



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Y Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc
The Children and Young People Committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 10 Chwefror 2009
Tuesday, 10 February 2009**

Cynnwys
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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Christine Chapman	Llafur Labour
Ann Jones	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Lynne Neagle) Labour (substitute for Lynne Neagle)
Helen Mary Jones	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Committee Chair)
Kirsty Williams	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Debbie Budlender	Community Agency for Social Enquiry
Rhian Croke	Achub y Plant Save the Children
Anne Crowley	Achub y Plant Save the Children

Swyddogion Gwasanaeth Seneddol y Cynulliad yn bresennol
Assembly Parliamentary Service officials in attendance

Tom Jackson	Clerc Clerk
Rita Phillips	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Kathryn Potter	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members Research Service
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol i'r Pwyllgor Legal Adviser to the Committee

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.17 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.17 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Helen Mary Jones:** Bore da, ac yr wyf yn eich croesawu i gyd i gyfarfod Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc y Cynulliad. Mae gennyf rai cyhoeddiadau ymarferol i'w gwneud. Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio Cymraeg a Saesneg yn rhan gyntaf y cyfarfod. Yn yr ail ran, byddwn yn cyfathrebu dros y ffôn gyda thyst o Dde Affrica, sy'n golygu y bydd yn rhaid i mi ofyn i Aelodau ddefnyddio Saesneg yn unig. Mae'r clustffonau ar gael ar gyfer cyfieithu ar y pryd ac hefyd i helpu pobl glywed yn well yn yr oriel gyhoeddus, yn ogystal ag yn yr ystafell pwyllgor. Yr wyf yn gofyn i bawb

Helen Mary Jones: Good morning and welcome to the meeting of the Assembly's Children and Young People Committee. I have some housekeeping announcements to make. You are welcome to use English and Welsh in the first part of the committee. In the second part, we will be communicating over the telephone with a witness from South Africa, which means that I will have to ask Members to use English only. Headsets are available for simultaneous translation and also to assist people to hear better in the public gallery, as well as in the committee room. I ask everyone to switch off any

ddiffodd unrhyw ffonau symudol, BlackBerrys neu offer felly—nid yw'n ddigon da i'w gadael yn dawel gan eu bod yn amharu ar yr offer cyfieithu a darlledu. Os bydd y larwm tân yn canu, mae'n golygu bod digwyddiad y mae'n rhaid ymateb iddo, felly gofynnaf ichi ddilyn y tywyswyr allan os yw hynny yn digwydd.

mobile telephones, BlackBerrys or such equipment—it is not enough to leave them on silent mode as they interfere with the translation and broadcasting equipment. If the fire alarm rings, it means that there is an incident to which we must respond, so I ask you to follow the ushers out if that happens.

[2] A oes gan Aelodau unrhyw fuddiant i'w datgan? Gwela'n nad oes. Fel arfer, yr ydym wedi derbyn ymddiheuriadau gan Lynne Neagle ac yr ydym yn croesawu Ann Jones eto, sydd wedi bod yn dirprwyo yn rheolaidd ar ei rhan, ac yr ydym yn gwerthfawrogi hynny. Yr ydym newydd dderbyn neges gan Angela Burns sydd â phroblemau teithio. Bydd yn ceisio ymuno â ni, ond os nad yw'n llwyddo cyrraedd yr ydym yn derbyn ei ymddiheuriadau.

Do Members have any interests to declare? I see that they do not. As usual, we have received apologies from Lynne Neagle and we welcome Ann Jones again, who has been substituting regularly on our behalf, for which we are grateful. We have just received a message from Angela Burns who has travel problems. She will try to join us, but if she does not arrive we accept her apologies.

9.19 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i Gyllidebu ar gyfer Plant Inquiry into Children's Budgeting

[3] **Helen Mary Jones:** Yr wyf yn croesawu Anne Crowley a Rhian Croke o Achub y Plant i'r pwyllgor. Yr ydym yn ddiolchgar iawn i chi am eich papur a'ch presenoldeb. Dyma'r ail gyfarfod lle byddwn yn trafod cyllidebu i blant. Os yw'n iawn, trown yn syth at y cwestiynau, sydd yn seiliedig ar y dystiolaeth yr ydym wedi ei dderbyn yn barod. Croeso cynnes i chi'ch dwy.

Helen Mary Jones: I welcome Anne Crowley and Rhian Croke from Save the Children to the committee. We are very grateful to you for your paper and attendance. This is the second meeting where we will discuss children's budgeting. If it is okay, we will go straight into questions, which are based on the evidence that we have already received. A warm welcome to both of you.

9.20 a.m.

[4] We are grateful to you both for being here. As I said earlier, Angela Burns has travel problems. We are also expecting Kirsty, but we are quorate, so we can carry on. I will begin with the first question. Children's budgeting is not necessarily an easy concept to understand, so can you start by telling us what Save the Children understands by the term 'children's budgeting', and what you understand the benefits of undertaking children's budgeting to be?

[5] **Ms Crowley:** Save the Children is very pleased that the committee has decided to focus on this issue, which Save the Children has been working on for a number of years, and, while there has been some progress in Wales, it has been slow. Essentially, what we mean by 'children's budgeting' is more transparency and visibility around what is spent on children. The Government has a range of policies, strategies, plans and actions in place to benefit children, particularly disadvantaged children, and we believe, as the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child believes, that, to back that up, we need to know about resources. As you will know from the paper that we submitted, Save the Children has done a number of pieces of work to try to render budgets and spending on children a little more visible to civil society and to children and young people themselves. However, it should not

be incumbent on a non-governmental organisation to do that. That information should be readily available to the public, including children and young people, so that they can see what is being spent on children and monitor trends over time, looking at what is spent on particular groups of children that may be particularly disadvantaged.

[6] Children's budgeting also helps to render children more visible in the political process. Again, if people can see what is being spent on children, and are concerned about that, that will help to raise the profile of children, who do not have a vote in the political process. I do not know whether you want to add any more, Rhian.

[7] **Ms Croke:** To add to what Anne said, it is an obligation under article 4 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that resources are spent to the maximum extent possible. That has been reiterated in concluding observations from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2002 and, most recently, in October 2008, which stated that that should happen. As Anne said earlier, we have had discussions with the Government over a number of years, and we would like to see this happening more considerably in the new reporting process.

[8] **Ann Jones:** You made the point in your paper that budgets in Wales are constructed in such a way that makes it difficult to identify what is spent on children and young people. Can you expand on that point and why that is the case?

[9] **Ms Crowley:** I do not think that the Government of Wales is different to other Governments in the UK or much of Europe, although there are examples of where budgets have been rendered more visible, which we can return to. In thinking about what is spent on children, there are some budget lines that are only spent on children, such as education—there is lifelong learning, but the education budget is primarily spent on children, so that is reasonably easy to determine. In the social services budget, one is able to discern some spending on children, but not all of it. The health budget is a nightmare, because the way that it is constructed means that it is difficult to identify what is spent on children, or indeed what is spent on women or older people. When you come to budgets such as those for housing, transport and economic development, it is even more difficult, but children do benefit from those budgets, and some work has been done to try to estimate what proportions are spent on children. I am not an expert on budgets or an economist, and, as I said, the fact is that that information is not out there. Save the Children has recently commissioned a report, which I mentioned in our briefing, looking at budgets across the UK with regard to what is spent on children living in poverty. That will be ready in time for the committee; we hope that it will be ready in early March. There is some very interesting information in there. However, it was difficult to identify what has been spent on poor children or children living in poverty in Wales.

[10] One of the sections that we are looking at is early years. I was tasked with finding a contact within the Assembly Government who the economists could talk to in order to identify what had been spent on the equivalent of Sure Start in Wales, childcare, and so on. I had to make about 10 phone calls. The policy leads within the Assembly Government were not really aware of how things are allocated. There is then the question of how it goes from the national budget down to local government. So, it is difficult to get at that information. As I said, I do not think that the Welsh Assembly Government is any worse than any other Government. There is a traditional view that it is all too complicated and bureaucratic, and so people wonder why we want to know about it.

[11] **Ann Jones:** Do you have any idea of what needs to change at both the national and local government levels so that we can look at meaningful children's budgets?

[12] **Ms Crowley:** We need to have a larger programme to make the budget process and

budgets more transparent to civil society generally. There needs to be education on budget literacy in our schools, right through the school system. We could work more proactively with local authorities in helping framework co-ordinators, children and young people's partnership co-ordinators, lead directors, and with children themselves to understand the budget process. We also need to help children to be involved in the budget planning process.

[13] At the national level, more needs to be done to help civil society to understand the budget process at that level. Other countries have good examples of participatory budgeting. Brazil is an example of that. Perhaps we need to look at examples from other countries with regard to how they bring the budget to the people to help them to be more involved in that democratic process.

[14] **Helen Mary Jones:** Chris, you have a question a bit further down the list about the pro-poor spending. Do you want to ask that question now?

[15] **Christine Chapman:** Yes. You say that the report that you have commissioned will probably be published in March. That is fine; we look forward to that. You said that there are some issues within the Welsh Assembly Government with regard to priorities and the timings and so on. Can you say a little more about the report?

[16] **Ms Crowley:** Yes, certainly. I will prefix that with a bit of narrative from my perspective, or Save the Children's perspective, with regard to what has happened within the Assembly Government. We commissioned a report in 2002 to look at spending on children, a copy of which, as you know, is in the Members' Library. The purpose of that report was to look at how devolution was affecting spending on children. I think that we got the timing wrong, because there is a statistics lag and it is not possible to identify what has been spent until a few years later. That process and that report allowed us to approach the Government. We had a meeting with the then Minister for children, the current Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Jane Hutt. We talked about the convention and what was required. She was very keen and well-disposed towards this issue. You will know that when the Welsh Assembly Government reported to the UN committee last year, it made an attempt to discern what proportion of budgets were spent on children. It was a pretty crude attempt, and it acknowledged that fact. There has been work within the Government—I think that it was piloted within the Department for Social Justice and Local Government, and I think that you were involved in some of that work, Christine, but I do not know what has happened since then.

[17] In Save the Children's work on poverty, we have been concerned to look at the spending on children living in poverty and to see whether—particularly at a UK level, but also within the devolved administrations—money is being put where the rhetoric is, for want of a better expression. So, this report looks at spending on children living in poverty across a number of key areas, including early years, education, social services and then, centrally, tax and benefits as well as some overall analysis of what is spent on children. There are some interesting comparisons across the country. For example, we know that rural authorities tend to spend more per child on education, and that is probably to do with factors such as the cost of school transport. The lower spending in urban areas is not necessarily a reflection of urban authorities seeing it as less important, however.

9.30 a.m.

[18] However, the report has a lot more information about England and shows that pro-poor spending in the early years there has been extremely successful. There has been a huge rise in spending on pre-school Sure Start childcare, and there is information to suggest that that is getting to the poorest people. We cannot say that in Wales, because we do not know. The report shows that childcare provision is less available in Wales than it is in England, and

that money allocated for the schooling of children living in poverty in England is reaching deprived areas. Again, we cannot really show that in Wales.

[19] You will know that the relationship between central Government and local authorities is different in England; it is much more prescriptive. This is about the allocation of money, but also about whether it reaches the children whom it is meant to benefit. The study shows a lot of variation in spending per pupil between authorities in Scotland and Wales. However, we cannot see a clear relationship between area deprivation and per-pupil expenditure. For example, Merthyr Tydfil is one of the most deprived local authority areas in Wales, as measured by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, but it spends less per pupil than the average in Wales. We need to ask questions about that. Cardiff is also one of the most deprived areas but has below-average spending. Powys and Ceredigion are both rural authorities but spend significantly more than nearly all the authorities for deprived areas. That will be mitigated by issues around rurality and transport, but we still need to ask questions about that. Sorry, that was a bit long-winded.

[20] **Helen Mary Jones:** Just to clarify, are you saying that we cannot see what is happening in Wales? We do not know that Government spend is not getting to the Sure Start areas, and so we cannot verify that it is.

[21] **Ms Crowley:** Yes, absolutely. It is a bit of a mix. We can see some things, as I have said, but, generally, we cannot see as much of the pro-poor spending as they can in England, or of whether it is reaching the people whom it is intended to reach.

[22] **Christine Chapman:** To clarify, you talked about the figures for England compared with those for Wales, and you named some authorities in Wales, but are you talking about budgets allocated for schools as opposed to spending on children outside school?

[23] **Ms Crowley:** I was talking about spending on schools, so per pupil. Spending on children overall would be more difficult to calculate.

[24] **Helen Mary Jones:** Indeed. Kirsty Williams has the next question.

[25] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you, Chair. I apologise for being late.

[26] In your paper, you recognise that the Assembly Government has tried to identify how much of its budget is spent on children. What is your view of the work that the Government has undertaken to establish spend, and how useful has it been?

[27] **Ms Crowley:** You just missed what I said about that, so I will say it again. We started discussions with the Government in 2002 when we commissioned the earlier report into spending on children. In fact, the Minister for children, who is still in that role, recognised that this is a requirement for compliance with the convention. We have had a number of meetings over the years to move that along, including meetings with officials from the finance department. I must say that I am not privy to a lot of the internal work. I was aware of the fact that the social justice division had done a pilot, because I spoke to officials about it, trying to discern what was spent on children under the social justice budget head under the last Government, but I do not know what the outcome was. I have never seen it, as it was never made public.

[28] The Government provided a very crude analysis of what it was spending on children when it reported to the UN committee last year. In fact, it was the only administration to do so. I was told by officials that they recognised that it was not great, but at least it was a start. The Minister was very committed to progressing this. However, that is all that I have heard, really. There is a commitment and things are moving. We had the first meeting in 2002,

which is now seven years ago. Not much is available to the outside world. When I tried to contact officials within the Welsh Assembly Government to help with our current analysis, there was no obvious place to go to find out what is being spent on children.

[29] **Kirsty Williams:** What was your last involvement with WAG?

[30] **Ms Crowley:** When it reported to the UN committee. It produced the report just before the election, so nearly two years ago. That was the last conversation really. I think it fair to say that Save the Children left them alone, because we were told that work was going on. Maybe it is time to go back and ask questions.

[31] **Helen Mary Jones:** I think that we shared with you the paper that the Assembly Government provided for this committee. If you have not had it, we will make that available to you, and would you then be able to come back to us with some comments? It would be interesting to know whether it shows any progress from the last point that you were just talking about, in response to Kirsty Williams.

[32] **Ms Crowley:** Yes, definitely.

[33] **Christine Chapman:** I want to ask about children budgeting at local level. Your paper states that you are working with others on a toolkit for local partnerships and their member agencies, which would include briefings to assist them to produce children's budgets. Could you say a little more about that, and do you have a view on the situation at local authority level?

[34] **Ms Croke:** The toolkit is enshrined within a larger website resource, currently in draft stage, which is on mainstreaming children's rights throughout public services and local authorities. So, within that, we hope to do some work advising local authorities, giving them top tips on how to make budgets more transparent and visible and on how to work with children to help them to participate in the budget process. At present, that is at draft and development stage. It was a very busy year for the reporting process last year, so it has been put on hold temporarily. However, we do want to start working on it again now that we can see from the concluding observations that it has been picked up yet again. We will be working on that in a little more detail.

[35] **Ms Crowley:** To add to that, in Ceredigion a few years ago, we did some work with young people on participating in the allocation of the Cymorth fund. You will be aware that the partnerships have been responsible for allocating Cymorth for a number of years. The extent to which the mainstream budgets of local authorities, health bodies and so forth come within the purview of the partnerships is still questionable. I think that the Government is trying to encourage that, but my understanding, based on the recent submission of the new single plans that all the 22 partnerships have had to submit, is that evidence of joint commissioning and the pooling of budgets is still pretty weak. It is a start, but there is a long way to go. They could start with Cymorth, but most of it will go into the rate support grant shortly. I do not think that budgets generally, that is, mainstream budgets, are the source of much discussion at a partnership level. So, it is not just about children's budgeting; the whole issue about pooling budgets and working jointly has to move on.

9.40 p.m.

[36] **Christine Chapman:** I have two issues to raise on that. The first is the extent to which young people are involved, and the second is whether any local authority members are debating children's budgeting. How widespread would you say that that is—or not? There are the children and young people's partnerships, but I am just thinking of the wider membership.

[37] **Ms Croke:** I think that Rhondda Cynon Taf did some work in this area, which might be worth investigating. I have not looked into that recently, but I heard about a year ago that it was looking at that as a local authority area, so it might be worth your seeing whether it is progressing that.

[38] **Ms Crowley:** You are due to take evidence from the Welsh Local Government Association at a future session, so perhaps you could mention that then and ask whether it might be worth its while looking into that.

[39] **Ms Croke:** I think that the WLGA is about to look at best practice in the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, so it could also look at that, although it might not fit within your timeframe.

[40] **Helen Mary Jones:** Chris, can you ask question 8 on participation now, given that Anne and Rhian have touched on it?

[41] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, it is really to find out a bit more about young people's involvement. How involved are they in participatory budgeting, and what is its extent across local authorities? Do you have any thoughts on that?

[42] **Ms Crowley:** We have not done a survey, but I mentioned earlier the example in Ceredigion. That was a few years ago now, but I do not know of any other examples, although there probably are some out there. School councils are given small budgets to spend, but I cannot cite any examples of children and young people participating in and contributing to the decisions about how larger amounts are spent.

[43] **Christine Chapman:** Do you think that there are benefits to be gained from young people's involvement? Would that be a plus point?

[44] **Ms Crowley:** Yes, absolutely. Part of the whole issue about children's budgets is about accountability. Those who have a responsibility to provide have a duty to ensure that the best interests of children and young people are considered, and civil society has to be able to hold those people to account. It is important and beneficial for children to be involved in that process, and it is also a means of teaching and supporting them to learn about issues of democracy and civil society.

[45] A few years ago, I was privileged to go to a conference on children's budgeting in South Africa, and I believe that you will speak to some of those people later. There were some young people there from Fortaleza, a big city in Brazil, who had been involved in determining the municipal budget. I am not familiar with its system, but, in South America, the public are apparently much more involved with budgets generally and can go along to public meetings and so on. These young people had been involved by going to look at the circumstances of children in what they called 'special circumstances', so homeless children, labouring children, sex workers and so on, and then they reported back at the budget meetings about the concerns that they had about them. They were then able to determine that more money should be spent on homeless hostels or something than the municipality had originally allocated. That was a very beneficial participatory process as far as those young people were concerned. They had learned not only about the budget-setting process and about money, but also about the circumstances of other children.

[46] **Christine Chapman:** You clearly welcome this idea, but are there any prerequisites that we should consider if we are to set this up seriously? What should be in place for those young people to be involved?

[47] **Ms Croke:** On the toolkit idea, I think that there needs to be an educational period

focusing on budget literacy first and foremost, then on gaining an understanding of democracy and governance at local authority level, as well as of children's rights and how rights link to budgets. So there needs to be quite a lot of preparatory work with children and young people before they can become involved in effecting change at budget level.

[48] **Ms Crowley:** There needs to be clarity about what is and is not up for discussion. We would not advocate five-year-olds determining the budget for Wales on their own. It is about working out where the parameters for children and young people's involvement are, what decisions they can influence, how their views will be taken into account, how decisions will be made, and how those decisions will be fed back to them. In terms of research, most children and young people do not expect to rule the world or control everything, and this is about them having a say and having their views taken into account, which is what they want. So, those parameters would need to be determined with the children and young people too.

[49] **Ms Croke:** There needs to be support for professionals who work around children and young people, because budgets are considered to be very technical and complicated.

[50] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. I remind Members that we have quite a few questions to get through, and we need to finish this session at 10 a.m., because we have the phone link to South Africa booked. Therefore, I would like, as far as is possible, succinct answers and questions. We may need to submit some of the questions that we have for the witnesses in writing if we do not manage to get to them. Ann has the next question.

[51] **Ann Jones:** You touched on forward planning and how funding is allocated to deliver policies and programmes for children and young people. Do you think that there is enough forward planning? Do you have examples of where that has happened or of where it is not happening?

[52] **Ms Crowley:** I can talk about an example where it has not happened in the work that we have done in relation to asylum seekers. That was a big issue when we conducted research into the circumstances of asylum-seeking young people in Wales about four years ago—'Uncertain Futures' was the name of the report. One of the issues that came up for service providers in that was that budgets were not being set early enough for them to get on and provide the services. The asylum situation is not unique, but it is difficult, because forward planning is difficult, although not impossible, with regard to when people are going to arrive. Providing for the education of the 100 asylum seekers or migrant children who come into your local authority is very difficult if you do not know what is coming beforehand.

[53] I am not an expert on forward planning, by any means, but in the voluntary sector we have many examples of projects. We are now in the middle of February, and organisations in the voluntary sector probably do not know whether they will have funding on 1 April. They will probably have issued redundancy notices to staff just in case. In my experience, all public agencies have got better in terms of forward planning, but there is still a long way to go, and there has been some discussion around the need to look at longer-term budgets rather than annual budgets. However, I am not an expert on this area.

[54] **Kirsty Williams:** In some ways, it is easy to identify resources in areas that are designed for children. To what extent do you think that children and young people's needs are taken into account when looking at other areas, such as housing and transport? In such areas, the needs of children might not immediately spring to the minds of the officials or politicians making decisions about those areas.

[55] **Ms Crowley:** I touched on this earlier. The Government should still be looking at those budgets and coming up with estimates of the proportions of those budgets that benefit children. It is more challenging—I accept that. There are examples of places where it has

been done and, and the monitoring of trends over time has to be consistent—you cannot look at it one way one year and another way the next year. Yes, economic development, transport and housing will all impact on children. The first report that we did in 2002, which is in the library, includes housing, and the economist came up with a way of determining proportion.

9.50 a.m.

[56] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. I think that we have dealt with question 8, so we shall now move on to question 9, which is also from Kirsty.

[57] **Kirsty Williams:** You have touched on some examples of where it has been done well, and your paper gives examples of countries where it has been successfully carried out. What lessons can we learn from other countries for us to be in a better position in Wales to understand how money is allocated and spent on children?

[58] **Ms Crowley:** That question is probably best put to the next witness. The only comment that I can make relates to my knowledge of other countries, particularly from my participation in the conference in South Africa. One of the lessons to learn is that there are a huge number of benefits. It is a lot of work and we need to learn lessons about how other countries have rendered the budget-setting process in a more user-friendly, accessible way to people generally, and children and young people in particular. At the conference, there was a presentation by an academic about the cost of not pursuing a particular policy, or pursuing a particular policy. So, another lesson would be that new policies and new directions for Government should be costed, not just in terms of the programme and the provision, but also the impact of doing this or not doing this, in terms of future costs.

[59] **Kirsty Williams:** That addresses question 10 about the necessity of cost-benefit analysis.

[60] **Helen Mary Jones:** It does. Do you want to ask your next question?

[61] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes. Briefly, on question 11, you say that there are benefits—in terms of governance, participation and democracy, there are obvious benefits—but can we demonstrate that more money equates to better outcomes for children?

[62] **Ms Crowley:** That is the million dollar question. I do not know that—

[63] **Kirsty Williams:** With regard to school spending, some counties spend more and get lower results than counties that spend less but have better educational outcomes.

[64] **Ms Crowley:** Yes. It is not a neat correlation. It is not just about money. We accept that. One of the issues in Wales and other parts of the UK with respect to children is that we have a crisis in the workforce. Most of the money spent on children's policies and programmes would be spent on staff. You can only buy so many computers, DVD players and so on. Those staff are not available for one reason or another. So, it is not just money. Cost-benefit analysis is pretty much in its infancy in terms of children's services, so I do not think that we know.

[65] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is the point: we do not know.

[66] I will ask the last question. The function of all of this is for us to make recommendations to the Assembly Government. However, we can also make recommendations that affect the way in which local government in Wales might conduct itself and so on—perhaps with regard to the children and young people's partnerships and their involvement in planning processes. Do you have any ideas about recommendations that you

would like us to make in our final report? I make no promises.

[67] **Ms Crowley:** As I said, given the history, we welcome the timing of the inquiry. It is brilliant, as far as we are concerned. It is far more effective for you to ask the questions than for us to do so. We would like to see the establishment of a children's budget—a document that sets out what is spent on children at both the national and local government level, as recommended by the UN committee. Our particular concern is poverty, and children and disadvantage. We would like to have transparency with regard to what is spent on tackling child poverty in Wales—the idea of pro-poor spending. Tackling child poverty is a priority for the Welsh Assembly Government. We would like to be able to see, analyse and observe whether that priority is reflected in spending and whether that money is getting to the poorest children.

[68] We would like to see the national Government and local-authority-led partnerships ensuring that children and young people are able to participate in budget setting. We now have quite a good structure for children and young people's participation at a national level, by way of Funky Dragon and we have local-authority-based youth fora and children's fora. So, the structures are in place to enable children and young people to participate in the budget-setting process. Do you have anything to add to that, Rhian?

[69] **Ms Croke:** I just wondered whether there might be a role for you as the Children and Young People Committee to monitor the proportion of expenditure on children. I do not know whether that might be possible.

[70] **Ms Crowley:** At the moment, the Finance Committee, presumably, scrutinises the general budget; I do not know whether you could have a role in terms of scrutinising a children's budget.

[71] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is a possibility.

[72] **Christine Chapman:** Do you feel that more research should be done? Often, if you spend a lot on children, you do not see the results for many years and, often, when people set budgets, they do not always see into the future. Do you think that more research should be done? I know much work is being done, but people do not always see the priorities and what could happen. Perhaps some sort of longitudinal study could be undertaken.

[73] **Ms Crowley:** Yes, and action research. For example, if participatory projects were set up for children, you could have pilot schemes and research, evaluate them and roll them out. You will know that the Government recently produced its wellbeing monitor, which gives us a lot of good information of a particular kind about outcomes for children and trends in terms of progress towards the core aims. Some sort of budget analysis, undertaken by Government, which followed that structure would be useful.

[74] **Ms Croke:** Further to what I said earlier about education, a recommendation for Government would be to budget for literacy throughout the personal and social education curriculum in both primary and secondary education. You could relate that to understanding human rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is now incorporated into PSE. There are so many benefits for children to learn about budgets from household up to Government level. That could be fruitful.

[75] **Helen Mary Jones:** Is there anything else that Members wish to raise? I see that there is not. Thank you both for your comprehensive answers and your paper. We are pleased that you are glad that we are doing this work. It seemed like the right time for us as well, and we look forward to your comments on our recommendations.

[76] **Diolch yn fawr i'r ddwy ohonoch** Thank you both.
chi.

[77] **Ms Crowley:** We will provide you with comments on your recommendations and we are co-ordinating written responses from the other children's non-governmental organisations.

[78] **Helen Mary Jones:** Mae gennym dri munud cyn siarad â Debbie Budlender ac **Helen Mary Jones:** We have three minutes before talking to Debbie Budlender and we mae angen tri munud arnom ar ôl 10 a.m. i need three minutes after 10 a.m. to ensure sicrhau bod y dechnoleg yn gweithio. Felly, that the technology is working. Therefore, I awgrymaf ein bod yn cael egwyl am 5 suggest that we take a five minute break. munud.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 9.59 a.m. a 10.03 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 9.59 a.m. and 10.03 a.m.*

[79] **Helen Mary Jones:** We have all returned and I think that we have the link up and running. Hello, Debbie.

[80] **Ms Budlender:** Hello.

[81] **Helen Mary Jones:** I am Helen Mary Jones, and I am the Chair of the committee. I want to say a big thank you to you for making time to be with us today. We are looking forward very much to hearing your views. Children's budgeting is new territory for us in Wales, so we know that we need to learn a lot from other countries that have been working on this for a lot longer and, therefore, we really appreciate your time. I will just remind Members that there is about 0.5 second delay between when we speak and when Debbie hears us, so we need to ensure that we take that into account when asking questions. Are you ready to take some questions from us, Debbie?

[82] **Ms Budlender:** Yes.

[83] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is great; thank you. I will start with the first question and then other Members will introduce themselves before they speak, so that you know who we are. Will you start by outlining for us your experience of children's budgeting?

[84] **Ms Budlender:** Okay. I started in about 1996, 1997 or 1998. We had started the previous year with the women's budget initiative, which was a joint initiative of parliamentarians in the new post-apartheid Government and two research non-governmental organisations. I led that initiative and co-ordinated it conceptually. That was from within my NGO. The other NGO partner had the idea of trying to do the same thing for children, so it started an initiative, and I helped with its early conceptualisation. That other organisation was the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, which then produced quite a lot over the next few years and is now doing very little. However, in recent years, I have been working with the Children's Institute, which is a research organisation based at the University of Cape Town, and we have been doing what are essentially children's budgets linked to its advocacy and research campaigns around the child support grant, which is a child benefit, and around the comprehensive Children's Act, as amended in 2007, which was preceded by 10 years of advocacy and work at that institute. It was passed about two years ago, and now we are doing advocacy work to see that adequate money is given to implement the Act.

[85] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is very helpful. Christine Chapman has the next question.

[86] **Christine Chapman:** Hello, Debbie. My first question is: what in your view are the

benefits of conducting children's budgeting? Are there any drawbacks?

[87] **Ms Budlender:** I have found it useful to focus on particular issues. I have seen what has been done by Jane Hutt in a report of three pages that sums up what has been happening. I have some hesitation about work that talks of more money for children. It is more useful to talk about more or better spending for particular things, which could be for a particular problem or a particular type of programme or a particular group of children. There is a danger, if one just talks about more, that it gets seen in the context of how everyone wants more for their special interest group. In the South African constitution, and in most countries, children have what Nelson Mandela called a first call, which means that they have stronger rights than adults, so there is a sense in which doing work on children's budgets is saying that there is an international commitment, and there may be a national commitment, to children's rights, and that the rights of children should be stronger than those of other groups, and therefore, we must prioritise them. One way of measuring that is looking at what was given in the budget to implement the programmes that will help children.

[88] The reason that we got into gender budgeting was that, after 1994, lots of wonderful promises came in with the new Government, but we knew that too many promises were being made and that not everything would be implemented. So, the gender budget was a way of measuring whether the money was at least given; you then have to go on to see that the money is spent and reaches where it is meant to reach.

[89] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you.

[90] **Ms Budlender:** I do not think that I answered your question directly, so, if you want to come back to it, I would be happy to do that.

[91] **Christine Chapman:** May I clarify the last point? Are you talking about targeting different groups among children?

[92] **Ms Budlender:** I do not think that it is all that useful to try to find out what percentage of the budget goes to children, because it could be that we spend 50 per cent of the budget on children, but that we spend it on the wrong programme, or that we spend it on programmes that mostly benefit the wealthiest 20 per cent of children in the country.

10.10 a.m.

[93] For me, there is an issue of knowing which children most need Government assistance, and which programmes will address the real problems or the most urgent problems that children face. I do not know what the situation is in Wales. In the previous narrative, you have scored on the employment programmes that targeted adults, but that probably scored nothing in terms of the percentage going to children. One could argue that a good employment programme would put money in the hands of parents, which would help children more than spending on something that directly goes to children. This is not a simple analysis and it is not simply a matter of computing sums; you must look at the policies that are underneath those numbers.

[94] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is very helpful. Christine?

[95] **Christine Chapman:** What are the broad principles, structures and processes that must be in place to enable children's budgeting?

[96] **Ms Budlender:** With gender budgeting, I will always say that there are no recipes—you must look at your country's problems and at what the Government is doing. Underneath gender budgeting and children's budgeting, I talk about five steps that could be seen as a

framework for doing any sort of budget analysis. First, you will start with the problem, which could be in a particular sector and could relate to children. I was in China last month, and the biggest problem facing Chinese women is migrant labour. So, if the problem is migrant labour, the second step is to identify what are the Government's programmes and policies that address women migrant labourers, and to assess whether those policies and programmes are addressing the problems that you have identified that these women have, including, for example, no access to healthcare because they are registered in the rural areas but are now living in the urban areas. So, the question is whether the programmes and policies address that issue. If not, you must change them. If they do address that issue, you must assess how much money is given to implement those programmes and policies.

[97] Only in the third step do you go on to the budget; you must have good programmes and policies in place first. The third step is how much money is allocated. If the allocation comes at the beginning of the budget year, it is a promise that it might not happen. So, the fourth step is asking whether the money was used for what it was allocated for and whether it reached the people who really needed it, or whether it went to the wrong people or was floated away in corruption. The final step is to do with outcomes and whether it made a difference to the problems that you identified in the first place. Sometimes, we devise policies that we think will solve a problem, but they do not.

[98] So, for me, that is a framework that one can use in relation to budgeting for gender, for children or for any group. It first targets the problems and, secondly, it keeps in mind that allocation is not the whole story and that you must follow it afterwards.

[99] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you; that is helpful. Kirsty Williams?

[100] **Kirsty Williams:** Good morning, Debbie. This is Kirsty Williams speaking. I think that you have just answered my question. However, are there any further lessons that we can learn from your experiences of working in gender budgeting?

[101] **Ms Budlender:** I did make little notes on this question. An issue that I have touched on a bit is my strong belief that one does not just talk about all children—there will be some children who are more in need than others. I noticed from the document that I received from you that some of the money goes to local authorities; in most countries you will find that, in some local authorities, the kids are doing worse than in others.

[102] Budgets are all about prioritisation, so it is often useful to disaggregate what is happening to boys as opposed to girls, kids from wealthy or less wealthy families, kids from single-parent families, or other kinds of family, and kids from different localities. Budgets are about distribution, and not just distribution between kids and adults, but distribution between different groupings of kids.

[103] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, Debbie. This is Ann Jones. Are you aware of any work that might demonstrate a link between the levels of spending and better outcomes for children and young people?

[104] **Ms Budlender:** Sorry, which link? I could not hear you.

[105] **Ann Jones:** The link between the level of spending and better outcomes for children and young people.

[106] **Ms Budlender:** I would have to think about that. It is quite difficult to give an answer off pat, but the thing about outcomes is that there are always a lot of different factors that influence outcomes, so I am not sure whether you can find a correlation between good outcomes and extra spending. In South Africa, we have a lot of evidence that the child

support grant, which is a small grant that goes to the caregivers of small children every month, has been associated with more children being in school. We have achieved that without attaching any conditions to the grant. I have done some work on that, which I could send to you. The grant was carefully designed to be very simple, so that officials and beneficiaries understand it, and it is difficult to meddle with. It is a small amount of money, but an analysis of survey data showed that it really made a difference.

[107] **Ann Jones:** Thank you, Debbie. I would be interested to receive that piece of work.

[108] **Helen Mary Jones:** It would be useful to see that example, and it is interesting that it is a universal grant. I would like to ask some questions—

[109] **Ms Budlender:** Perhaps I should say that, with that grant, we are continuing with advocacy and at this point, 80 per cent of children are eligible for it, due to a change to the means test. The grant was originally for children under seven years of age, and was introduced in 1998. Through concerted advocacy as well as research that showed what it achieved, we have now had the grant extended to children up to 15 years of age. Tomorrow is our budget day and the Minister of finance will almost certainly announce the extension of the grant to 16 years from this year, 17 years from next year, and 18 years the year after. So, it is an interesting case study of how evidence-based research combined with advocacy has resulted in better outcomes for children. The budget work has been built into that, but we have also done other work—some of the advocacy has been saying, ‘This is affordable’.

[110] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. That sounds like a good example of money making a difference, the research showing that it has made a difference, and that resulting in more money.

[111] **Ms Budlender:** Yes. We have written up that case study, and I can send it to you if that would be useful.

[112] **Helen Mary Jones:** That would be very useful, if that is possible. Thank you.

[113] **Ms Budlender:** I should warn you that the report is quite long.

[114] **Helen Mary Jones:** I am sure that we can manage.

[115] **Ms Budlender:** Okay.

[116] **Helen Mary Jones:** Our problem with this piece of work is not having too much evidence, but not having enough. Any good evidence that we can find, we would be very grateful for.

[117] I would like to ask a broad question. What advice would you give to a country like Wales as we look to set up more transparent budgeting processes to show children’s budgets? That is a big question.

10.20 a.m.

[118] **Ms Budlender:** Yes, that is a big question. I must admit that I know very little about Wales. My grandmother lived there for a few years as a child, but I am speaking about countries in general and not about Wales. One possibility is to try to ask Governments to introduce children’s budget statements, if you are talking about transparency and about what is being done for children. This is something that we do in the Western Cape province, which is my province, relating to gender and youth and, this year, disability has been added. Basically, every Government department has to submit a report according to a standard

format. They first look at their biggest sub-programmes and their biggest allocations and ask what, if anything, are they doing for gender and youth and then they pull out any other sub-programmes that they think contribute to gender equality or youth development. So, it is a structured process, which is meant not to put too much of a burden on the Government departments, so that they express in their own words what they think they are doing and that is then tabled in Parliament. So, that is one possibility for how to do this.

[119] The other possibility is to look at your performance-oriented budgeting, so that, if there are already targets and reporting on achievement in the budget, you also build disaggregation into that so that you can see what goes to kids and what goes to adults.

[120] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you, that is very helpful. From the work that you have been involved with and your experience, are there key lessons that we could learn about any pitfalls or mistakes that you think should be avoided in trying to develop a children's budgeting process and that transparency that you talked about?

[121] **Ms Budlender:** Sorry, can you repeat the question?

[122] **Helen Mary Jones:** Sorry, it was not very clear. Do you think that any mistakes have been made or are there things that have not worked when trying to tackle children's budgeting that we could learn from and avoid?

[123] **Ms Budlender:** I think that the one mistake that is made is to get a lot of research done that does not then get out to someone who will apply pressure. So, all the time while you undertake this analysis and research, you should think about who will use it, how they will use it and how to present it in a way that will facilitate its use.

[124] On this work, I suspect that your committee could think about working with NGOs that work in the children's arena because they already feel strongly about things. They could provide outside pressure that could help. You already have powers as parliamentarians, but it also helps to have outside pressure.

[125] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you, that is very helpful. Do Members have more questions for Debbie? They are all shaking their heads and saying 'no'.

[126] **Ms Budlender:** If your committee wants to send me questions via e-mail, let me know.

[127] **Helen Mary Jones:** That might be helpful, particularly as we get other evidence. We may want to ask you what you think about what we are being told by others. It was useful to get your comment on the Government's paper, for example. So, that would be great.

[128] **Ms Budlender:** Okay and good luck to you.

[129] **Helen Mary Jones:** Is there anything you wish to add, Debbie, before you go?

[130] **Ms Budlender:** No.

[131] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you for your help. That was interesting, useful and it worked. Before we move on to the next item on the agenda, I would like to thank the technical staff in particular for setting that up. It all went smoothly.

10.25 a.m.

Cynnig Trefniadol
Procedural Motion

[132] **Helen Mary Jones:** Cytunwyd i drafod yr eitem nesaf yn breifat, felly cynigiaf fod
Helen Mary Jones: It was agreed to discuss the next item in private, therefore I propose that

y pwyllgor yn penderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog Rhif 10.37(vi).
the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 10.37(vi).

[133] Gwelaf ein bod yn gytûn. Diolch. I see that we are in agreement. Thank you.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion carried.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.26 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.26 a.m.