



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

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

**Dydd Mawrth, 1 Mawrth 2011
Tuesday, 1 March 2011**

Cynnwys
Contents

- 4 Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions
- 5 Adroddiad Etifeddiaeth y Pwyllgor—Casglu Tystiolaeth
Committee Legacy Report—Evidence Gathering
- 26 Papurau i’w Nodi
Papers to Note

Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi 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

Helen Mary Jones	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Committee Chair)
Lynne Neagle	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Sandy Mewies) Labour (substitute for Sandy Mewies)
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Oliver Bartlett	Y Pwyllgor Ecolegol, Ysgol Gynradd yr Holl Saint yr Eglwys yng Nghymru, y Barri Eco Committee, All Saints Church in Wales Primary School, Barry
Hannah Bowen	Myfyriwr Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol, Coleg Powys Health and Social Care Student, Coleg Powys
Dylan Clarke	Cyngor yr Ysgol, Ysgol Gynradd yr Holl Saint yr Eglwys yng Nghymru, y Barri School Council, All Saints Church in Wales Primary School, Barry
Bronwyn Davies	Myfyriwr Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol, Coleg Powys Health and Social Care Student, Coleg Powys
Mason Enticott	Y Pwyllgor Ecolegol, Ysgol Gynradd yr Holl Saint yr Eglwys yng Nghymru, y Barri Eco Committee, All Saints Church in Wales Primary School, Barry
Sam Grainger	Fforwm Ieuentid Tor-faen Torfaen Youth Forum
Emma Holland	Olchfa Comprehensive School, Red Café Youth Project, Mumbles Ysgol Gyfun yr Olchfa, Prosiect Ieuentid Red Café, y Mwmbwls
Eve Hopkins	Grŵp Gweithredu'r Ysgol ar Faeth, Ysgol Gynradd yr Holl Saint yr Eglwys yng Nghymru, y Barri School Nutritional Action Group, All Saints Church in Wales Primary School, Barry
Erin Howes	Grŵp Gweithredu'r Ysgol ar Faeth, Ysgol Gynradd yr Holl Saint yr Eglwys yng Nghymru, y Barri School Nutritional Action Group, All Saints Church in Wales Primary School, Barry
Eve Kyriakides	Olchfa Comprehensive School, Red Café Youth Project, Mumbles Ysgol Gyfun yr Olchfa, Prosiect Ieuentid Red Café, y Mwmbwls
Sarah Moir	Fforwm Ieuentid Tor-faen Torfaen Youth Forum
Chris Pollard	Fforwm Ieuentid Tor-faen Torfaen Youth Forum
Sophie Pollard	Fforwm Ieuentid Tor-faen Torfaen Youth Forum
Emma Robinson	Cyngor yr Ysgol, Ysgol Gynradd yr Holl Saint yr Eglwys yng Nghymru, y Barri

Lucy Rogers	School Council, All Saints Church in Wales Primary School, Barry Grŵp Gweithredu'r Ysgol ar Faeth, Ysgol Gynradd yr Holl Saint yr Eglwys yng Nghymru, y Barri School Nutritional Action Group, All Saints Church in Wales Primary School, Barry
Isaac Sampson	Gower College Swansea, Red Café Youth Project, Mumbles Coleg Gŵyr Abertawe, Prosiect Ieuentid Red Café, y Mwmbwls
Cleo Stanford	Olchfa Comprehensive School, Red Café Youth Project, Mumbles Ysgol Gyfun yr Olchfa, Prosiect Ieuentid Red Café, y Mwmbwls
Dwayne Way	Fforwm Ieuentid Tor-faen Torfaen Youth Forum
Louise Webb	Athrawes, Ysgol Gynradd yr Holl Saint yr Eglwys yng Nghymru, y Barri Teacher, All Saints Church in Wales Primary School, Barry
Eddie Weeks	Fforwm Ieuentid Tor-faen Torfaen Youth Forum

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

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Abigail Phillips	Clerc Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.15 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.15 a.m.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **Helen Mary Jones:** Bore da bawb a chroeso cynnes i'r cyfarfod hwn o'r Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc. Dechreuaf drwy ddymuno Dydd Gŵyl Dewi hapus i bawb, ac atgoffa pawb bod croeso i bobl ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg, a bod clustffonau ar gael ar gyfer cyfieithu ac addasu'r lefel sain os oes angen. Mae cyfieithu ar y pryd ar gael ar sianel 1 a gallwch glywed yr iaith wreiddiol ar sianel 0. Atgoffaf bawb i ddiffodd unrhyw ffonau symudol, 'mwyar duon', galwyr ac unrhyw ddyfais electronig arall oherwydd gallant amharu ar yr offer sain a darlledu. Nid ydym yn disgwyl ymarfer tân, felly os clywn larwm, mae hynny'n golygu bod problem a bydd angen i ni ddilyn y tywyswyr allan o'r adeilad yn y

Helen Mary Jones: Good morning, everyone and a warm welcome to this meeting of the Children and Young People Committee. I will start by wishing everyone a happy St David's Day, and reminding everyone that they are welcome to speak in Welsh or English, and that headphones are available for interpretation and amplification of sound if needed. Simultaneous translation is available on channel 1 and you can hear the floor language on channel 0. I remind everyone to switch off any mobile phones, BlackBerrys, pagers and any other electronic equipment as they can interfere with the sound and broadcast equipment. We are not expecting a fire drill, so if we hear an alarm, it means that there is a problem and we will

ffordd fwyaf diogel. Yr ydym wedi derbyn ymddiheuriadau heddiw gan Eleanor Burnham a Jonathan Morgan. Felly, aelodau'r pwyllgor sy'n bresennol heddiw yw finnau, Joyce Watson a Lynne Neagle.

need to follow the instructions of the ushers and exit the building in the safest way possible. We have received apologies this morning from Eleanor Burnham and Jonathan Morgan. Therefore, the committee members in attendance today are myself, Joyce Watson and Lynne Neagle.

9.16 a.m.

Adroddiad Etifeddiaeth y Pwyllgor—Casglu Tystiolaeth Committee Legacy Report—Evidence Gathering

[2] **Helen Mary Jones:** Esboniaf i bawb yr hyn yr ydym yn ei wneud y bore yma; yr wyf yn gwybod bod y tystion eisoes yn gwybod. Ni yw pwyllgor y Cynulliad sy'n gyfrifol am sicrhau bod Llywodraeth Cymru yn cadw'i haddewidion gogyfer â phlant a phobl ifanc yng Nghymru. Mae tymor y Cynulliad ar fin dod i ben a bydd etholiadau i ddewis Aelodau newydd i'r Cynulliad ymhen ryw wyth wythnos—nid yw'n amser hir o gwbl. Felly, yr ydym ni fel pwyllgor yn casglu tystiolaeth er mwyn creu adroddiad i'r Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc nesaf neu ba bynnag bwyllgor a fydd yn gofalu nesaf am faterion plant, fel ein bod ni'n gallu awgrymu i'r pwyllgor hwnnw y pethau y dylai weithio arnynt. Dyna pam yr ydym wedi eich gwahodd yma.

Helen Mary Jones: I will explain to everyone what we are doing this morning; I know that the witnesses know already. We are the Assembly committee responsible for ensuring that the Welsh Government keeps its promises with regard to children and young people in Wales. The Assembly term is about to come to an end and there will be elections to choose new Assembly Members in around eight weeks' time—it is not long at all. Therefore, we as a committee are gathering evidence to write a report for the next Children and Young People Committee or whichever committee takes responsibility for children's issues in the next Assembly, so that we can make suggestions to that committee about the things that it should be working on. That is why we have invited you here.

[3] We have asked you here today because we want to gather evidence on the issues that matter to children and young people so that the next Children and Young People Committee can have some ideas from us about what it needs to ask the Government about. I understand that you have some presentations ready, and things that you want to tell us, so we are going to hand over to you for you to tell us about the issues that you are concerned about in whichever order you have decided upon. Committee members might then ask you some questions and to tell us more about why you think something is important, and we will just take it from there. It is important that you are here giving evidence, but, hopefully, you can relax and talk to us in a very natural way; we are quite scary, but not desperately so. Before we ask you to give your evidence, I will explain to everyone why someone here is dressed as a daffodil—it is St David's Day, of course, so people have come in their St David's Day costumes, which is even nicer. I will hand over to the witnesses now; I believe you have a plan about who is going to say what and when.

[4] If there are three groups, shall we perhaps do it one by one? Which of the groups wants to go first? I see that no-one does, so I will pick, and we will have nutrition first.

[5] **Ms Rogers:** Why do we get encouraged to bring healthy snacks to school, when we do not think our school dinners are healthy?

[6] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is a very good question. Does anyone else want to say anything about that?

- [7] **Ms Webb:** We were going to read out all of the issues.
- [8] **Helen Mary Jones:** Okay.
- [9] **Ms Howes:** We did a survey of every child in our school and nearly all the children said that they would like to have a choice of fruit at the salad bar for dessert. We asked the cook and she said that she was only allowed to order apples, bananas, pears and oranges. Why can we not have fruit such as grapes, pineapples, kiwis and so on and choose a selection of them?
- [10] **Ms Rogers:** The survey also made it clear that children want more choices, such as jacket potatoes and salads such as coleslaw, pasta, beetroot, sweetcorn and so on. Why can these choices not be included in the school dinner menu?
- [11] **Ms Hopkins:** Who decides what choices we have for our school dinners?
- [12] **Ms Howes:** Why can we not have more of a say?
- [13] **Helen Mary Jones:** Lynne or Joyce, would you like to say something in response to those very good questions?
- [14] **Joyce Watson:** I can see that we have some budding politicians here. Good morning, I am Joyce Watson; I live in Pembrokeshire and I represent Mid and West Wales. In relation to school dinners, a budget is set by your local authority for the school to spend on its meals. The school will then use that money to buy what it thinks is appropriate to give you a balanced meal, and there are guidelines from the Assembly on the nutritional value of each of those meals. As you can imagine, because I represent such a huge area, I have seen lots of different schemes in schools: for example, children running fruit bars as businesses. Those children told me the same things as you have: they might get an apple, orange or banana at school, but they want other fruit. They buy those other fruit as a co-operative, which makes the fruit really cheap for children to buy at break time. I do not know whether a similar scheme is run in your school, or whether you think that that might be a good idea.
- [15] On the question of why you cannot have a wider selection in salads, I love salads, and the one thing that drives me mad is not having the choice that I would like, so I understand what you are saying. Have you asked the school why it is not giving a wider choice? We know that it will come down to cost; there is no question about that. The school is trying to produce a meal on a very small budget, but your survey says that children want something completely different.
- [16] **Helen Mary Jones:** Does anybody want to say anything to Joyce in answer to the points that she made? Have you asked your school about the choices? [*Inaudible.*] Would you like to come and sit at the table so that we can get your contribution on record? Could you introduce yourself, please?
- [17] **Ms Webb:** I am Louise Webb; I am the teacher who runs the school nutrition action group. As far as a fruit co-operative goes, it is not snack time that we feel is the problem—that is a positive thing in our school—but lunchtime. We are told that childhood obesity is on the rise; these children want to eat healthily, and they are being told that they cannot have the fruit and salads that they want to eat. They tell us that they want to make healthy choices, but that option is not available to them.
- [18] **Helen Mary Jones:** Can you tell us a bit about what sort of choices you have? When you go back to school today, what might be on the menu for lunch?

[19] **Ms Rogers:** We get chips quite a lot in the week.

[20] **Ms Webb:** They have a choice of baguettes, but the salad that comes with them is just lettuce and cucumber, not nice salad, which is what they want.

[21] **Helen Mary Jones:** As Joyce said, one of the problems is how much it costs, because if you give people lots of choices it means that more food is thrown away if people do not choose it. One thing that you could think about doing, because you have your survey about what people want, is to see whether the school would conduct an experiment to find out whether all of the children would eat the healthy choices. Fruit such as kiwi fruit are more expensive than apples, but if you will eat the kiwi fruit and you will not eat the apples, it is probably better value for the school to buy the kiwi fruit. You are not the first young people to talk to us about problems with school nutrition. The question is how much we as a country and the different county councils are prepared to invest. When I look at some of the budgets given by some county councils, I know that I could not cook a nice meal for my daughter and myself at home with the amount of money spent on each child. We will discuss this with the other committee members, but we certainly might want to suggest that the next Children and Young People Committee asks questions about this. There may be things that we need to get the Government to do differently. There are national guidelines now—they did not exist previously—about healthy eating in schools and about the vitamins, protein and minerals that you should be getting in your school meals. However, if these things are being offered to you in school meals that you do not like and therefore will not eat, perhaps we are not hitting the targets. We will think about how we can put the questions that you have asked us into our report, and we will ask the next children's committee to pose some of these questions to local authorities and the next Welsh Government.

[22] **Lynne Neagle:** My little boy says that he does not have enough time to eat his school dinners. The other problem is that he will not have the dinners provided by the school because he has to queue outside to get them. I wondered whether there were any other issues that are not related to the food that make it difficult for you to eat well in school. Do you have plenty of time to eat your food?

[23] **Ms Rogers:** About 10 minutes.

[24] **Lynne Neagle:** That is not long enough, is it?

[25] **Ms Webb:** A few issues came up in the survey that we are going to work on at the school. A Vale of Glamorgan nutritionist is going to come out to speak to us as well, and she can give us a bit of an insight into what you were talking about.

[26] **Helen Mary Jones:** Could we have a copy of your survey results?

[27] **Ms Webb:** Yes.

[28] **Helen Mary Jones:** We could then include it in the report. In some cases, we are taking entire pieces of evidence and putting them in the report. We would not want to say that your school was worse than any other school, or that the Vale of Glamorgan Council was not as good as any other council, but it would give a good example of the sorts of issues that arise, would it not? The issue of time is really important if you are going to have proper food. You can eat a bag of chips in five minutes, but you cannot sit down and eat a roast dinner or a big plate of salad and enjoy it in five minutes.

[29] Is there anything else that Members would like to ask the school nutrition group, or is there anything else that the school nutrition group would like to tell us? I see that there is not.

Let us move on and hear from the eco committee, which I believe is represented by Oliver and Mason. Fire away, boys.

[30] **Mr Bartlett:** Our question is: if we are encouraged to recycle at home and school, why are we not encouraged to do so in public places, such as beaches and parks?

[31] **Mr Enticott:** The eco committee carried out research, and we only found one recycling bin at Barry Island beach and none at our local parks.

[32] **Mr Bartlett:** On Knap beach, all we found were normal bins, not recycling bins.

[33] **Helen Mary Jones:** Sarah is going to help you hold your posters up, so that the cameras can see them.

[34] **Mr Bartlett:** If you put recycling bins out, it costs less money over time, because you would not have to pay to send out people from the council to pick up litter. All that you would have to do is send one lorry around all of the recycling bins to collect the recyclables. That is all you would need to do, instead of paying people to go out and about all of the time.

[35] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is a very good point. Is there anything else that you wish to raise with us, eco team?

[36] **Mr Enticott:** If it costs a lot, we could all raise money through sponsored events.

[37] **Helen Mary Jones:** Those are very good points. Would any Members like to respond? I see that Joyce would like to. Fire away, Joyce.

[38] **Joyce Watson:** There is good news here. First, you are out and about, which is really great. The other thing is that you care about the environment, which is fantastic. Recycling bins are a fantastic idea and, in some places, you find them in car parks and such places. My question is why you picked the park and the Knap in Barry. Why did you think that was a good spot?

9.30 a.m.

[39] **Mr Bartlett:** Lots of people go there. They like to go in the sea. We thought that, because lots of people go there, we could see whether the rubbish left was rubbish that could be recycled or rubbish that could not be recycled. There was more rubbish that could be recycled than could not be recycled.

[40] **Joyce Watson:** So, you did your research. With regard to providing recycling bins, again, the responsibility lies with the local council. It is not that we are passing the buck; it sounds like we are, but we are not. I do not know whether you intend to take that forward and ask the council whether it will consider that, or perhaps we could ask it about that. We can certainly let it know what you have told us. What sort of rubbish was there? Was it plastic, bottles and cardboard?

[41] **Mr Bartlett:** Yes, things like that.

[42] **Joyce Watson:** Was it in the hedgerows?

[43] **Mr Bartlett:** Yes.

[44] **Joyce Watson:** It is not good, is it?

[45] **Mr Bartlett:** No.

[46] **Joyce Watson:** Who do you think is responsible? Is it adults, children—

[47] **Mr Bartlett:** The public.

[48] **Joyce Watson:** So, everyone is responsible.

[49] **Lynne Neagle:** I think that that is a really good idea, particularly the recycling at Barry Island beach. I have never seen so much rubbish stuffed into bins as I saw the last time I was there. I am sure that providing recycling bins there would be a really good way of boosting the amount of recycling. I think that we should suggest that.

[50] **Helen Mary Jones:** Oliver and Mason, you obviously care very much about the environment, and you have chosen to get involved. Do you think that lots of children your age think the same way? When you talk to your friends, are there lots of people who want to sort things out?

[51] **Mr Bartlett:** Yes.

[52] **Mr Enticott:** Yes.

[53] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is a really good thing to hear, because it is very positive for the future. This is something that I think we should certainly take up. I think that it would be a good idea if your school's eco group wrote to your local councillor and asked him or her to come to have a chat with you about what you have found out about the bins, because they would be able to raise it in their council. However, it is certainly something that we could suggest, perhaps not to the next children's committee, but the next environment committee. Joyce is right that, at the moment, local councils can choose, but perhaps there ought to be some national rules to say, 'This is what we expect you to do; as a local council, you can work out the best way to do it, but we think that, if you are recycling in homes, schools and offices, it is not sensible not to recycle rubbish in public bins'. That is particularly the case somewhere such as Barry Island where you get a lot of rubbish, because there would be enough rubbish to have separate bins for glass, plastic and so on. I am sure that, if they got into the habit, lots of people would use them. Do you think that they would?

[54] **Mr Bartlett:** Yes.

[55] **Mr Enticott:** Yes.

[56] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is a very good suggestion. Is there anything else that the eco team wants to raise with us? Are you doing some things in your own school with the eco team? Do you want to tell us a bit about what you have been doing? You say that you recycle at school like you do at home. What sort of things have you been doing?

[57] **Mr Bartlett:** Along the corridor by our new ICT suite, we have recycling bins for cardboard, plastic and paper. We have recycling bins in every single classroom.

[58] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is really good, and is a good example. I am sure that lots of schools are doing that, but it would be a good thing if every school did that. Thank you very much to the eco team. You have certainly given us all a great many things to think about. We would like to hear from the school council now, from Dylan and Emma Robinson.

[59] **Ms Robinson:** We are worried about the cutbacks that the Government is making and the implications of these for education in schools in Wales.

[60] **Mr Clarke:** We are lucky that we have a large extension with an ICT suite, a bigger hall and more classrooms, but what about some schools that we have heard about that have to teach in halls and cabins?

[61] **Ms Robinson:** Teachers are buying their own resources. Schools are funding and supporting subjects such as catch-up mathematics themselves. If this is happening already, what is it going to be like soon? What about the effects of the cutbacks, not just in primary schools, but in secondary schools and universities? What is the point of us trying our best if we cannot afford to go to university? How can you help us to feel less worried and to be more motivated?

[62] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. Those are very good questions. I invite a Member to start in replying to them. You might find that some things are done slightly differently here, compared to other parts of Britain. Would you like to make a start, Joyce; or Lynne, perhaps?

[63] **Joyce Watson:** I am quite happy to make a start. It is really sad that, as you just mentioned, some schools are still not up to standard and do not have the facilities that you have in your school. However, as this is an area for which we are responsible, the Assembly Government has put huge amounts of money into extra budgets for the council, and it has also topped them up with extra money to build new schools, to refurbish schools, to buy equipment and so forth. We have given as much as we can. There are big differences here in terms of the cuts happening in Westminster and those cuts that happen in the Assembly, which is what devolution is all about. Therefore, we have protected the budget in education in Wales because we decided to do it differently. It has an increase of 1 per cent which, as we know, is not a big increase, but it is 1 per cent over inflation. We have ensured that it is protected because we really do care about education and children because you are our future; you are the people who will be running the country tomorrow, the next day and so on, for decades.

[64] In terms of going on to university, I am sure that you have seen the headlines, and I am sure that you are worried about having to pay tuition fees of £9,000 or £12,000 before you can even get through the door. In Wales, we have ensured that Welsh students, whether they study in Wales or elsewhere in the UK, will not have to pay that because we subsidise the fees. I think that we have capped it at £3,000. That is still a lot of money, but it is a heck of a lot less than £9,000 or £12,000. Therefore, like you, we are concerned. We do not know what the future holds in terms of cuts because we get our money from Westminster. We do not know what will happen if our money is cut further. However, we know that we have done the very best that we can with the money that we have now, but we recognise that we need to do more because we know that there are schools like the ones that you have described, where pupils have to learn in corridors and cloakrooms, and must go outside to the toilet. We know that we have a lot more work to do. We have done as much as we have been able to do in the time that we have been here, and you can rest assured that we will keep spending on education, and keep trying to improve it as fast as we can. I know that, for some people, that will not be fast enough.

[65] **Helen Mary Jones:** Do you wish to add anything, Lynne?

[66] **Lynne Neagle:** Only to agree with what Joyce has said. It has to be a very high priority for us to make sure that our children and young people are educated in buildings that are modern, clean and suitable for everyone, which is something on which I work hard in my area of Torfaen. Children will not have a good education if they are in schools where the walls are wet, where everyone is cold, and it is damp and miserable.

[67] Tuition fees are a big worry for everyone, and you may all be thinking about going to

university in the future. However, we have seen a positive step in Wales with the Government's announcement to keep down the fees for students from Wales. Hopefully, that will encourage you for the future and perhaps it can show what a difference having an Assembly can make.

[68] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you, Joyce and Lynne. As you probably know, because I know that you have learnt a lot about the Assembly in your school, the Government in London gives the Assembly a certain amount of money. Therefore, in terms of the things that the Assembly is in charge of, such as the health service, schools and colleges, and roads and transport, we can then decide how much is spent on what. Our Government, with the support of the rest of the Assembly Members, has decided that the things that really affect people—what we call front-line services—are the most important. So, while we cannot promise that there will not be any cuts, we have asked the county councils to try to ensure that any cuts made are applied to offices and behind-the-scenes arrangements, so that the cuts do not affect the children in schools, the patients in hospital beds, and those who are unwell and waiting for treatment. It will not be easy to do that, and as Joyce said, we do not know what is going to happen in future, but we do know how much money we have for the next three years, and we have told the county councils that they must spend the money on schools, social services for children and the other things that really matter. If they do not do that, they will be in trouble. One of the things that the Welsh Minister has done has been to look at the all different county councils in Wales, and he has seen that, of the money that the Assembly gives to each county council, some county councils seem to pass more of it to the schools than others. So, he is taking a look at that to see if it is fair and if there are ways that we can make it work better.

[69] As for universities, it is important that everybody understands that children from really poor families do not have to pay anything to go to university in Wales, because the Government will pay all their fees. If they are very clever and they get to go to a university that costs a lot of money, the Government will pay all their fees. For more ordinary families, nobody will have to pay more than £3,000 a year. Now, that is a lot of money and while many of us, if we had enough money, would want to say that people do not have to pay anything to go to university, at least you can be sure that, at the moment, you will not have to pay as much as students in England will. That is because it is about deciding what is important. One of the things that the Assembly has decided is that education is important for the future. So, we will continue to invest in better school buildings, but it is true to say that this will be done somewhat more slowly than in the past 10 years, because we will not have enough money. However, it is not going to stop.

[70] I think that people sometimes become frightened when they hear headlines on the television news or when they read the newspapers that are printed in London, but sometimes those are things that will not happen in Wales. People do not always understand that point, however, because journalists and newsreaders do not always say that these things will happen only in England. They sometimes say that something is happening, but it is for England, as it will not happen the same way in Wales, Scotland, or the north of Ireland. That is a bit of a problem for us in the Assembly, because we have to explain it to people and say, 'No, you don't need to be worried; we're not going to do that in Wales'. I had a good example of that the other day when I was knocking on doors and talking to people. A young lady of 16, a student at a further education college, was getting what is called an education maintenance allowance to help her to stay in college, and she was very worried that that was going to be taken away. That allowance is being taken away in England, but she had not realised that it will not be taken away in Wales. We have to keep reminding people of things like that.

[71] The questions are really important, and they are questions that we will want to ensure that the next children's committee keeps putting to whoever is in the next Assembly Government. I do not think that it will change very much, because all the parties in Wales agree that children and education are important, and not only the parties that are represented

here today. We will ask the next children's committee to ensure that that does not get forgotten and that that does not change, so thank you for asking us those questions, which we will ask the next committee to ask.

[72] Thank you all very much for your presentations. Is there anything else that you think is important that you would like to tell us, or which you would like us to get the next committee to remember? I see that there is not. Do members of the committee have anything that they would like to ask the pupils from Barry?

[73] **Joyce Watson:** Did you enjoy doing this work and find it interesting? Did you come up with all the ideas yourselves? I see that you did. So, look out for the future.

[74] **Ms Robinson:** In schools, my mum does catch-up mathematics. She buys the resources for pupils to use when they are under her care. I do not see why she should pay for them and why they should not come from school funding.

[75] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is a very good point. It is something that is being decided by the school, the school governors or the county council. If it is something that somebody thinks they need, they need to explain why. It might be something that your mum thinks is particularly important, and that she needs to talk to other people about.

9.45 a.m.

[76] We need to be careful that we do not talk too much about individuals. However, we can make the general point that, sometimes, teachers have to invest their own money and resources and so on. I remember that, when I was a teacher, a long time ago, I used to have to do quite a lot of that. It is sad to hear that, all this time later—because I was a teacher a very long time ago—some teachers still have to do that.

[77] Is there anything else that anyone would like to tell us?

[78] **Ms Howes:** When we line up in the lines, those who have school dinners have to wait a long time, but those who bring packed lunches just sit down and eat straight away.

[79] **Lynne Neagle:** That is what happens in my little boy's school. That is why he will not have a hot dinner, because he does not like to wait in line, because they always end up having to go out without their coats and so on. Those are the practical issues that we need to consider; it is not just about the quality of the food, but the things that make it easy for people to eat well in school.

[80] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is an important point, which we will want to pass on to the next committee. It is not just about ensuring that the food is available and that it is healthy and nice; it is about how you can arrange things better so that people do not have to wait a long time. Of course, you will always have to wait a little longer if you have to queue up to get your plate than you would if you had your own packed lunch with you, but there must be easier ways. One thing that the next committee could do is to look at whether there are schools elsewhere in Wales that have found an easier way to do this, and whether there are good ideas that we could share. I am sure that you have some good ideas in your school that you could share with other schools, and other schools might have good ideas that they could share with you. Perhaps you need to do more of that.

[81] Is there anything else that you wish to add?

[82] **Ms Rogers:** We get chips quite a lot during the week. We get them about three times a week.

[83] **Helen Mary Jones:** Do you think that that is too often, Lucy?

[84] **Ms Rogers:** Yes.

[85] **Helen Mary Jones:** I think that that is too often as well. That is something to talk to your nutritionist about when she comes in. The school always has to strike a balance between giving people food that they will eat and giving them healthy food. However, I personally believe that to have chips three days a week out of five is probably too much.

[86] **Joyce Watson:** When you say that you get chips, do you have another choice? Is it chips and perhaps a baked potato, or is it just chips?

[87] **Ms Rogers:** It is just chips. However, we have a choice of baguettes.

[88] **Helen Mary Jones:** So, those chips are your only option of hot food.

[89] We have come to the end of our time for this session. I want to say a big thank you to all the representatives of All Saints Church in Wales Primary School, Barry. You have given us a lot to think about and a lot of things to talk to the next committee about. We thank you, and all your fellow pupils back at school who have helped you prepare for this meeting. We also thank all the staff who have helped you prepare, and who got you here today. We will pass your evidence and your suggestions on. Diolch yn fawr iawn i chi.

[90] Our next group of witnesses are from the Red Cafe Youth Project in the Mumbles. They will be joining us in a moment.

[91] Good morning, everyone. I am Helen Mary Jones, the Chair of the Children and Young People Committee and the Assembly Member for Llanelli, so I am a neighbour of yours. Also with me are Joyce Watson and Lynne Neagle, who are other committee members, and the team that helps to make it all work. Thank you very much for coming to give us evidence today. I understand that you have a presentation to give us. I understand that you have made enormous efforts to be here, particularly Isaac—I understand that you have persuaded your family to miss the first day of their holidays so that you could be here today.

[92] **Mr Sampson:** Yes, we did the talk on the Friday. We left on Saturday morning instead.

[93] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is all right then. We have Isaac Sampson, Cleo Stanford, Ellie Samuel, Eve Kyriakides and Emma Holland with us today. I believe that you have a presentation for us.

[94] **Ms Holland:** Ellie is not here today; she could not make it.

[95] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is a pity; I hope that she gets well soon. To explain what we are doing, we are the Children and Young People Committee and our job is to get the Government to keep its promises to children and young people in Wales and to ask questions about that. The third Assembly is coming to an end and we are preparing what we call a legacy report, which we will give to the next committee that will be looking at children and young people's issues. It might be a children's committee or it might be part of another committee; we hope that it will be a children's committee. We are collecting evidence to prepare that report for the next committee to note the things that young people in Wales are telling us that they are concerned about that they want you to investigate. That is why you are here today. I will hand over to you and, when you have finished your presentation, we will be able to ask you questions.

[96] **Mr Sampson:** We are from the Red Cafe Youth Project in Mumbles and we are here to talk to you about the issues that we feel affect us as young people growing up in south-west Wales.

[97] **Ms Stanford:** I am Cleo and I am going to talk to you about healthy eating and schools. Schools are encouraging us to eat healthily, but healthy food is more expensive than unhealthy food, so more people buy unhealthy food because it is cheaper. There is a big difference between the prices of healthy and unhealthy food. In our school, chips are 85p and the healthy wraps are £1.95. That is a difference of £1.10, so more people buy chips because they are cheaper. We also think that they should add tax to fatty foods and subsidise healthy food options.

[98] **Ms Kyriakides:** Hello, I am Eve and I am going to talk to you about the environment. I feel strongly about global warming and endangered species such as polar bears. In the Arctic, the summer is getting longer and the polar bears have to starve until the water freezes so that they can catch fish to eat. Also, water meters should be made compulsory because that would force people to be more responsible for water use, which means that we could save more water. I think that the Government should encourage renewable energy sources such as wind turbines and solar panels.

[99] **Ms Holland:** My name is Emma and today I am going to be talking about bullying in schools. Our age, in comprehensive school, is the age at which people are bullied the most. Being bullied can make you feel insecure and a possible result of being bullied is a loss of confidence. You might think that the fact that you are being bullied is something to do with your weight, which could lead to you not eating much and becoming anorexic and mentally ill, or you could eat a lot and become obese, which is hard to get out of if you are already like that. Maybe people do that because they are trying to fit in and they want to change themselves. I think that teachers should have a greater awareness. Some of them do not really know how to handle it. In our school, they might say something once, but then they will not be persistent and it will not really stop. You could put a specifically trained guidance counsellor in schools and that would be their only job, so that they would not be distracted by other things. Maybe every year you would have one or two compulsory appointments with the guidance counsellor or a five-minute chat to see how you are, because some people who are bullied might find it easier to tell someone if they are approached, rather than having to approach someone else. Otherwise, they might feel a bit like a snitch.

[100] **Mr Sampson:** We feel that young people are put under far too much pressure at a young age to be successful in their career. It is kind of portrayed that money is the only thing that will make you happy. I think that teachers should emphasise that your relationships with the people who are close to you are as important as—if not more important than—your career and money and that sort of thing. We feel that the age at which you choose your GCSEs, which is 13, is too young, because at that age you do not really know what you want to do with your life. There should be more flexibility to change the subjects that you want to do. So, the teachers should let the kids know that they are allowed to change within the first month or so. I just do not think that you will be able to know what subjects you want to do. Also, I feel that they put too much pressure on that one GCSE decision. It is not necessarily the be-all and end-all. For example, if you take geography, you are not necessarily going to be something to do with that. I think that they put too much pressure on that decision.

[101] I also feel that it is important that university tuition fees stay at £3,000 in Wales. I think that everyone should be able to go to university, regardless of their financial situation. I think that that is a right that everyone should have. Also, I feel that schools and colleges see apprenticeships as more of a second option, so that if you cannot go to university, you do an apprenticeship. As there is a skills shortage in the UK at the moment, I think that

apprenticeships are as good as—if not better than—a university degree. I also feel that gap years could be encouraged more in schools, because I think that they are a really good opportunity to find out what you want to do with your life. The teachers should show the kids what options there are for gap years. Do you have any questions?

[102] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. That is an enormous range of issues. I am sure that we will have questions. Does either of the other committee members want to make a start?

[103] **Joyce Watson:** I will make a start. I am glad that you have brought the difference in the pricing of school meals to our attention, Cleo, because that is important. As a nation and a Government, we are trying to get young people to eat healthily, as are nutritionists. We have seen report after report about the cost of obesity to the country and individuals, and that is something that we will definitely take on board and include in our legacy report. So, thank you for that.

[104] Moving on to Eve's point, compulsory water meters are hugely controversial and I will tell you why. I agree that getting everyone to think about the water that they are using seems like a good idea. I support that. However, if you have a poor family with four, five or six children—I am one of eight by the way—you are certainly going to use significantly more water doing the same things as a family of two people. The multiple tells you that. It will cost you significantly more to do that if you are on a water meter. Also, when you talk about compulsion, you have to be careful about who might be affected, because the poorest people could end up not being able to afford their water.

10.00 a.m.

[105] People then start to do things such as using the same bathwater for multiple baths, because they know that the meter is ticking over, just as older people and vulnerable people keep one room warm because they know that the meter is ticking away in the rest of the house, and they are aware of the problems related to that. So, I cannot absolutely support compulsion with regard to water meters, but I do support the fact that we need to think about what we are doing regarding the use of water.

[106] On renewable energy, the Assembly is doing a lot on renewables, but decisions on the big energy wind farms are not devolved to us; they are taken in Westminster. We are trying to tackle that issue, and you will know that there is the 'yes' vote this week. There is also local decision making in relation to renewable energy, and often people think that renewable energy is a good thing until it happens to be in their environment, and then they vote against it.

[107] On bullying, you are absolutely right, Emma, to mention teacher awareness. My son was bullied all the way through school. I could not get anything done about it at all, and I was an elected member of the council that was supposed to be doing something about it. There are many reasons why people are bullied, but the system is the same. You will find that someone is picked out for being different, and that difference can be anything—anything at all. In my son's case it was the fact that he wore glasses; the reason can be as small as that, and then the person becomes a victim. Each school is supposed to have its own clear guidance that it is supposed to use when it comes to bullying. I would ask you maybe to go back and find out whether it has ever been used, because that was my question to the school. It said, 'We have a policy,' but the school had never used it.

[108] **Ms Holland:** Our nurse is also the—what is her title?

[109] **Helen Mary Jones:** Is it 'school counsellor'?

[110] **Ms Holland:** Yes. I lived in America for a year, and there was a guidance counsellor there, and that was her only job. She was really good, and because I was new, she helped me to fit in and make new friends. I do not know many people who go to the nurse for guidance; they just go to her if they need a nurse.

[111] **Helen Mary Jones:** For medical problems.

[112] **Ms Holland:** Yes.

[113] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is a really interesting point about mixing up the jobs.

[114] **Mr Sampson:** I think that each student should have to see the nurse for a certain amount of time, maybe once a term or once a year, so that they talk. They do not want to go of their own accord, because that is another reason for people to bully them. It is not that people do not want to go; it is just that they feel that there is a stigma attached to going, and it is as if you are weak if you go. I do not think that you can stop bullying; the issue is more how you deal with it, and teachers should maybe attend specific courses. Although this may sound a bit harsh, kids will be kids, and it will happen. So, it is more about how it is dealt with.

[115] **Joyce Watson:** I fully agree with you, and having a compulsory annual visit is a good idea. You can put in school counsellors, and we have; it is fantastic, many people use them and they are really successful. So, if everyone went, then no-one would know what the visit was about. That is sensible and it is something that we should take forward.

[116] **Ms Holland:** Yes, and it would not just have to be about bullying; counsellors could be there for everything, for example to talk about careers, as you mentioned, or money worries. We do not have anything like that.

[117] **Joyce Watson:** Isaac, I agree with your point about pressure to succeed. I have always thought that 13 years of age is too young to choose your subjects for life. However, I am not the Minister, but I will tell him that. We have taken away a little of the pressure to succeed in Wales, for example by abolishing the standard assessment tasks—which still exist in England, as far as I know—because we saw children being stressed out at the age of seven because of them. We did not think that that was appropriate, so we took action. I also agree that tuition fees should stay, and, again, as a Government, we have taken action on that.

[118] I have done a lot of work on apprenticeships, and they certainly need to be valued. It is odd, is it not, that in these financially difficult times, they will be valued more, because people have to think completely differently? The evidence is showing us that people are considering where they should be investing money for their children and whether a degree is good value for money. So, you are ahead in your thinking by saying that apprenticeships should be valued.

[119] We must also consider careers advice, so that we do not have a situation where all the boys are told to consider one career pathway and the girls are told to consider another. Have you looked at that at all? The idea of a gap year is interesting, and I can see why you mention it. At what age would you consider a gap year to be appropriate?

[120] **Mr Sampson:** Generally after finishing at comprehensive school or after you have taken your A-levels. I am 17, and many of my friends who are the same age do not really know what they want to do, and they just get pushed along into university, which they may not want to do. So, a gap year is a good chance to think about things and to figure out what you want to do, because more than 50 per cent of people do not really know what they want to do when they finish comprehensive school or their A-level studies.

[121] **Joyce Watson:** What should that gap year be used for?

[122] **Mr Sampson:** I think that schools should tell people more about them and explain what schemes are available. There are many valuable schemes, such as the charity ones, which are really good. So, the teachers should let people know more about them and advertise different schemes, as they do with university courses.

[123] **Helen Mary Jones:** Lynne, did you want to ask a question or add anything?

[124] **Lynne Neagle:** I just want to say that this has been really interesting evidence. I particularly liked the suggestions that you have made about bullying and counselling. That evidence is really useful, because, from my experience of parents coming to me to complain about bullying in schools, I know that it can be a very difficult issue to sort out. So, if there are suggestions about ways to tackle bullying going forward, then we should seriously consider them.

[125] **Helen Mary Jones:** There are a couple of points that I want to pick up on. You have raised many points, but we cannot touch on them all. I agree with the other two Members that the idea of a compulsory appointment with a school counsellor, so that everyone has to go to touch base, is a good one. I often feel that the people who use those services are the ones who need them the least, and that the people who have the deepest problems might find it difficult to come forward. However, if someone is asking you whether you are all right, then it might be easier for you to speak out. I am also worried about boys not making use of that kind of service and for it to be seen as being soft to go to see the school counsellor. We know that that can be quite serious and that boys are sadly much more likely in Wales to commit suicide than girls, because they find it more difficult to talk about their problems. So, it would be good to get them to clock in with the school counsellor. We should take away that point about whether it is okay for the school nurse and the school counsellor to be the same person and look at it, because I know that it happens in other schools. We should go away and think about it. There might be some advantages, but there might also be disadvantages. We should ask the Government to think about it.

[126] On the environment, like Joyce, I think that we must be careful about compulsory water meters, but many of the other points that you made were important. The Assembly Government has taken some steps. For example, yesterday, the Minister announced that she has changed the planning laws to make microgeneration easier. For example, for someone to have a little windmill in their garden or, if a stream is running through their farm, to put a small hydroelectric plant on that, or to put photovoltaics—I cannot pronounce it, the stuff that sucks up the sun—on their roof. So, she has changed the planning guidance to make it easier for that to happen. The point that Joyce made was that you can be in favour of renewable energy until it relates to a windfarm in your area or off your coast, or a tidal scheme in the bay where you live—I am not saying that that is true of you, but the public generally will say ‘We like the idea’ but it does not want to accept the consequences of that. So, changes to planning to make it easier are good.

[127] For the first time ever, this year, the Assembly Government will spend more money on public transport than it will on building roads, which is an important change in terms of what we are trying to do for the environment. However, I am sure that we will need to do more. Many of the groups of children and young people we have spoken to have expressed concern about the environment, and we will certainly want to take that up.

[128] As Joyce said, the point about healthy eating being more expensive than less healthy eating has also been made by other groups of young people, and we will want to ask the next committee to look at that. Some people cannot afford to make the healthy choice—some

families can get free school meals, but other families on low incomes do not. So, we should certainly take that up.

[129] I was struck by many of the points that you made about pressure, Isaac. For example, I know that some schools will let you start your GCSE courses in the last half term of year 9, and if you find that you do not like the choices that you have made, they will let you change those choices. Maybe we need to look at some of that good practice to make it a bit easier. Again, that comes back to sharing good ideas.

[130] You have shared much with us and I am sure that we will want to take a lot of it forward. Are there any further points that you want to raise or things that you want to say in response to what the Members have said?

[131] **Ms Kyriakides:** On wind turbines, you do not have to put them right next to houses, but if there are some woods in a city, you could put them in their middle, so that they would not get on people's nerves.

[132] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is absolutely right. The Government in Wales owns a lot of forestry land, and one of the things that it is beginning to do is to put wind turbines in some of that forestry land, miles away from anyone's house, so they do not create a problem with noise or anything like that. However, people will sometimes still complain. Even if they are on the top of a mountain, miles away from anywhere, they will complain, because they do not think that they look pretty. I always say, if we have a choice between an opencast coal mine or wind turbines in my constituency, I know what I would prefer to look at from the bottom of my garden. So, that is a very good point, Eve; it does not have to be near people's homes. Is there anything else? Emma, you looked as if you wanted to say something, but I do not want to put you on the spot.

[133] **Ms Holland:** I was just going to say that I am on the school council and we were thinking of getting a wind turbine, but no-one is sure of how to do it, because they are quite expensive. Maybe schools should be encouraged to get them and also solar panels. Maybe by getting a reward, but not a big one, they would be encouraged to do it more.

[134] **Helen Mary Jones:** So, perhaps they could be given some help to fund it or advice on how to find funding; that is a really good idea. Making its own electricity would also save the school money in the end, which could be used for books or whatever else it needed.

[135] **Mr Sampson:** Going back to the water meters, they should not necessarily be compulsory, but there should be a system in which exceptions are made. People will save water when they have a water meter. They will make it a priority, because it will save them money. If there is a standard charge, they will use as much as they want, because it is the same price. Their priority will be to save their money.

10.15 a.m.

[136] **Helen Mary Jones:** Yes, we can consider that, but if you have four children, you have to wash four lots of clothes if you have one child, you have just one lot of clothes to wash. You cannot choose whether to wash those clothes or not—well, you could choose not to, but then you would have hygiene problems and so on. We have met children and young people from other places who have talked about their families not being able to turn the hot water on, because, although water is not metered, electricity is. It may be surprising to hear, but some children have to wash in cold water or not at all because their mums and dads cannot afford to switch the immersion heater on. Those are the sort of concerns that Joyce and I would perhaps have about that: would people then be unable to take baths as often as they needed or whatever? However, we will have a think about that, and we will certainly want to

pass on the broader environmental concerns to the next committee that is in charge of that.

[137] Thank you all for your evidence this morning. There was some really thought-provoking stuff, and I am grateful to you for all the time that you have put into getting it ready. I also thank the other people involved in the Red Cafe Youth Project and the staff that support you. You have made a great contribution and we are grateful for your time. Diolch yn fawr iawn.

[138] We will now take a short break because our next evidence is from health and social care students at Coleg Powys, which we are taking via videoconference. I know that we are a few minutes behind time, but we may be losing the last evidence session.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.16 a.m. a 10.20 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 10.16 a.m. and 10.20 a.m*

[139] **Helen Mary Jones:** Good morning, Coleg Powys. Can you hear us? Can you see us?

[140] **Ms Bowen:** Yes. Good morning.

[141] **Helen Mary Jones:** We have Hannah Bowen and Bronwyn Davies. Is that right? I see that it is. I am Helen Mary Jones, and I am the Chair of the committee. With me are Joyce Watson and Lynne Neagle, my fellow committee members. I know that you know what we are asking you to do. We are the committee in the Assembly whose job it is to ensure that the Welsh Government keeps its promises for children and young people in Wales. The Assembly term is coming to an end—we will have elections in May, and after that we will have a new Assembly. So, what we are doing is preparing a report for the next committee that is in charge of children and young people's issues to point out some of the things that we think that it ought to look at, because we do not know whether that will be us or someone else. So, we are taking evidence from children and young people all over Wales about the issues that you think are important. We will write up those issues in our report so that the next Assembly committee that looks after children and young people's issues will, hopefully, be able to take them on.

[142] Thank you very much for joining us. I think that you have a presentation for us, do you not?

[143] **Ms Bowen:** Yes.

[144] **Helen Mary Jones:** So, fire away with your presentation, and then Members may want to ask you questions or make points arising from your presentation. Is that okay?

[145] **Ms Bowen:** We do not have the presentation, because there is nothing that we can display it on.

[146] **Helen Mary Jones:** Talk us through it.

[147] **Ms Bowen:** Okay. I am Hannah Kate Bowen, I am from Coleg Powys and I live in north Powys near Llanfair Caereinion. I am worried about the health services around my area. The first thing that I am worried about is the maternity and children's wards that may be moving from Shrewsbury to Telford. If that happens, it would be distressing for both mothers and children and would mean spending more money on petrol.

[148] **Ms Davies:** I am Bronwyn Davies from Coleg Powys, and I come from south Powys and live in Builth Wells. My issue is the closing down of local hospitals. Ten years ago in Builth Wells, 20 out of 30 students in a class would have been born in the local hospital. The

rest would have been born away from the local hospital because the birth was complicated or because they had moved into the area from elsewhere. Being born in your local hospital means something special; it means that you are born and bred in that town, and mothers feel more comfortable and have a stronger bond with their midwife in a local hospital than in a county hospital. With the closing of local hospitals or cutting of facilities, if a mother has a premature baby it is sent to Bridgend, which can be distressing to the mother, who knows that she is a two-hour trip away from her premature newborn child.

[149] **Ms Bowen:** Also, if the air ambulance has to get involved for anything major, it will have to travel longer to get to its destination, which is going to cost more money in petrol—it costs around £1,000 for the ambulance to fly out in the first place.

[150] **Ms Davies:** We also do not believe that the funding should have been cut for sex education. The funding has been cut for a bus that came around Powys to give free advice and allowed teenage kids to get free contraception without the stigma of having to go to the local family planning clinic. Teenagers have not stopped having sex, so the budget should not have been cut; if anything, the age of teenagers having sex has gone down, which has increased the rate of sexually transmitted infections and underage pregnancies. So, contraception should be easier to obtain and should be promoted more to teenagers, rather than services being cut and teenagers being told to go the local doctor. Teenagers will not go to the local doctor, because they are embarrassed.

[151] **Ms Bowen:** I will talk about transport next. Transport is a major issue for us in our area. Apparently, as I heard on the news this morning, the cost of insurance for women drivers will be rising, which means more money for us to pay out. Also, public transport services, that is, buses, which we use to get to college, are not frequent enough. There is a service every two hours from Welshpool to Llanidloes, and there should be more buses going back and forth. In our local area, there are no cinemas or shopping centres. The nearest shopping centres for us are in Shrewsbury, which has a large centre with River Island, New Look and so on, and in Welshpool, which is a bit smaller. The cinemas are the same, and, in Welshpool, there is no disabled access. In Newtown, the traffic lights by Tesco are causing a delay for people who want to get to work in the morning, afternoon and at night. Diesel prices are apparently going to rise to £8 a gallon, which is ridiculous. Some people have to travel more than an hour and should be entitled to better travel and comfortable seating on a bus. There are buses from Welshpool to Llanidloes every two hours, and there should be more buses coming and going.

[152] **Ms Davies:** Ambulance transport will also be affected: if there are no local hospitals, women in labour will have to travel further. It also affects the environment, as the further someone has to travel, the more fuel is used and the more carbon dioxide is emitted. It is costing the Government more money for more fuel and, with the fuel prices going up, we want to save money not spend more. You would save more lives by reducing travelling time and it would also help save money on ambulance fuel costs.

[153] We will talk about education next. GCSE pupils, in years 10 and 11, and pupils in the years above, should be offered access to an individual laptop, perhaps putting down a deposit of £100. Students at college should be receiving the education maintenance allowance if they cannot afford a laptop, and the EMA could then pay for it—that is what it is for. Students and pupils having laptops would mean that course work and assignments would be of a higher standard, given spellcheck and grammar checking, and the work would be legible. It would also mean a better educational experience, because the work can travel with the student from place to place. There should be more Coleg Powys sites in Powys. Some people have to travel an hour to two hours to do the course that they want. If they could access the college at a site nearer to them, more teenagers would want to go on to further education, as they would be able to access a course half an hour down the road, rather than having to travel an hour and a

half to do it.

[154] **Ms Bowen:** Primary schools such as Llanfair Caereinion Primary School are getting closed down in our area. What will happen to those buildings afterwards? Also, children will have to travel further to get to the nearest school, and the nearest school may not take them because their parents are not Welsh. Some high schools and colleges will also be closed down.

[155] **Ms Davies:** On sport, there should be better promotion of women's sport and leisure centres. More efforts should be made to promote sport among teenagers and young adults in order to get them into the habit of living a healthy lifestyle. Also, image is a big issue for young people, and having easier and cheaper access to leisure activities would be greatly appreciated by students. There should be easier access to women's sport in Powys. Women have to travel to play rugby or football, because not many local teams are being promoted or are known about. However, women should have just as many opportunities to play rugby and football as men.

10.30 a.m.

[156] On housing, once children get to a certain age, they will want to buy a house—for example, when they leave university or school—but it will become too hard to do this. On leaving university and getting a full-time job, people want independence. However, house prices, the need for large deposits and lack of available mortgages are ridiculous, because they are making more people stay at home with their parents for longer. Cheaper housing is important, as everyone needs somewhere to live. Renting is also difficult as it is very expensive.

[157] On housing at university, once you complete the first year at university, you will need to find your own house, which can be an issue as there may not be decent housing nearby, and it may be expensive, which could increase a student's debt. Universities should offer housing for the full course, not just for the first year, after which it is expected that students will move out. Accommodation should be provided to make the university experience less stressful.

[158] **Ms Davies:** That is everything; thank you.

[159] **Helen Mary Jones:** Wow; you raised a massive number of issues. [*Laughter.*] I will bring in the other committee members in a moment, but it is interesting that a lot of what you said chimes with what other young people have told us. You have two people at this table who know quite a lot about your part of the world; I grew up in Cefn Coch and went to Llanfair Caereinion High School when I was a teenager, and Joyce is an Assembly Member for Mid and West Wales, so she is one of your representatives in Powys. We are not going to be able to cover everything that you have raised, but I am sure that Members will want to come back on some of the issues. Joyce or Lynne, does one of you want to start? Lynne, I know that you have been concerned about maternity services, for example.

[160] **Lynne Neagle:** Although I am not aware of the local situation in your area, the points that you have made about maternity services are important, particularly on provision for special-care babies; that has been a long-standing concern that has come up time and again in the Assembly. It is not right for people to have their babies moved to hospitals several hours away. Although the Assembly Government has taken some action, we still have not nailed a solution, and that is something that we should flag up.

[161] **Joyce Watson:** I was in Welshpool hospital last week and I also know where Llanfair Caereinion is because my aunt lived there and my father was born and brought up in the area. As I understand it, this is a cross-border issue because, at the moment, you can give birth in

Wales, but when there are complications, you have to make other decisions because there is no district general hospital in Powys. At the moment, a decision is being made in another country—England—regarding whether they are going to move their provision from Shrewsbury to Telford, and I discussed that with the matron in Welshpool last week. That decision is outside our control, but we will do our best to influence anything that happens and I know that Edwina Hart, the Minister for Health and Social Services, is fully aware of the issue and is looking at it. As someone who has three children, I share all of your concerns that people should have the right maternity care in the right place that is accessible at the right time, because timing is a big issue. I live in Pembrokeshire and we all accept—like you have learnt to accept—that we must travel for an hour before we get anywhere; that is the way that life is, so let us not make it even more difficult.

[162] On the withdrawal of the bus that was offering free advice on contraception and other issues to teenagers, I do not know anything about that case, so you will have to give us more information on it. We do not know whether it was funded by the Assembly Government; my guess is that it was funded by your local county council. We need to know more about it and why it has been withdrawn.

[163] I know about traffic in Newtown and about the lights because I have been stuck there many times; I was stuck there a few times last week. As Helen Mary said, we have invested more than ever in public transport, but the infrequency of the service is related to trying to run a bus service as best you can with the money that you have. Powys has particular problems because it is a huge, long strip of territory that runs right down the length of Wales. It is the biggest county, in geographical terms, in the country.

[164] We have piloted laptop schemes, and you are right that the education allowance could be used for that. I know about the school reorganisation that is currently going on. I am not going to say any more than that at the moment because decisions are about to be taken. There are very good examples of schools that have been put back into public use. We are aware that information and good practice are being shared in cases where buildings have become empty and have been reused by local communities. Communities need to know how to access that funding, where to go for it and how to get the help of other people who have done that kind of thing before them.

[165] Housing is a massive problem across Mid and West Wales. However, the Assembly Government has met its target for building affordable housing. We are the only ones in the UK to have done so. However, housing that is affordable for some is not affordable for others.

[166] **Helen Mary Jones:** You have raised a huge range of issues and I would like to thank you both for that. I was particularly struck by what you said about children and young people's access to information and sex education. It is difficult to provide that in a discreet way. I completely understand what you said about going to the family doctor because a lot of people do not want to do that. People who live in a big town may be able to go to a clinic or hospital, but you cannot do that. A bus sounds like a really good idea and we would like to find out who is not paying for that anymore and why they are not, because it sounds like a great pity that they are not. As you rightly said, Bronwyn, young people are not going to stop having sex and they need access to the best information and advice. I also like the point that you made about laptops. As Joyce said, the Assembly Government has been piloting that to see how well it works. I would certainly like to see the scheme made available for more children and young people.

[167] Joyce made a point about services that are provided across the border in England. Our Government cannot prevent the health service providers in Shropshire from moving maternity services from Shrewsbury to Telford. However, I know that our Government has written to them and asked them not to do it. They get a lot of money from the Government in Wales to

provide those services for families in Powys. The same is true of the hospital in Hereford that provided services for people in south Powys. I hope that they will listen, if only because the money is important to them. If they will not listen, we will have to think about how else we can do this. It might mean that families from north Powys, instead of going to Shrewsbury, might need to go to Wrexham in future. However, our Government is trying to keep that service there for people because we know that it is important. We will feed that information back to the Minister for health. I will be talking to her tomorrow about many things and I will tell her that you are worried about that, as young people.

[168] Would you be able to e-mail us a copy of your presentation, girls? I see that you will. There was so much in it. I was writing notes like a mad thing, but I do not think that I got everything. Before we bring the session to a close, is there anything else that you would like to say to us?

[169] **Ms Bowen:** Diolch yn fawr iawn. **Ms Bowen:** Thank you very much

[170] **Helen Mary Jones:** Diolch yn fawr **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you very much. iawn ichi.

[171] You have raised a huge range of issues. A lot of them pick up on things that other children and young people have been telling us. We will certainly want to take some of them up with Welsh Ministers here and now, such as the sex education bus issue. We can also put these issues in our legacy report. When the legacy report is ready, you will receive a copy of it so that you can see how we have built your evidence into it. Thank you very much.

[172] We now need to take another short break. We have been having some difficulties with the Torfaen Youth Forum's video-conferencing facilities. We will see if we can find them. If we cannot, we may have to think of an alternative way to take that evidence.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.40 a.m. a 10.45 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 10.40 a.m. and 10.45 a.m.*

[173] **Helen Mary Jones:** Croeso yn ôl. Welcome back to this meeting of the Children and Young People Committee. I welcome the Torfaen Youth Forum via a video link. I think that we have Eddie Weeks, Chris Pollard, Sophie Pollard, Sam Grainger, Sarah Moir and Dwayne Way. Is that right?

[174] **Mr Pollard:** Yes, that is correct. We are all here.

[175] **Helen Mary Jones:** I am Helen Mary Jones, Chair of the Children and Young People Committee. Joyce Watson and Lynne Neagle are also here. I am very glad that we could get hold of you. We have had a few technical problems. I think that you have a presentation for us: a contribution to the legacy report that we will leave for the next children and young people committee. Therefore, shall we go straight into that? The committee members will then ask you questions.

[176] **Mr Pollard:** Yes, we shall. We will jump straight in. Obviously, we will introduce ourselves; we are the Torfaen young people's forum. We have four priorities that we feel affect children and young people, not only in our area but our region in general. They consist of transport, culture, youth activities and recreation, and street lighting. Perhaps we could jump straight in and start with transport. I will hand you over to Sam and Sarah.

[177] **Mr Grainger:** Hello. I congratulate the Welsh Assembly Government for raising bus stops. They are more accessible for people with disabilities. However, there are numerous problems that I would like to bring to your attention that render this upgrade ineffective in

many areas. These issues include the lack of dropped kerbs in the vicinity of bus stops and problems with steps on buses, which make areas inaccessible for people with disabilities or prams, regardless of their age. Similar problems also exist with trains. I suggest that the Welsh Assembly Government suggests to the councils that they convert pavements to dropped kerbs. This is a pre-existing problem and it is not disabled-friendly. Also, I suggest that it should attempt to convince the private bus companies to provide disabled access on a variety of routes, not just on a single route. This would allow people with disabilities to live more freely in Wales. Thank you.

[178] **Mr Pollard:** Basically, the other issue of transport that we were going to mention was fares. Currently, there is an issue with young people who are around 14 or 15 years of age paying adult fares. They are teenagers who look older; therefore, they pay the full fare although, rightly, they should pay a child's fare. We thought that the solution to this would be to use a teen ticket. We see a lot of organisations nowadays, particularly cinemas, providing a teen ticket, which is a cheap alternative for young people to use at peak times. Another issue that we had was frequency: on a Sunday, for example, buses run on an hourly basis or they may stop completely at 5 p.m. Those were our main issues around transport.

[179] We will jump straight into our next priority, which was culture. I will therefore hand you over to Eddie.

[180] **Mr Weeks:** Good morning, all. With culture, we are looking at the stereotypical conceptions that the media portray of young people and how they always seem to view us as young people who are just out to get you and are out to cause trouble when, in actual fact, that is not always the case. We think that the solution to that would be to work with our local media and our local councillors to have our voices heard within the local media, and to try to get a more positive image portrayed.

[181] **Mr Pollard:** That is wonderful. We will now move straight on to the next priority, which was youth activities and recreation. I will pass you over to Dwayne to explain that a little bit more.

[182] **Mr Way:** Good morning. There are a couple of issues with this area, namely transport to and from these activities, and the frequency of services for young people. The other issue is to do with the range of activities open to the older lot, aged 15 and over. We have found this through numerous consultations on the issue. There is also the issue of the way in which we broadcast and advertise these events. We have thought of some solutions, including freshers' fairs, open days and information buses going out to spread information. The major one was inter-agency linking to offer more activities for the older groups, and perhaps a few more for the younger generation as well.

[183] **Ms Pollard:** As you all know, street lighting is a problem around Torfaen. Streetlights are being turned off at night. We are worried about the safety of young people. Young people are worried, and some do not want any of our streetlights to be turned off, as some see it as a threat to their safety, although there has not been any correlation demonstrated between anti-social crime and the streetlights being turned off. It is not only young people who are worried. Our senior citizens feel threatened and are too scared to go out when it gets dark. For example, my grampy does not want to go out at night because he feels worried and threatened. Turning off streetlights saves money, but we are concerned about the safety of people around Torfaen. We want to do more research to find a solution. We had the idea of using energy-saving light bulbs for the streetlights. Thank you for listening. Do you have questions?

[184] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. Just before we bring Members in for questions and comments, will you all just state your names for the record, please? I should have got you to

do that at the beginning. We know who you are, but it is not clear who is who from here.

[185] **Mr Pollard:** My name is Chris Pollard.

[186] **Mr Weeks:** I am Eddie Weeks.

[187] **Ms Moir:** I am Sarah Moir.

[188] **Mr Grainger:** I am Sam Grainger.

[189] **Ms Pollard:** I am Sophie Pollard.

[190] **Mr Way:** I am Dwayne Way.

[191] **Helen Mary Jones:** Great. Thank you. I should have done that right at the beginning, but I always forget with video-conferencing. There were loads of issues there; it was really interesting. Your own Assembly Member, Lynne Neagle, is a member of this committee, as is Joyce Watson who has taken a big interest in loads of young people's issues over the years. Lynne, do you want to start with a response to some of the issues that the young people have raised?

[192] **Lynne Neagle:** Yes. I think that you raised a lot of very important issues. I know that street lighting has been a very contentious issue. Whenever I do surgeries in Torfaen I get complaints about the street lighting, and this is something that I am quite worried about myself. It is interesting that you raised that, because we have had a lot of young people raising environmental concerns with us. Turning off the streetlights could be seen as an environmental measure, but I know that it has worried a lot of people. One of you suggested using low-energy lighting. I know that the council is now looking at that. The lights go off quite early in Torfaen. It is not that they are just going off at midnight; some of them are off completely all the time. We need to look at that as well.

[193] The points that you make about culture are also very important. Anti-social behaviour has been a big issue, but I think that we need to address some of the stereotypes of young people. You have highlighted that issue, and we need to address that. That is very important.

[194] **Helen Mary Jones:** Joyce, is there anything that you would like to comment on?

[195] **Joyce Watson:** I sit on quite a few committees, one of which is the Committee on Equality of Opportunity. We have just completed a study and a survey and taken lots of evidence about access to transport for disabled people. We looked particularly at trains, but also at buses. What is interesting is that all of the things that you have just told us we had already been told time and again. It is very useful—we can pass this on to the other committee—that you are providing a young person's perspective and demonstrating that it affects everybody, because people mostly think that it affects older people.

[196] The other issue that I think is important is the provision of activities for people of different ages. There is a squeeze in the young teenage age range—the 14 to 18 age group, which has been missed out; it is missed out very often when organisations and Government are looking at provision. That is something that we will be happy to recommend that it be looked at, because all we are doing is making recommendations for the next Assembly. It was an issue that came up time and again in our inquiry into the provision of safe places to play and hang out. Those are the only issues that I will address.

[197] **Helen Mary Jones:** I agree with much of what my fellow Members have said. I was particularly struck by the point about culture, in that you were highlighting the fact that not

only is it an issue, but that you have some plans to do something about it with the local media and local councillors. You are absolutely right that there is a lot of negative reporting about children and young people. In my area of Llanelli and Carmarthenshire, we find that people will attribute bad behaviour to people in their teens and early 20s, but when the police actually arrest the people who are drunk and making a noise, they often find that they are older people; men in their 30s and 40s. So, the problem of anti-social behaviour is one of anti-social behaviour, and not one of young people. It can be more difficult to get the local media to take an interest in some of the really good things that children and young people are doing in our communities, so I would be really interested to know how you get on with that, because I think that that is a positive way of moving things forward. We know that people in the community broadly trust what they read in the local papers. They can sometimes be a bit suspicious of what they read in the national press or hear on the national news, but they do tend to trust their local papers, so if you can develop a good relationship there, that would be brilliant.

[198] Is your presentation available in a format that can be e-mailed to us?

[199] **Mr Pollard:** That would not be a problem. We were planning to draft everything.

[200] We had a great discussion yesterday about our key priorities, and many of the things that you have said today were discussed yesterday, particularly the points to do with finding solutions and culture. There are a lot of opportunities that we can seize, particularly with regard to the media. There is Clic, for example. I attended the Senedd a few months ago for the launch of the media toolkit, and Keith Towler and Huw Lewis were there for that. A lot is being done, and there are a lot of opportunities; it is just about seizing them.

[201] We can put a draft of all this together and send it to you via e-mail, no problem.

[202] **Helen Mary Jones:** That would be brilliant. Do any of you have anything that you would like to add, either in response to what the Members have said or as something further to the issues that you have raised?

[203] **Mr Pollard:** No; I think that that has pretty much covered it. We do have one or two solutions for each priority—not so much solutions, perhaps, but ways by which we can make further progress towards achieving our aims. We can measure those and keep you updated.

[204] **Helen Mary Jones:** That would be great. I thank you all on behalf of the committee for an excellent presentation. It was really focused and it raised many issues that young people from different parts of Wales have raised with us. You have also come at these issues from some new angles, which is really interesting and useful. We will certainly want to include your evidence in our legacy report. Once that report has been drafted, we will ensure that you have a copy of it, so that you know how we have incorporated what you have said and what we will be passing on to the next Assembly as the legacy of what is left of our committee's work. Thank you all; we really appreciate your contribution. Thank you for your time this morning.

[205] **Mr Pollard:** Thank you for your time.

10.59 a.m.

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[206] **Helen Mary Jones:** Mae dau bapur **Helen Mary Jones:** There are two papers to i'w nodi, sef ymateb y comisiynydd plant yn note, namely the children's commissioner's

nodi'r materion y mae am eu gweld yn yr adroddiad etifeddiaeth, a'r un peth gan Barnardo's Cymru. response noting the issues that he wants to see in the legacy report, and the same from Barnardo's Cymru.

[207] Diolch i fy nghyd-Aelodau ac i staff y pwyllgor. Byddwn yn cwrdd nesaf ar 15 Mawrth. Diolch yn fawr. My thanks to my fellow Members and to the committee staff. Our next meeting is on 15 March. Thank you.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.59 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.59 a.m.*