



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

**Pwyllgor Plant a Pobl Ifanc
The Children and Young People Committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 3 Mawrth 2009
Tuesday, 3 March 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

Angela Burns	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
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

Keith Bowen	Cyswllt Teulu Cymru Contact a Family Wales
Zoe Richards	Plant Anabl yn Cyfri Cymru Disabled Children Matter Wales
Nicollette Shercliff	Plant Anabl yn Cyfri Cymru Disabled Children Matter Wales

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 9.31 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.31 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Helen Mary Jones:** Croeso i bawb i gyfarfod y Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc. Hoffwn atgoffa pawb o'r materion cadw tŷ, fel petai. Cynhelir y cyfarfod yn ddwyieithog ac felly mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg. Mae offer cyfieithu ar gael a all fod o gymorth os ydych yn drwm eich clyw. Atgoffaf bawb hefyd i ddiffodd unrhyw ffonau symudol, eu 'mwyar duon' ac ati. Nid yw'n ddigon da i'w rhoi ar 'tawel' gan eu bod yn amharu ar yr offer cyfieithu a darlledu. Nid ydym yn disgwyl ymarfer tân

Helen Mary Jones: Welcome to everyone to this meeting of the Children and Young People Committee. I remind everyone of the housekeeping arrangements. The meeting will be held bilingually and so you are welcome to speak in Welsh or English. Simultaneous translation equipment is available, which can also help if you are hard of hearing. I also remind everyone to switch off any mobile phones, BlackBerrys and so on. It is not sufficient to switch them to 'silent' as they interfere with the

heddiw, felly os clywch y larwm tân, mae'n golygu bod rhywbeth yn digwydd ac felly byddwchystal â dilyn y tywyswyr allan o'r ystafell. Gofynnaf i Aelodau ddatgan unrhyw fuddiant. Gwelaf nad oes unrhyw fuddiannau i'w datgan.

interpretation and broadcasting equipment. We do not expect a fire drill today, so if the fire alarm sounds, it means that something is happening and so please follow the ushers out of the room. I ask Members to make any declarations of interest that they may have. I see that there are no declarations of interest.

[2] Cyn inni symud ymlaen, hoffwn ddiolch yn fawr i'r Aelodau a'r grwpiau o rieni a gymerodd ran yn y cyfarfodydd anffurfiol gwerthfawr iawn yr wythnos diwethaf. Yr oedd yn brofiad gwych ac yr wyf yn hynod ddiolchgar i bawb a gymerodd ran. Cawn gyfle yn nes ymlaen yn y cyfarfod i drafod rhai o'r syniadau a ddeilliodd o'r cyfarfod gyda'r rhieni.

Before we move one, I want to thank those Members and the groups of parents who took part in the invaluable informal meetings that were held last week. It was an excellent experience and I am extremely grateful to everyone who took part. We will have an opportunity later in the meeting to discuss some of the ideas that resulted from that meeting with parents.

[3] Yr ydym wedi cael ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb oddi wrth Lynne Neagle, fel arfer, ac felly estynnwn groeso cynnes i Ann Jones, sydd bron â bod yn aelod cyflawn o'r pwyllgor bellach. Diolch yn fawr, fel arfer, am eich cyfraniad, Ann.

We have received apologies for absence from Lynne Neagle, as usual, and we therefore extend a warm welcome to Ann Jones, who is now more or less a substantive member of the committee. Thank you very much, as usual, for your contribution, Ann.

9.34 a.m.

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

[4] **Helen Mary Jones:** Hoffwn atgoffa'r tystion y cynhelir y cyfarfod yn ddwyieithog, felly efallai y bydd angen yr offer cyfieithu arnoch. Mae croeso i chithau hefyd ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

Helen Mary Jones: I remind witnesses that the meeting will take place bilingually, and so you may need to use the interpretation equipment. You are also welcome to speak in Welsh or English.

[5] Estynnaf groeso cynnes i Keith Bowen a Nicollette Shercliff. Caf ar ddeall bod Zoe Richards ar ei ffordd ond, yn anffodus, ni fedrwn aros amdani.

I extend a warm welcome to Keith Bowen and Nicollette Shercliff. I understand that Zoe Richards is on her way but, unfortunately, we cannot wait for her.

[6] These Tuesday morning slots are quite tight, so we need to make a start.

[7] Diolch am eich tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig. Thank you for your written evidence.

[8] We are very grateful that you have come to committee to give evidence, and we would like to go straight into a set of questions. Before we move on, can you hear everything, Nicollette, and is everything okay?

[9] **Ms Shercliff:** Yes.

[10] **Helen Mary Jones:** If you need us to stop or slow down at any point, just let us know. We tend to ramble on a bit. I will begin with the first question, and it is very much up to you how you want to answer. We will address the questions to both of you—and to all

three of you when Zoe gets here—and then you can choose the most appropriate person to answer, or you can all contribute. Is that okay, Nicollette?

[11] **Ms Shercliff:** Yes.

[12] **Helen Mary Jones:** Good. I will begin. Could you tell us about your understanding of the phrase ‘children’s budgeting’? What are the benefits of children’s budgeting exercises?

[13] **Mr Bowen:** From the point of view of Disabled Children Matter Wales, children’s budgeting goes to the heart of tracking Welsh Assembly Government expenditure on disabled children and young people. There are broader issues around children’s budgeting, but we need budgets to be as precise as possible. That goes to the heart of some of the issues that we have had as a campaign, in trying to ensure that the various initiatives get backed with financial resources that can then be monitored and traced.

[14] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. Do you have anything to add, Nicollette?

[15] **Ms Shercliff:** No.

[16] **Angela Burns:** One telling comment in your evidence is from Lee in Swansea, who said that:

[17] ‘Young disabled people across Wales will look at this draft budget and wonder what will this mean for us. Those who have been involved in giving evidence to various WAG committees in recent years will be thinking where is the investment to back the promises made’.

[18] You were very clear in your paper—and I thank you for it—that there is little or no transparency in how the Assembly Government sets and allocates its budgets for disabled children and young people. Could you tell us about your experiences of trying to find out how much is spent on disabled children and young people? What have been the main problems with that?

[19] **Mr Bowen:** Nicky will start with our answer to that one. I will read the prepared answer into her ear, and she can say what she has to say.

[20] **Ms Shercliff:** Since 2003, a group of young disabled people have met at least three times a year to discuss the issues that they face. On many occasions, we have had the opportunity to meet with the Assembly and with members of committees to have an input to policy making. Over the last six years, we have generally discussed the same issues and asked the same questions. Small things have changed, but there have been no significant changes to how our lives are affected by the issues that we face. Policies have been put in place to remove barriers, but they have not had successful outcomes. There have been no substantial moneys attached to those polices.

[21] Each time we ask for a service that we need to live our everyday lives, we are told that there are not enough resources available. Without substantial funding, and policy recommendations there will be no impact on the issues that affect our lives.

9.40 a.m.

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

[23] **Angela Burns:** Thank you. I thought that what you had to say was very telling, Nicolette. One of the issues that we face is that the Government will say that it is providing

funding and budgeting for disabled children, but it is very hard for us to track it through. That is why we asked whether you could give us some examples of cases where the funding is obviously not there or where it is evident and of the difficulties. Your evidence has been really helpful, because it is coming from the sharp end of the situation.

[24] **Mr Bowen:** That is the feedback that we get from young people. A number of young people from across Wales were able to meet with Jane Hutt last week, and that is the sentiment that they expressed. They have been giving evidence over the years and there have been various Welsh Assembly Government policies, but there does not seem to be the tie-in with the budgetary process, which is a frustration. One of the other issues is that one of the reasons why there is not a direct cross-over between some of the Assembly Government's policies and the budgetary process is that, to a certain extent, the pre-budget process is not very transparent.

[25] **Angela Burns:** Yes.

[26] **Mr Bowen:** In the voluntary sector, we tried at a very early stage in 2007, and as a campaign throughout 2008, to influence the early stages of the budget. For the voluntary sector, it seems that there is not much transparency about the pre-budget stage. Obviously, a great deal of work will already be going on behind the scenes with regard to the budget coming up in the autumn, and yet the current structure of sub-expenditure groups reporting through Ministers and to Cabinet seems to be a bit of a closed book to the voluntary sector. However, it is at that early stage that we need to be involved. So, there is a lack of transparency after the budget, but there is also not a great deal of transparency before it is set. Although it is clearly for the Welsh Assembly Government to set its own budgets with scrutiny by the Assembly, it is quite difficult for the voluntary sector to find a way in to contribute positively to that. We are certainly not given very much information about how the process works. Therefore, it is sometimes hard to track spending. Do you want us to pick up on this point about tracking the spending once it has been announced?

[27] **Angela Burns:** Not at the moment, thank you.

[28] **Helen Mary Jones:** We will come on to that.

[29] **Angela Burns:** If you could be more involved in the process and we could make it more transparent, how do you think you could be involved in the process and at what point? You must appreciate that any Government, when putting together budgets, simply cannot ask everybody for their views. How would you see you making an effective contribution to the pre-budget process? You have identified clearly in your paper that, if we could get that right, it would be very helpful. Therefore, what would you like to be able to do as the voluntary sector?

[30] **Mr Bowen:** There are two things to say about that. Perhaps Nicky would like to say something about what happens when young people meet with Assembly Members and Ministers and whether there is any discussion of money.

[31] **Ms Shercliff:** I think that the young people who have meetings with Ministers feel that there is no discussion about money that they can understand and relate to.

[32] **Mr Bowen:** A lot of the discussion with young people tends to be about the issues, and there is very little discussion about the money. Certainly, in the meeting last week, as far as I am aware, there was a lot of discussion of the issues, but no discussion of the budget. So, to a certain extent, a little more upfront discussion about finances and resources would be helpful.

[33] **Angela Burns:** Are you saying that if Ministers say, 'Yes, we would like to try to help', you would almost rather them say, 'But we only have £x million, so we can only do this much'? Do you feel that the fact that there is no indication of how big the budget is going to be does not help you to prioritise?

[34] **Mr Bowen:** Yes. The current situation does not lend itself to realistic discussions, because there are quite limited resources and, to be honest, as we look ahead, they are going to be even more limited. So, there is not much direct discussion of finances and resources. There seems to be a mismatch between policy discussions and discussion of the issues and of the money.

[35] On the pre-budgetary process question, I am not sure, because I do not know that much about it. I would like to know more, and the campaign would like to know more about how the process works. It is hard to answer the question of how we could be more involved, because it is not at all clear to us how the process works. With regard to feeding into the sub-expenditure groups and so on in the early stages—in the spring and summer—obviously there are several different mechanisms whereby different vested interests are able to feed in their priorities and say what the demands on their budgets are. It seems that there ought to be a clearer and more transparent mechanism for the voluntary sector to input. I am not sure whether we know enough about that process to be able to make a recommendation.

[36] **Angela Burns:** Does Zoe want to add anything to the discussion? We are talking about the lack of transparency in the budgeting process and the disassociation between the money and the issues and the outcomes required.

[37] **Ms Richards:** Going back to some of the things that Nicky raised and your earlier question about having discussions with young people about how much is available, I know that Nicky has been involved in this for several years, and that young people almost have an expectation that, if they come to meet Assembly Members and raise their issues, action is going to be taken. Those discussions around the budget would be helpful in terms of their expectations not being raised as much, because, if they know that budgets are very tight, they will know that there are a limited amount of things that can happen for young people. The congress in 2003 was a huge event, and the young people had a really positive outlook and thought that things were going to change quite rapidly for them, but that has not been the case. So, a very honest line on the budget would be beneficial to young people.

[38] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. We are going to need to move on. I remind Members that we have quite a lot of questions to get through by 10.30 a.m., so I would appreciate succinct questions and answers—I am not saying that just because Ann is next.

[39] **Ann Jones:** I will not take offence, Chair. Mr Bowen, you have clearly demonstrated that there is not any transparency in budget-setting at the national level. What is your view of budget-setting at local authority level? Is it any different?

[40] **Mr Bowen:** Prior to today, we have spoken to several different organisations, and someone said yesterday that you need a private detective to trace the money. That was interesting.

[41] With regard to some of the moneys that have been announced in response to the Disabled Children Matter Wales campaign, as we outline in the paper, some of the problems have arisen because the announcements have been made in dribs and drabs. Therefore, local authorities, in particular, have not always known what is coming from one year to the next.

9.50 a.m.

[42] We are currently trying to track spending of the Cymorth money for inclusive play—which the Assembly Government has announced in response to the campaign—and the short-break money. We are trying to encourage our supporters to get out and about locally and to track how that money is being spent. It is often difficult to trace that expenditure. Having said that, there are a number of issues that complicate matters—certainly with regard to the way in which funding is announced by the Welsh Assembly Government at the moment. There are often delays and local authorities sometimes do not know what is coming their way until August or September, or sometimes even later. That makes long-term planning difficult and results in some last-minute planning. That does not help.

[43] The amounts involved are also quite small by the time the money has been spread across all 22 counties. Again, this sometimes presents problems for local authorities with regard to being able to make the best use of that. Sometimes, announcements from the Welsh Assembly Government do not clarify whether money will be received year on year, which, once again, makes long-term planning difficult. So, a lack of transparency at a local level means that it is sometimes difficult to trace spending on disabled children and young people, but there are also practical problems that make a positive use of the money quite difficult.

[44] **Helen Mary Jones:** Nicollette, do you want to come in on that?

[45] **Ms Shercliff:** No.

[46] **Helen Mary Jones:** I have a supplementary question before we move on. You talk about some of the issues with Assembly Government funding, but as you rightly point out, we are talking about relatively small amounts of money. Do you have any sense, as a campaign, of the extent of the commitment of local government budgets? A lot of the spending that you need to track is core local government spending on education, social services and housing, which does not come down in special grants in dribs and drabs from the Welsh Assembly Government. Do you have any sense from local government in Wales of a willingness to be more transparent, or do you think that that needs a stronger central lead?

[47] **Ms Richards:** As far as children and young people are concerned, at the moment, the children and young people's plans are overarching for all kinds of priorities. Looking across the 22 local authorities, only seven have made disabled children a priority within their plans. The Cymorth grant will follow the priorities in each area, but only seven have made young disabled people a priority.

[48] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you, that is helpful. Keith, do you want to add to that?

[49] **Mr Bowen:** One issue is the data collection requirements, which has arisen a few times recently. Contact a Family and Shelter Cymru did a piece of work tracing spending on disabled facilities grants. Asking about the level of spending for children and young people—that is, those aged under 18—for disabled facilities grants was not as straightforward as it could and should have been. One of the review's recommendations in 2005 was that separate figures should be kept for children and adults. So, sometimes, as well as prioritising areas for their spending, pulling out the data is not always as clear as it should be. The Welsh Assembly Government could have a role in simplifying and clarifying data collection and financial reporting to make it easier to track that money. As well as making decisions about the local priorities for funding through the young people's plans and so on, there are also issues about financial reporting to ensure that local authorities and local health boards can pull out the relevant statistics on spending.

[50] **Helen Mary Jones:** The data issue is something that is coming out in our discussions.

[51] **Christine Chapman:** How do you perceive the Welsh Assembly Government and the extent to which it is joined up in how it allocates and spends money on disabled children and young people across departments?

[52] **Mr Bowen:** Within the Welsh Assembly Government, as I mentioned, what has been quite frustrating for the campaign is how announcements are made about various initiatives and various pots of money. Sometimes the links between the policy divisions and the finance department in the Welsh Assembly Government are not as clear as they could be. We could run through many different examples of where there have been announcements of funding without prior discussion of the mechanisms for putting that funding through. That is partly why we end up with delays within the financial year. So, there are various bits of money that are not ready to go at the beginning of the financial year in April, even though the announcement has been made and the policy division has done its work, as the dialogue with the finance department has not always taken place in order to ensure a smooth flow of those resources. If you look at the money for short breaks, for example, again there were delays in the first two years, but only now, two years later, are local authorities aware of what money is coming their way in April. So there is a mismatch between the finance and policy divisions, which leads to a delay in these announcements and the money is therefore not being used most productively.

[53] **Christine Chapman:** What about local government? Does the same apply with regard to local government working across its departments?

[54] **Mr Bowen:** Nicky, do you want to say something quickly about some of the local projects that you have been involved in?

[55] **Ms Shercliff:** I have been involved in some good local projects that help disabled children and young people socially and a lot of them rely on funding, but because it is not there, they are not able to provide such projects in the same way as they used to be able to.

[56] **Mr Bowen:** Many really positive projects operate on a shoestring and do not know what money is coming their way from one year to the next. That makes it quite difficult for them to plan their activities. There are difficulties with regard to money cascading down. You are right, Chair, to raise the issue that it is not only about particular pots of money, but about spending as a whole. Local projects, particularly within the voluntary sector, often do not know what funding they will get from year to year. So, while some counties have made a commitment to disabled children and young people, many local projects still struggle and, on a financial basis, cannot plan for the long term.

[57] **Christine Chapman:** I thank Nicky, Keith and Zoe. I will now move on to talk a little about policy areas that are not so obviously directed towards children and young people, such as transport, housing, planning and leisure and so on. To what extent do you think that we are taking children's budgeting into account in those areas?

10.00 a.m.

[58] **Ms Richards:** The recommendations that came out of 'Why is it that disabled young people are always left until last?' did not really have any substantial or targeted budgets to accompany them. A lot of the recommendations were around employment and although employment was the key theme, the issues around gaining employment would include housing, transport and so on. If you look through the recommendations, there is very little to say to the public, 'We are addressing recommendation 14 with this initiative, which is also backed by so-many pounds'. It is the lack of joining things together that really has an impact. I know that the young people who were part of the review, including some of Nicky's friends, have not yet seen any benefits from those recommendations or, if there have been benefits,

they have not been able to directly relate them to the recommendations that were published.

[59] **Mr Bowen:** I have a brief positive point on that. I think that it is a good example of how things sometimes do come together, with regard to disabled facilities grants and the report that I mentioned earlier. Following a previous campaign, there was a recommendation from the review into disabled facilities grants in 2005 that parental means testing should be abolished and the Minister at that point accepted that recommendation, acted on it through secondary legislation and put money into it. We have revisited that now, three years later, and there have been a lot of positive developments in relation to disabled facilities grants. There are still plenty of issues left to deal with, but it can be shown that waiting times have come down, the service has been quicker—although demand has gone up it has been met—and it has not been hugely expensive. So, when things are planned and done in a planned way, there can be a lot of benefits. So, that is a positive with regard to housing.

[60] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is interesting because it is a clear example of the money following the policy and being able to see what is happening. It is useful to have that example.

[61] **Kirsty Williams:** From what you have said this morning, Keith, and from what Nicky has said, would it be correct for us to assume that, in general, disabled children and young people are not enabled to participate in budget setting and allocation processes?

[62] **Mr Bowen:** Nicky, would you like to say something about how much you think that you have been involved?

[63] **Ms Shercliff:** I have—

[64] **Ms Richards:** Have any of the forums or exercises that you have been involved with talked about budgeting?

[65] **Ms Shercliff:** No.

[66] **Helen Mary Jones:** Nicky, when people ask for your ideas, do they ask you how much it is going to cost and whether one thing is more important than another?

[67] **Ms Shercliff:** No.

[68] **Mr Bowen:** That was very well put. [*Laughter.*]

[69] **Kirsty Williams:** So, that was a ‘no’. What do you think would need to happen to enable that to change?

[70] **Mr Bowen:** I think that there needs to be a much more frank discussion about finances. I think that there also needs to be a direct link between finance and recommendations. If you look back at committee reports, going back to 2001 and the ‘Review of Services for Children with Special Health Needs’, there are a number of recommendations all the way through those reports, many of which were accepted by Ministers, but when it comes to looking back at them, there is quite often not a column to say whether those recommendations were met by any financial resources. So, I think that there needs to be a much more direct correlation, which brings us back to our first point in the paper, that people need to be able to look at Assembly committee recommendations and Welsh Assembly Government policies and scrutinise them and track whether any spending has been allocated to them.

[71] **Kirsty Williams:** What about support for children and young people to make it a

meaningful experience for them? If the Government was to open up its systems a bit more, what kind of practical support and assistance would children and young people need to be active participants in that?

[72] **Ms Richards:** It is about looking at the participation projects that are already out there. Young people have been successfully involved in the Committee on Equal of Opportunity, and although those discussions were issue-based, it is not difficult for participation organisations to open up the budgeting process and be involved with some of the finance committees, although that is a drier subject for young people. After years of discussing their issues, they are now keen to look at the budgeting process, and there would be a willingness to do that. It is about ensuring that participation projects or groups of young people are involved in finance committees, perhaps, or at least meeting those committees.

[73] **Ms Shercliff:** I think that if we were involved, from our own viewpoint, young people would want a clear breakdown of the spending, but, equally, we want to understand.

[74] **Kirsty Williams:** One of those would be useful for me too. *[Laughter.]*

[75] **Mr Bowen:** I think that Nicky summed it up, really. To be able to do that, much clearer data collection is needed. That is what makes this committee's focus on children's budgeting invaluable, because it is essential if we are to look at effective policy and planning.

[76] **Helen Mary Jones:** Nicky, if you and other young people were told enough about what money is being spent now and how much the Government has, you would be able to help to decide the most important things to spend it on.

[77] **Ms Shercliff:** Yes.

[78] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is great. Thank you. Chris, back to data, I think.

[79] **Christine Chapman:** Following on from the last point, you say in your evidence that figures are not recorded in a way that makes it easy to separate out budgets between children and adults. What mechanisms, do you think, can be used to enable this to happen?

[80] **Mr Bowen:** What seems to happen at the moment—again, we are not experts in this at all—is that some exercises are much more complicated than they need to be, because people are not keeping separate data right from the outset. It would make getting information on disabled facilities grants spending much easier if there were a clear requirement to keep the data for under-18s and over-18s separate: it would be quite a simple thing to do. Some local authorities do that, but others have been not doing it in such a straightforward way, which then makes it a big exercise to separate the information out. If the Welsh Assembly Government were to make it much clearer that we want data kept in that manner, that would be helpful.

[81] There are other, similar issues, because many children's services—and not just disabled children, but children across the board—are also services for adults. Wheelchair services, for example, cover the whole of the population. If the Welsh Assembly Government were to ask for those data to be separated out right at the outset, it would really help. Within that, it would help to be able to pull out spending on disabled children and young people. We have worked with the task group, which was set up last January in response to the campaign, and one of the first agenda items was to provide a summary of spending on disabled children across the board, all the way. We have struggled to do that, and it is basically because the mechanisms are not in place.

[82] So, within the data, we want to see spending on children and adults separated out,

and, within that, the focus is on the clear, critical need to get data on spending on disabled children and young people clearly itemised.

[83] **Christine Chapman:** Following on from that, it has been suggested that budget analysis could be done following a similar structure to the ones set out in the child wellbeing monitor, which gives information on outcomes for children. Do any of you have a view on that suggestion?

[84] **Ms Richards:** I do not know about it.

[85] **Mr Bowen:** I am not familiar with that, I am afraid.

[86] **Christine Chapman:** Okay.

10.10 a.m.

[87] **Ann Jones:** In your paper, Keith, you said that there has been a considerable amount of evidence gathering and policy development over the years, with clear evidence that outcomes for disabled children and young people remain extremely poor. However, that does not seem to be reflected or even considered in the budget-making processes. Have you any evidence to show that, where you put more money in, outcomes for disabled children and young people get better? We are interested in following the money, but we need to know that there is evidence.

[88] **Helen Mary Jones:** Does more money lead to better outcomes?

[89] **Mr Bowen:** When we thought of revisiting the disabled facilities grant, I must admit that, if I had prejudged that—although you should never prejudge the outcome of any research that you do—I would probably have predicted that the outcomes would be quite poor. I thought that the goalposts might have been moved to overcome the difficulties around the parental means test, and there are still some difficulties around the funding. However, that is a good example of evidence being gathered, policy decisions being made being backed with funding, and the legislation being in place, and, in fact, it has proved to be effective. So, that is a definite example of outcomes following the money. However, for that to happen, all those things have to be in place.

[90] With a lot of the activities that are happening, some of the funding is starting to show dividends—around short breaks, inclusive play, and so on. There needs to be more evidence gathering on that, but the reports are starting to come back that this is starting to show an effect. However, at the moment, the mechanisms for proving that are quite poor.

[91] **Ms Richards:** On a much grander scale, the Welsh Paralympians received funding and expert coaching that were on a par with those of our other athletes and Olympians, but that does not reach all disabled young people in Wales. It was a clear example of the same amount of funding going into mainstream activities as into activities for disabled young people, and we were successful in the Paralympic Games.

[92] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is an interesting example, actually.

[93] **Kirsty Williams:** Keith, you said that you are beginning to see some outcomes from money going into specific areas. Are you aware of any other examples of a cost-benefit analysis being formally undertaken to look at the impact on spend, especially where spending might be offset in other areas because of that intervention?

[94] **Mr Bowen:** My hesitation in answering Ann's question implies not. I do not think

that there is enough of that going on.

[95] **Kirsty Williams:** Would you welcome more of it?

[96] **Mr Bowen:** We certainly would, and part of the reason for the hesitation was that I was trying to focus on how the money has been spent, where it has been spent well, and what the outcomes have been. We would very much appreciate that kind of approach. So, yes, more of it, please.

[97] **Helen Mary Jones:** I thank all three of you for your contributions. There are some clear areas emerging from your evidence on which we could make some recommendations. I want to build on those in the last couple of questions.

[98] We recently took evidence from a witness who had undertaken gender and children's budgeting work in regional government in South Africa. She suggested that the Government could introduce children's budget statements, where each Government department would have to say how its policies and programmes are helping work on gender, youth and disability, with that clearly matched against their budgets. Does that sound useful in making the budgeting processes here a bit more transparent?

[99] **Mr Bowen:** Yes. I am not familiar with that, but it sounds like a step in the right direction. I am sure that, with a bit of thought, you could get that sort of process to work.

[100] **Helen Mary Jones:** I presume, from what you have said already, that you would need the data sets available to make those statements meaningful.

[101] **Mr Bowen:** Yes, and hopefully, rather than placing a huge burden on the system, it could be done in a fairly manageable way. At the moment, it is not so much that the data are not being collected, but that they are not being collected in such a way as to allow the figures to be extrapolated easily. Hopefully, if those processes were put in place, you would have the figures. As Nicky pointed out, to be involved in weighing things up, you need to have the figures. You could then start to achieve a process similar to the suggestion from South Africa.

[102] **Helen Mary Jones:** This has been quite a project, because it is quite new and so identifying evidence has not been that easy. However, you are aware of the process: once we have concluded taking evidence, we will prepare a report, and the Ministers will have to respond to the recommendations that we have made. In your written evidence, you make some useful suggestions for recommendations that we will take into account, and you have touched on some further issues today. I was particularly struck by what you said about data and how meaningful participation is if young people are not talking about money as well as policy. However, would any of you like to add anything about the sorts of recommendations that you would like us to make?

[103] **Mr Bowen:** Tying in a little with Kirsty's last question about a cost-benefit analysis, I would like to raise the use of pilot schemes. The Welsh Assembly Government makes wide-ranging use of pilot schemes across Wales. Within those that affect disabled children and young people, there are a number of examples of schemes where, although we certainly welcome the initiatives—and there have been some positive pilot schemes on transition key working and autism—they are sometimes announced late and there are delays with funding, and that means that they have a bit of a wobbly start and there is a mismatch with the different financial years. There is also the issue of whether a cost-benefit analysis is even conducted or a clear discussion had of whether there will be a roll-out of the scheme at the end of the pilot. So, it would be worth looking at that in a little more depth and taking a critical look at the use of pilot schemes.

[104] **Helen Mary Jones:** So, it is a case of looking at when a pilot scheme is really a pilot scheme.

[105] **Mr Bowen:** Yes.

[106] **Kirsty Williams:** Picking up on that, are you aware of any cases in which a pilot scheme has run its course, an evaluation has supposedly been undertaken, but no-one seems to have seen the content of the evaluation and so the project has died a death, or perhaps by the time the evaluation has come to light and additional funding made available, there has been a gap, so the project has stalled and needs to be reworked because key staff have left because they have mortgages to pay and so on?

[107] **Mr Bowen:** Off the top of my head—although I might be wrong, and some of my colleagues in the voluntary sector might shout at me—I am struggling to think of a pilot scheme that has been fully rolled out. Helen’s question about when a pilot scheme is really a pilot scheme is relevant.

[108] **Helen Mary Jones:** A pilot project is only a pilot project if it is going somewhere, if it leads to something else. Otherwise, it may be a good project in itself, but it is not a pilot project.

[109] **Ann Jones:** Have you seen a scheme rolled out across the border for which we have then had to carry out a pilot project, even though it is known that an evaluation has been done across the border and the project rolled out? Is there any evidence that we tend to carry out pilot projects for the sake of it?

[110] **Kirsty Williams:** To appease people.

[111] **Ann Jones:** Yes, and to avoid providing proper funding for a scheme.

[112] **Mr Bowen:** Sometimes. Perhaps you would like to say something on this, Zoe?

[113] **Ms Richards:** The short breaks project was not a pilot scheme, but there was a small amount of money announced for one year. That money was spent in various local authorities, and there was then a need to evaluate how successful that small pot of money had been. In the meantime, for the three months that it took to evaluate it, the programme ceased to exist. It was then restarted with another announcement of moneys. However, what you had done, in effect, was create a fantastic service for a certain number of young people for six months, then lay off all the staff while it was being evaluated, and then input the money again. There were wasted resources in reigniting that project.

10.20 a.m.

[114] **Mr Bowen:** There is also a point on timescales. Some of the issues that we have been talking about are, to a certain extent, because of a lack of forward planning, particularly in line with budgeting processes. On the existing pilot schemes, we want to highlight that time is passing, so that cost-benefit analysis should be done early in the process, and it should be ensured that it is not left to the last minute. It has become a bit of a theme that there is not that forward planning that relates directly to the budget process to ensure that decisions are made at the right stage. To take the example of both the autism and the key working transition pilot schemes, which we hope, even at this early stage, will be rolled out, if the decisions and evidence gathering happen early, by the time those pilot schemes come to an end, there will be a clear announcement that things are running on. There is sometimes a mismatch between the policy-making timescales and the financial decision making, which means that we end up with these gaps. Sometimes, there is a reason for pilot schemes and they are helpful; at other

times, there is the sense that they are trying to make a little go a long way.

[115] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. Is there anything that any of you three would like to add, or are there any other questions or issues that Members would like to raise? I see that everyone is content. I thank all three of you again for being here this morning, with particular thanks to Nicollette, because it has been really useful to have you here. On this committee, we always find it helpful to talk directly to children and young people about their experiences. It has been really useful to have you all here, but particularly Nicollette. Thank you again for your written evidence. You will receive copies of our report in due course. Let us hope that we can make some progress.

10.22 p.m.

Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion

[116] **Helen Mary Jones:** Yr eitem nesaf ar yr agenda yw'r adroddiad drafft, ond cyn inni drafod hwnnw, cynigiaf fod **Helen Mary Jones:** The next item on the agenda is the draft report, but, before we discuss it, I propose that

[117] *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).*

[118] Gwelaf fod y pwyllgor yn gytûn. I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion carried.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.23 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.23 a.m.*