.

[205] **Ann Jones:** One last question again, yes. The floor is yours.

[206] **Simon Thomas:** It's a question for the Government as much as anything, but you're here representing the Government today. We've had two, I think, attempts in legislation to deal with the question of reasonable punishment of children—the removal of the defence of reasonable punishment, I should say. Is it now the intention of the Government to take this forward in any legislative way? I know there's no time in the legislative programme anyway, in this Assembly, but what mechanisms have you at work in Government to address this

issue?

[207] **Lesley Griffiths:** You're right—the Government doesn't believe we have a mandate to legislate on this issue. It wasn't part of our manifesto and it doesn't feature in the legislative programme, as you've said. We feel now that the best thing is for it to be a matter for party manifestos next year.

[208] **Simon Thomas:** So, you're not doing any Government work around scoping how that could be dealt with in legislation.

[209] **Lesley Griffiths:** What I'm concentrating on at the moment is positive parenting. You'll be aware of the work that we do on positive parenting within Flying Start, for instance, but I want to see a much more universal approach to positive parenting. So, I've asked officials to do a piece of work for me. By July, I will want to make an announcement on what we're doing to have that sort of universal approach. Then we will have a look at what else we need to do around legislation.

[210] **Simon Thomas:** Okay. Could I have another final question on something very different?

[211] **Ann Jones:** A final final question, go on then,

[212] **Simon Thomas:** It directly links on to what you might be doing in a second—you're launching this Communities for Work programme. In the statement that you put out this morning, you said that there was further information to come about the youth aspect of that. Can you give us a kind of hint of what that might be or what you might be looking at for young people in that particular programme?

[213] **Ann Jones:** Bring the embargo forward by 5 minutes. [*Laughter.*]

[214] **Lesley Griffiths:** No. [*Laughter.*] I will be putting more information out.

[215] **Simon Thomas:** Roughly when?

[216] **Lesley Griffiths:** I'm not sure of the timescale, but I will—

[217] **Ms Cassidy:** As soon as WEFO give the approval.

[218] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, it depends when WEFO gives the approval as to the timings for me.

[219] **Ann Jones:** Can we have a note from that?

[220] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes.

[221] **Ann Jones:** Even just perhaps a little heads up, you know, on an embargo, might help. [*Laughter.*] Okay.

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

[223] **Ann Jones:** Minister, thank you very much for that. I think we've gone through and over and beyond your portfolio at times, but thank you very much for that. There are a couple of notes, I think, that you are going to send us anyway, so we'll look for them. Okay. Thanks very much.

[224] **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes. Thank you.

10:57

**Papurau i'w Nodi
Papers to Note**

[225] **Ann Jones:** We've got a few papers to note, which I did say I was going to raise at the beginning. So, we're happy to note those.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42(ix) i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod Cyfan ar 10 Mehefin
Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the
Whole of the Meeting on 10 June**

Cynnig:

Motion:

bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o'r cyfarfod cyfan ar 10 Mehefin ac o weddill y cyfarfod hwn yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog 17.42(ix).

that the committee resolves to exclude the public from the whole of the meeting on 10 June and from the remainder of this meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.42(ix).

*Cynigiwyd y cynnig.
Motion moved.*

[226] **Ann Jones:** Can I ask the committee to agree, under Standing Order 17.42, that the rest of this meeting and the next meeting will be in private? Is that okay? All right. Thank you very much. The meeting is closed.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10:57.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10:57.*