



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

**Y Pwyllgor Cyfle Cyfartal
The Committee on Equality of Opportunity**

**Dydd Iau, 27 Medi 2007
Thursday, 27 September 2007**

Cynnwys
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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

Angela Burns	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Christine Chapman	Llafur Labour
Mark Isherwood	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Helen Mary Jones	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Lynne Neagle	Llafur Labour
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Michael German	Aelod Cynulliad, Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (dirprwyo ar ran Mick Bates) Assembly Member, Welsh Liberal Democrats (substitute for Mick Bates)
Dr Mike Shooter	Cadeirydd, Bwrdd Ymddiriedolaeth, Plant yng Nghymru Chair, Trustee Board, Children in Wales
Catriona Williams	Prif Weithredwr, Plant yng Nghymru Chief Executive, Children in Wales

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

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Gwyn Griffiths	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Claire Morris	Clerc Clerk
Denise Rogers	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members' Research Service

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.31 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.31 a.m.

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

[1] **Ann Jones:** I welcome everyone to this morning's meeting of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity. We all know the arrangements for the broadcasting. Translation is available on channel 1 and the verbatim proceedings on channel 0. We do not expect a fire drill this morning, so, if the alarm goes off, we will wait for the ushers to direct our next

moves. I ask everyone around the table to switch off their mobile phones, BlackBerrys and pagers. I think that you are allowed to keep your pacemakers on, but anything else must be switched off, as it affects the broadcasting. We welcome Sarah Bartlett, who has kindly offered to act as our deputy clerk in Claire Griffiths's absence. Claire is off, having had an operation, and I have conveyed our best wishes to her via Claire, the clerk. Welcome, Sarah, and thank you for agreeing to join us this morning.

[2] I have received apologies from Mick Bates and we are joined by Mike German instead. Welcome, Mike.

[3] Are there any declarations of interests? I see that there are not.

9.33 a.m.

**Trafodaeth ar y Papur Cwmpasu ar gyfer Ymchwiliad Craffu'r Pwyllgor i
Hygyrchedd Canolfannau Pleidleisio yng Nghymru
Discussion of Scoping Paper for the Committee's Scrutiny Inquiry into the
Accessibility of Polling Stations in Wales**

[4] **Ann Jones:** We agreed that we would do a short review based on the findings of Scope's review of its Polls Apart campaign. As you may remember, Scope undertook Polls Apart at around the time of the 2003 Assembly elections, and carried out a follow-up survey at the 2007 elections. We decided that we would look at this short piece of work to see whether we could add some more influence to Scope's campaign for the accessibility of polling stations to be looked at in time for the local government elections in May 2008. So, we have a scoping paper before us, and the object today is to have a discussion as to whether the terms of reference are okay, and whether we are happy with the list of people who should come to speak to us, or whether we should add someone else to the list. Does anyone want to pass any comment?

[5] **Helen Mary Jones:** On the people whom we invite to give evidence, I do not know whether we have the time, but I see that the Disability Rights Commission is on the list, but Disability Wales is not. That is the umbrella body for voluntary organisations, and it has a particular bit—I cannot remember what it is—that focuses on access. That might be a good way to pick up local experience. We may hear one story from the Welsh Local Government Association and the returning officers, but find that the story on the ground, as the scoping paper suggests, is different. So, it might help us to hear a few specific local examples. So, we should either invite representatives of Disability Wales, if we can squeeze them in, to give evidence, or ask them to suggest one or two local access groups to give us evidence in addition. I completely accept that we may not have time.

[6] **Ann Jones:** I think that Disability Wales is probably the umbrella organisation. We will probably invite it to send representatives and ask them, in the first instance, to provide us with written evidence as well, and then have them in for an oral session. I think that you are right; we may get one story from those who think that they have it right, and then we need to know from people who actually access the services whether that story dovetails in and fits. So, we will put Disability Wales on the list. Is there anything else?

[7] **Mark Isherwood:** At the Eisteddfod, I attended various events, such as Mencap's, and they all brought up the same points. An umbrella organisation might be the ideal means of addressing them all.

[8] **Ann Jones:** We are looking at polling stations' physical accessibility, but there are wider implications for how people vote and the methods of voting. I do not think that we can

look at that, however, in any depth to be able to propose a recommendation. Of course, we want to scrutinise the Government and see whether the grants that the Government put towards polling station accessibility have made a difference and whether they have been put in the right place. That is our focus, and perhaps after the May elections, we will hear a story that we may wish to return to with regard to people's voting rights and accessibility. That may be a different subject.

[9] **Helen Mary Jones:** I agree with that, Chair, and the only thing that I would add is that physical accessibility, in terms of getting in and out of the polling booth, is also affected by the needs of sensory impaired people, and I hope that we would include that. For example, somebody who is blind or partially sighted is entitled to take somebody into the polling booth with him or her. I am sure that we all know of cases in which that right has been persistently refused because the returning officer's staff do not know that it is allowed. So, there are some things that are to do with needing to change the physical location, but there are also issues of training staff and attitude and awareness that go beyond just trying not to put things in buildings with 10 flights of steps and so on.

[10] **Ann Jones:** Absolutely.

[11] **Joyce Watson:** It is also about accessibility for the parents of young children, because some polling stations are on routes that are difficult to cross. I can think of one particular example in my area, where there are no adequate road-crossing facilities, so they are literally taking their children's lives in their hands when they try to cross busy roads. It is the accessibility of the location, because that would affect everybody.

[12] **Ann Jones:** That might be a line of questioning for returning officers, the Association of Electoral Administrators and the WLGA to look at, with regard to how the siting of polling stations affects accessibility. That is a fair point. Is there anything else on this issue, or are we content with the terms of reference in the scoping paper and the people that we will invite to give evidence, including Disability Wales? I see that you are content.

9.40 a.m.

**Trafodaeth ar y Papur Cefndir i Ymchwiliad Arfaethedig y Pwyllgor i Faterion
sy'n Effeithio ar Weithwyr Mudol**
**Discussion of Background Paper for the Committee's Proposed Inquiry into
Issues Affecting Migrant Workers**

[13] **Ann Jones:** We agreed to look at this topic at our first formal, but brief, meeting as a wider and much more in-depth piece of work. We may want to branch off and cover a specific area within the overall project. We have a very in-depth scoping paper before us, and, again, we will discuss whether we can look at what we want to scrutinise initially, what we want to look at, and whether we can find ways of discussing the key areas. Perhaps we can then form a basis for the terms of reference. We need to consider who we would like to invite to give evidence to this inquiry. We will bring this issue back to our next meeting, to be signed off. I now open this up for Members' comments.

[14] **Mark Isherwood:** I wish to propose some invitees. The North Wales Race Equality Network has been doing a lot of work in this area and has some very useful information on the levels of need in both urban areas, such as Wrexham, and more rural areas where people often live in relative isolation. We could invite Wrexham County Borough Council, because it has the largest concentration of migrant workers, or the new north Wales regional council, which may wish to send Wrexham to represent it or it may wish to send a more cross-regional representative group. Ann, I mentioned to you Refugee Voice Wales, which had a meeting

here last night. It has a mountain of issues, but they are refugee-based as opposed to migrant-worker-based, and one of its concerns is to ensure public awareness of the difference. Its representatives are keen to talk to the committee and whether that discussion could be incorporated in this inquiry would be for the committee to decide.

[15] **Ann Jones:** On the refugee group, you did speak to me last night, and I thank you for that. Perhaps we should write to the refugee council when we have the terms of reference, but I think that it would be interesting if its representatives were to come in to talk to us separately. That would give them an opportunity to tell us about some of their work and their views. They may have some vital evidence that will fit in to this piece of work, but it would be nice to have them in to discuss the issues that affect refugees. Perhaps we can fit that in somewhere in the forward work programme—we will talk about that later. We could add that to the forward work programme and also include them in this piece of work, if we feel that there is any evidence that they could offer us. Do you think that that is right? I am looking for agreement.

[16] **Helen Mary Jones:** We should certainly invite the refugee council to talk about its issues, but I would have a concern about mixing it up in this process, unless it wants to be involved, because, as Mark rightly says, one of the issues that refugees face is that they could not be more different from migrant workers. Migrant workers come here to work and one of the big issues for refugees and asylum seekers is that, in most parts of Britain, they are not allowed to work. Therefore, the issues that they face are really different and I would worry about including them in this. If the council wants to submit evidence, that would be welcomed, as would evidence from any organisation, but I think that we should see it separately, if we can, Chair.

[17] **Ann Jones:** I was waiting for someone to say, ‘Yes, that is what we need to do’. It would be more helpful for us, as a committee, to talk to the refugee council about these specific issues.

[18] **Mark Isherwood:** One small correction: it is not the refugee council, it is Refugee Voice Wales. It is their own refugee group. I have the contact details here and I can hand them to the clerk.

[19] **Ann Jones:** If you hand the details to Claire, we will make contact with the group. We will have a meeting to discuss the issues, but we will also ask that organisation if it wants to give evidence to this inquiry—as Helen said, if anyone wants to provide evidence, that is fine, they can send their evidence in. However, I think that Refugee Voice Wales will have some specific issues that we will need to address at a later meeting.

[20] **Christine Chapman:** We need to get the Ministers in on this. Jane Davidson, when she was the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, did some work on the education of migrant workers, so I think that we need to monitor how that is going by talking to the new Minister. Access to public services, such as housing and health, would involve other Ministers as well. I do not know how much time we have for this, but it would be useful to get some ministerial input.

[21] **Ann Jones:** I also think that that would be useful. We seem to be focusing on who we should bring in before we have considered what we are hoping to get out of this.

[22] **Joyce Watson:** This may be timely, therefore, because I think that there are some key issues about the treatment of migrant workers, which will then break down into subsections. Those subsections will include housing and how migrant workers are housed. You will see that Pembrokeshire is named as one of the unitary authority areas with large-scale multi-occupation, which is then displacing the availability of housing for locals at affordable rates. I

know that Carmarthenshire has particular problems and I know exactly where those are. I have spoken, and I have spoken many times to the Commission for Racial Equality about those. Again, it is about large-scale numbers of migrant workers in a small area, so they make up 10 per cent of the population of the village where they are located and where they work, with no facilities.

[23] Therefore, the issue is about housing for them, and the wider implications that that might have. It is about welfare issues for the migrants, and all that is encompassed in that. The other key area on which we need to focus is where they are tied in their work to the place that they reside, how they travel to work—it is tied employment, albeit in a new form, because it is not domestic as it used to be—and how they are often exploited in that way. Those are key areas. Furthermore, if they bring their children, there is an issue about how they are accommodated into local schools.

[24] **Ann Jones:** Those are fair points. One issue that I would like to look at is how agencies handle migrant workers, because their employment conditions are sometimes not what they should be. They have the same rights as anyone else in the workplace, but, sadly, that does not appear to be the case.

[25] **Helen Mary Jones:** I was going to suggest the same thing, because many of the issues that other people are touching on result directly from the way that agencies conduct themselves. On some of Joyce's points about housing, for example, and ludicrously high rents being charged for these houses in multiple occupation, I think that we will have issues in getting evidence about this. In my Llanelli constituency, we have a high concentration in a few communities, and it is difficult to get people to talk, because they are afraid. However, as a committee, that should not stop us trying. In the scoping paper, there is a reference to the Gangmasters (Licensing) Act 2004 and the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, so we should also examine whether we believe that that Act is adequate. This committee has never been afraid to look at non-devolved issues; in our work with Gypsies, Travellers and refugees, we have made representations to Westminster, and have had video-conferencing links with Westminster Ministers who have been happy to talk to us about that. Therefore, we should look at whether the legislation is adequate, and then whether sufficient resource is put into enforcement.

[26] Anecdotally, I am aware of employers being paid bonuses to take on workers from an agency, which means, effectively, that those workers are not being paid the minimum wage, because it is not costing the company the minimum wage. I do not know whether we will be able to get that out into the open air; I do not even know whether that is unlawful under the Act. Therefore, it would be helpful if the Members' research service could put together some information about how the agencies conduct themselves, and what is currently lawful, and what is not. If things are unlawful but we think that they are happening, there is an issue then about whether we can get evidence to prove that they are. There is also the issue about whether everything that we believe should be unlawful is unlawful, in terms of ensuring that migrant workers have the same rights as other employees—for two reasons: for the sake of the migrant workers, but also so that they cannot undercut the local labour market, which then creates community tension. It would be useful to do that.

[27] On process, Chair—and, again, I do not know how practical this will be, so I will throw it out for you and the clerk to consider—it might be helpful if we were able, either as a whole committee, or perhaps on a rapporteur basis, to go out to take evidence in the communities that are most affected, in Carmarthenshire, Wrexham, or wherever. The scoping paper notes the numbers of people who are registered, and it is ludicrously low; it must be many more than that. We should try to get out there. I would obviously put in a bid for the committee to visit Llanelli. However, Llanelli is one of the few places that has an organisation of migrant workers, namely the Polish Welsh Mutual Association; we should invite its

representatives to give evidence—whether we go out to west Wales, or whether they come to us. I believe that we would be more likely to pick up on the issues that really matter to people. We need to face the fact that reaction from people in the local communities will probably be quite negative, but even that may be helpful if we have an open-mic session and people can talk about their concerns, because then we could identify the myths, which would help with the myth-busting side of what we are trying to do.

9.50 a.m.

[28] **Ann Jones:** I think that that is an excellent suggestion. I would want to go out and about. I think that that is far easier, especially if it is going to be very difficult for people to talk about what they think. Sometimes, it is easier for people to do that in their environment rather than in this very formal environment. We could do it either as a whole committee or perhaps just in small groups. It might be up to the committee to decide where we go in terms of timetabling. I am certainly keen to get out and talk to those people and I am sure that we would want to go up to north Wales and to talk to people up there. I think that you are right on that.

[29] The Welsh Affairs Select Committee is also doing a piece of work on migrant workers and we ought to make contact with it and, if necessary, use the video link, although we are not very good at video-linking; I always get lost with it. However, if we cannot go to talk to people there or they cannot come here to talk to us, we should at least set up a video link to see where they have got to with their work.

[30] **Helen Mary Jones:** Perhaps we could do that on a rapporteur basis, with one or two members of this committee going to meet that committee's members or one or two of them coming to see us. Also, the video-conferencing in the big room works quite well because the screens are big.

[31] **Ann Jones:** Yes, we would have to put a bid in for the larger committee room if we wanted to do that. We will look at those practicalities and come back to Members on them. Does everybody agree that that is what we should do: get out and take that evidence?

[32] **Mark Isherwood:** In that context, if we wanted to meet, for example, the North Wales Race Equality Network or the north Wales regional partnership, we could do it on the same day.

[33] I went to the Welsh Affairs Select Committee meeting in Wrexham as an observer. It was taking evidence from Wrexham County Borough Council and it highlighted one of the points that Helen Mary raised. Its assessment of the actual number of people concerned as opposed to the official number was significantly higher and there might be some interesting information there.

[34] We have not mentioned the police. Last week, a chief constable in, I think, south Wales indicated a funding shortfall for translation services, for example, and a lot of tabloid coverage allegedly links these groups of people to issues. It might be helpful to hear from the horse's mouth what is happening.

[35] **Ann Jones:** That might be a good thing to do. Joyce has a comment and then Mike will come in.

[36] **Joyce Watson:** I was also going to mention the police. There is also a separate issue, and this is not about numbers; it is about proportionality. It is not about Llanelli, but within that area—although I am not going to announce where to the world here and now—there are issues in relation to suicide, which links to social issues and provision. There have been three

suicides there in 18 months. We need to get in there urgently. People need to know urgently that we are on the case and that we are looking at it. Work was done by the CRE and the Equal Opportunities Commission last year, so perhaps they have information that we can draw on.

[37] **Ann Jones:** We will look at that.

[38] **Michael German:** This is just an observation. I am an observer, and am representing somebody else.

[39] **Ann Jones:** We would like you to join in.

[40] **Michael German:** It seems to me that the discussion so far has centred around three bundles of topics and I wonder whether that focus will be useful. It seems to me that, to help understanding, the first thing to do would be to get fully to grips with the regulatory regime—including the gangmasters legislation and the registration schemes—and where the boundaries of work have been drawn and what they cover, that is, the legal framework within which all of this operates.

[41] The second group of issues—and I am not going to say which order these come in—seems to be the level of state support. This is a very personal issue and I would support entirely looking at the education of migrant children. I can cite family experience of a classroom not miles away from here, where a very high percentage of the children are from the Czech Republic and there are no translation facilities. So, they are teaching Czech children from scratch without them having any knowledge of Czech, without the children having any knowledge of English and without interpretation support. How we support children as part of that process is a key issue.

[42] The third area seems to be the social impact on communities that tend to be very tight. All of us have experience of such communities in our caseloads and it can sometimes be very difficult to get behind the issues and to find the facts. All three areas will merit some detailed investigation, which is quite a heavy piece of work, and each part will perhaps require a different approach.

[43] I understand why people are commenting on key areas, and I know about the Wrexham issue. However, the largest concentration of migrant workers is in Cardiff. I think that it would be wrong not to consider the issues that are magnified here.

[44] **Ann Jones:** Thank you. That is quite a good summary of what everyone around the table was saying. I think that is probably a good way to set the terms of reference for the committee. I take the point that we have to look at what is happening in Cardiff. That is from where we are going to draw the biggest part of our evidence. There are huge numbers of migrant workers in Cardiff, and therefore there is probably a structure of some description here, but you also get isolated communities, where you have a small group of migrant workers who are housed and taken by bus to their employment and then back to their housing—often sub-standard in my experience. Those workers are isolated and do not integrate into the community. So we also need to get out and about. Those are the issues that Joyce was raising about health, education, housing and so on, which Helen has also raised in the past. We also have to look at what is happening in Cardiff, because that is where large numbers of workers are.

[45] **Michael German:** Cardiff is important because, as you said, there will be support mechanisms in place—although I have just pointed to an area where there is no support—and there will be lessons to be learned from those.

[46] **Helen Mary Jones:** Christine mentioned earlier the action that has already been taken. It might be useful either to speak to the relevant Ministers soon or to ask for some papers. I know that work is going on. Currently, local authorities that have large concentrations of refugees get some support with regard to money spent on translation facilities and so on, so that pressure is taken off local services. I know that the Welsh Local Government Association has been talking to Ministers about a similar funding formula for those areas where you have demonstrably large populations of migrant workers. It might be useful to explore with them some of the issues with regard to where there are small numbers but high concentrations of people, which have a big impact on the community. When the formula is considered, is it just about looking at the known numbers? While numbers might be huge in a big city the people might not be experiencing the same isolation or having the same impact on public services as a smaller number in a higher concentration. Therefore, we might want to explore a range of issues with Ministers regarding the progress on that, and we might want to raise that with the WLGA when the time comes. We need to ask whether the formula is complex enough to deal with the issues.

[47] We also might want to ask whether formulae are based on the known number of people who are registered, and, if not, what local authorities can do to estimate the number of unregistered workers. One of the key issues is the impact on public services, and whether migrant workers and their families are able to receive public services and are given information. Many turn up at accident and emergency departments in hospitals in west Wales because they think that that is the only way that they will get see a doctor; they do not know that they have a right to register. If that is going to be taken into account in Assembly Government funding formulae, we should ask Ministers about that fairly early on, as I think that that work is going on now.

10.00 a.m.

[48] Also, in terms of recommendations, we might want the Assembly Government to look again at the issues around houses in multiple occupation, for example, because there may be things that it can do to legislate. Again, we need to look at not just what regulations there are, but what is in place to ensure that those regulations are enforced. I have been shocked to discover how low the standard is for what is considered unlawful overcrowding. Even then, I am sure that there are places that are unlawfully overcrowded that local authorities perhaps just do not have the resources to go and sort out. Those are some issues that we could explore with the Ministers. However, they are doing some things, and perhaps one of the first things should be to find out what the National Assembly Government is doing across portfolios. Some of those things are in the scoping paper, but Christine's point was that some of these initiatives had been in place for a while, and we might want to explore with Ministers what impact they are making.

[49] **Ann Jones:** Are we broadly content with covering the three areas that we were coming to, but which Mike managed to put into three areas, for which, well done? On understanding the legal position, before we undertake any sort of inquiry, we all ought to be sure about what the legal position is and where we are up to, then we can ask for papers from the Ministers about what the Welsh Assembly Government has done. That is the first thing that we need to do, because there is some confusion—I am certainly not sure as to what the legal position is—and while we all want to get on with the inquiry, we must do so in a way that will have some impact at the end of it.

[50] **Lynne Neagle:** I apologise for being late. I have obviously missed a chunk of the discussion, and I am not quite sure what went before, but I want to flag up the importance of taking evidence early from the trade unions, which have done a lot of work on this issue, particularly my union, the Transport and General Workers' Union. It is really important that we make early contact with the TUC, the TGWU and any other unions that have focused on

this issue.

[51] **Ann Jones:** Thank you for that, Lynne. We will look at the legal position and get the Minister to tell us what the Welsh Assembly Government has been doing in the first instance, and then go on to look at the social issues of migrant workers and their families, in particular, health, education, housing and employment rights.

[52] **Helen Mary Jones:** I just wanted to add, Chair, that I think that there are two aspects to that—access to services for migrant workers and their families, and also the impact that large concentrations of migrant workers have on public services more broadly. There is a myth out there that they are getting all the houses and swamping our schools, and so on, which, if we look at it with a cool head, we will probably find is not true.

[53] **Ann Jones:** Does that not break down into two areas? We will look at the social issues that are affecting the migrant workers and their families, and whether they are being treated on a par with the rest of the community in which they are living—and I am sure that we will find that they are not—and that has a lot to do with how the agencies manage that. That is where the trade unions can probably give us some evidence. Alongside that, we need to look at the impact on communities in terms of services. I think that we will be able to blow the myth out of the water. As you said, I think that we will find that people's perception that they come in and have everything is completely wrong.

[54] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is right and I know that local authorities are doing ongoing work on monitoring the impact of migrant workers on public services to others, but it will be more difficult to get at access to public services for migrant workers, because part of the problem is that they simply do not know that they can access them. There is some anecdotal evidence that some of their employers do not want them to know that. They do not want them to know that they have housing and employment rights and those sorts of things. So, that will be a challenge, but the work that the unions have done, as Lynne has said, has got under the skin of some of that already, so we can use that.

[55] **Mark Isherwood:** There is a second UK context. The first is the Welsh Affairs Select Committee, but the second is the broader Treasury approach. When we discussed this in the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee in the last Assembly, the Minister strongly made the point that there is a link here with UK policy. If we are going to get Barnettised funding, it must be based on the allocation for housing, health and education in England. So it might be helpful to know where the UK Government is going on this, too.

[56] **Ann Jones:** That might be an issue that we can tease out when we meet with the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, and we might even manage to get people from the Treasury down here. Are we broadly content with these areas? Is there an area that anyone thinks we have not raised, but they would like to look at?

[57] **Joyce Watson:** Have we included the police?

[58] **Ann Jones:** Yes, we have brought them in on that issue. That ties into funding as well, does it not, Mark? It was the chief constable of Cambridge, I believe, who said that she found it difficult to get the translation—

[59] **Mark Isherwood:** My understanding is that, a few days later, a similar statement was made by a chief constable in Wales.

[60] **Ann Jones:** Okay, we might ask them both here, to see what the differences are. That relates to funding, and to how the police can assist with migrant workers. Is there any other issue that people feel we should be looking at, or can we safely go away and look at the terms

of reference, looking at the legal side first, and then at social issues for migrant workers and their families, and the impact on communities? We have had some suggestions about who should come to give evidence. Are there any others apart from the usual people whom we would have from the Welsh Local Government Association, the police, and the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs? We have mentioned the unions and Ministers.

[61] **Christine Chapman:** Is it just the WLGA, or will we ask the chief executives of local authorities individually? I have been up to Wrexham for discussions, and I know that Merthyr is another possibility.

[62] **Ann Jones:** Well, if we are going out and about, perhaps we could ask local authorities to come to give evidence about their findings. When we go to north Wales, we could ask Wrexham and others about their findings. The North Wales Race Equality Network will have views for us.

[63] **Lynne Neagle:** Is there any way of taking evidence directly from organised groups of migrant workers? I do not know whether such groups exist, but there may be some in areas where the local authorities have made an effort to support them. That would be good, if it were possible.

[64] **Ann Jones:** We touched on this, and we did not know whether some of them would want to come to give evidence. What we thought we would do is go out into the areas where there is a high concentration of numbers, and try to talk to them. If we could find people, that would be good. They can always be called Mr A or Mrs B, and it could be taken as a private session to protect them.

[65] **Helen Mary Jones:** There is an association that the Assembly Government is funding in Llanelli, which has been quite successful at getting into the houses that are run by agencies, and so on, and so it might know. That is the only organised group that I know of. However, the unions may know of more, when we talk to them. They obviously manage to access these groups and may be able to suggest to us how we can do the same. It might be like the review of provision for Gypsies and Travellers. We did not expect travellers to come either to a formal session here, though they did later on, or to formal sessions in communities. However, one or two members went and visited places where people live and work, and we might want to talk to the unions to see what they did about that. We could also talk to the mutual association in Llanelli, which may have links with less organised groups. I know that there is a social club for Polish workers in Wrexham, for example, which meets in the crypt of the parish church. I do not know whether they have a committee, or a name, but we might be able to talk to them.

[66] The other thing that we might want to do is talk to the churches, because the Polish and Czech workforce are mostly Catholic, and they go to church. It is one of the few things that the agencies have not been able to stop them doing. I know that in Llanelli a Polish-speaking priest attends once a month, to hear confession, and so on. So, the churches may be able to get us in touch with people who are not formally organised. That only occurred to me when I thought about the places at which migrant workers meet, and, in Wrexham, they meet in the church. It is the only alternative to pubs, and so on, where there are young people drinking too much and getting into trouble.

10.10 a.m.

[67] **Angela Burns:** What I would like to see at the end of this, when we have finished our report, is a list of best practices. There is not much point in producing a report that says, 'The state of affairs is totally dreadful', if do not also offer some solutions. I would like to go out and find employers who have also taken on migrant workers and have treated them well, and

have helped them to integrate. They are out there; they are not all evil gangmasters. It would be really good to take evidence from a couple of companies, large or small, that have done it well, so that we can go out to those who are not doing it well and say, 'This is what you should be doing; this has worked, and here is the empirical evidence'. That way, we could build up a body of positivity out of this, so that we are not just focusing on the negative message, and saying, 'We are handing this really badly'. We would then have solutions as well, and that would give us real teeth.

[68] **Ann Jones:** That is a fair point. When we first discussed this issue informally, the aim of conducting such a review was to point out good practices and share them. That is a good point that we can look at.

[69] One of the first things that we need to do is write to Ministers asking them what is happening on Welsh Assembly Government policies on migrant workers.

[70] **Christine Chapman:** And the trade unions.

[71] **Ann Jones:** Yes.

[72] **Christine Chapman:** They have been working with the Minister.

[73] **Ann Jones:** That would be good, would it not? If we get those pieces of evidence in, we can start the ball rolling. Are we happy to draw some terms of reference up with regard to the points that we have discussed. Are you content with that? I see that you are. Do you have enough to do there, Claire?

[74] As soon as Claire has managed to draft the terms of reference, we will circulate them to Members ahead of the committee meeting, so that you can check them to see whether we have missed something, along with a list of consultees. If you think of any other people in the meantime, we can add them to the list. We will then have a paper to present on 11 October, and we will be ready to start running with this. Are Members happy with this approach? I see that you are. Are there any other points on this issue? I see that there are none.

10.12 a.m.

Blaenraglen Waith Forward Work Programme

[75] **Ann Jones:** Members will see that we have drawn up a forward work programme, which takes us to the Christmas recess. We also have other issues to include. I apologise to Mark, who raised this issue before, on the equal pay campaign and at sub-committees. I will let you bring that one in first, Mark, and we will see where we go from there.

[76] **Mark Isherwood:** In the last Assembly, this committee was the parent committee of a sub-committee on equal pay, on which members of the committee sat along with the representatives of other organisations. The Equal Opportunities Commission and others were represented. The issue is not going away; it is being talked about more and more. Local authorities are talking more about it. I think that we will have to keep a watching brief, particularly with the growing weight of tribunal action and court action involving complainants, local authorities, trade unions and others. I think we need to look at that, as well as the funding aspects, where there is still a degree of uncertainty about the capitalisation rules. Before the Assembly election, the Minister announced that Wales was going to allow that to happen, and that an announcement would be made in the autumn term. Perhaps we need to have a view on that one when the announcement is made.

[77] **Ann Jones:** Just remind me, because the equal pay committee has been running for a while now, and I cannot remember its make-up. Were there four Assembly Members?

[78] **Helen Mary Jones:** If I remember rightly, there was one Member from each party, a member of staff from the Equal Opportunities Commission, and a member of staff from the TUC.

[79] **Ann Jones:** What are the Members' views, then?

[80] **Lynne Neagle:** I have picked up a lot of issues in my constituency in relation to the implementation of single status. Torfaen has been one of the first authorities to do it, which is very much to be welcomed. However, there have been issues in relation to the information given to people to enable them to make claims, as well as in relation to staff in church schools. So, I certainly would not mind looking at those issues again.

[81] **Ann Jones:** I think that we will have to carry on with a sub-committee; people seem to think that that is the way forward. I know that the former Local Government and Public Services Committee used to spend some time on equal pay, but we concentrated more on the local authority aspect. Gwyn, you are going to tell us the rules, now, are you?

[82] **Mr Griffiths:** Yes, I am afraid so, Chair. The Standing Orders that now apply to sub-committees are somewhat different from those that applied to the last Assembly and they were drawn up particularly in relation to regular attendance by non-Members of the Assembly. The matter is now covered by Standing Order No. 10.43 and Standing Order No. 10.44. The former says that,

[83] 'Members who are not members of a committee may, with the permission of the chair, participate in a committee meeting but may not vote'.

[84] Standing Order No 10.44 says,

[85] 'Committees may invite any person to attend meetings for the purpose of giving evidence, or providing advice and may invite any such person or body to submit evidence and produce documents'.

[86] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thank you for that.

[87] **Helen Mary Jones:** Before, it operated on the basis that it was not a formal sub-committee, because then it would have had to meet in public and it would also have raised a whole set of issues about the availability of rooms and staff. So, the equal pay group functioned as a sub-committee, in that it did not make any decisions and it fed any decisions that needed to be taken on recommendations to this committee. However, it was a sub-group, as was the sub-group that monitored progress on the review of service provision for Gypsies and Travellers.

[88] **Ann Jones:** It was probably more of a working group. I think I sat on it about four years ago. We could set up a working group just to keep abreast of the issues, but it would not be a sub-committee. Shall we have an equal pay working group, then?

[89] **Helen Mary Jones:** One of the starting points was deciding that what we were really doing in that working group was monitoring an Assembly Government equal pay campaign, but then the crisis in local government hit. So, that sub-group might want to begin by asking Ministers whether the intention is to keep the campaign rolling and whether they will continue working. The TUC was partly funding it, so there was partnership between it and the Assembly Government. It might be a starting point to ask Assembly Ministers for a paper.

[90] **Ann Jones:** So, as a committee, should we write to the Government to ask it about the equal pay campaign? If we ask for an update on the equal pay campaign, we could then set up a working group, if necessary, to look at the issues that come from that letter and any other issues that we need to raise. I think that that covers the point, so that we are not in breach of Standing Orders. Is everyone happy with that? I see that you are. If Members are interested in sitting on the working group, once we have had the letter back from the Minister, please indicate as such to Claire. One Member from each party is probably sufficient. I see that everyone is happy with that. Are there any other issues on the forward working programme? Does anyone want to add anything for a later date?

[91] **Joyce Watson:** I know that the Assembly has done a lot of work on domestic abuse, but I would like us to widen our thinking on that to ending all violence against women rather than just domestic abuse; we could include forced marriage, genital mutilation and ‘honour’ killings, as they are called. There is a group that could feed some evidence and background papers, and so on, to us. The big issue that no-one in the Assembly is looking at, as far as I am aware, is sex-trade trafficking. It is an issue that comes under the radar all of the time, and, again, we need to try to tease out that it is not just in the city, but is pretty widespread in rural areas.

10.20 a.m.

[92] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Are there any more questions?

[93] **Bethan Jenkins:** I know that the Black Association of Women Step Out Ltd is doing some research into that. It has already said that it will be happy to feed information to the committee on that issue.

[94] **Ann Jones:** There is also Amnesty International. I will be launching its report on sex trafficking. There was an incident only four miles away from my home town, so you are right that it does not only happen in major cities; it also happens in rural areas. Could we add that to the list and look at when we can fit some work in around that?

[95] **Mark Isherwood:** Have we resolved the question of standing invitees yet?

[96] **Ann Jones:** I think that we have, given that Standing Orders preclude us from having standing invitees.

[97] **Mark Isherwood:** I am thinking about the commission for equality and human rights. Previously, we had representatives from the three commissions as well as from Stonewall and the Welsh Language Board. Do we just invite someone from the CEHR or do we still need representatives from each of the strands and who should they be?

[98] **Ann Jones:** This is a huge departure. We are under the impression from Standing Orders that how the committee operated before, with standing invitees, will no longer operate. Such people will only be allowed to give evidence, because they are not part of the committee. I have sought advice and that was the advice that I was given—that we are the same as any other Assembly committee and that people will be allowed to come and give evidence at times.

[99] **Michael German:** Perhaps it is different for the Committee on European and External Affairs, but it has standing invitees. The head of the European Commission office in Wales, MEPs and members of the Committee of the Regions are standing members. I do not know whether it is just written differently. If it not, then perhaps they are ultra vires and Gwyn can take them to court or something.

[100] **Helen Mary Jones:** I think that it might be useful to revisit the advice. I know that the previous committee, as Mark will recall, was quite concerned about this because we wanted to be in a position to have those standing attendees, or whatever we call them—mainly to give them a different name from what we gave them before. We made submissions to the Committee on Standing Orders and the assurance that we were given was that it was intended that the Standing Orders be written in such a way that that would be possible, if the committee so wished. Obviously, it is a matter for this committee if this committee so wishes.

[101] My own view is that it was very useful in terms of providing us with an ongoing expert resource, although, as Mark says, we have to think about what we do to ensure that we address the issue of the different equality strands. However, perhaps the way to proceed with that would be to ask for some further advice on Standing Orders, because my understanding is that the Committee on European and External Affairs has the same status as this one—there are a few cross-cutting committees with that status. I know the assurances that we were given, but of course once Standing Orders get into the hands of the lawyers and get written up, you end up with a law of unintended consequences, with all respect to our colleagues here today. So, perhaps we should look at that.

[102] There are two questions: can we have that regular input and do we want it? I do not know how much time we can spend on that today, but if you saw what the Committee on European and External Affairs is doing and how it works and if we know whether we can do so or not, then we can decide whether we want to or not.

[103] **Mr Griffiths:** On the point that Mike raised about the Committee on European and External Affairs, there is a specific provision under Standing Order No. 18 that states that,

[104] ‘Members of the European Parliament representing Wales and the Assembly’s representatives on the Committee of the Regions may attend, and with the permission of the chair, speak at the Committee’s meetings, but they may not vote.’

[105] There is no corresponding provision in relation to this committee.

[106] **Helen Mary Jones:** There is the provision that you read out about sub-committees, is there not? The intention was for that to apply to committees as well. If that has not carried across and we decide that we want to do that, then it would be possible for us to approach the Business Committee to amend Standing Orders; I do not believe that anyone would object if that was the will of this committee. It was certainly intended that that would also be possible, but we were not in a position, unlike the Committee on European and External Affairs, to prescribe who we wanted to put on that list, because we did not know what the impact of the new commission was going to be on that.

[107] **Mr Griffiths:** I could prepare a note on that, if that would be helpful.

[108] **Ann Jones:** That would be handy; we will look at that. Is there anything else on the forward work programme?

[109] **Helen Mary Jones:** The intention is to carry on reviewing the Government’s implementation of the committee’s work on mainstreaming equality, Gypsies and Travellers, and services for young disabled people. Those reviews are at three different stages, so how will we monitor that? On mainstreaming equality, we will receive the Government’s annual report, so we can use that as a basis for discussion with Ministers. When we are preparing our questions to them, we should look back at the mainstreaming equality report to help us do that.

[110] On service provision for young disabled people, that is at an early stage, because the previous committee only finished that work just before the end of the last Assembly. On the review of service provision for Gypsies and Travellers, things are much further down the road. My perception, from the previous committee, is that delivery was different in different Government departments; some Government departments had got hold of this and were running with the recommendations that the Government had accepted, and other departments were utterly bemused.

[111] Therefore, I suggest, Chair, that you and the clerks give some thought to how we do that. We could go down the route of having an ad hoc working group to look at the disabled young people and the Gypsy/Traveller reviews, or we could think of another mechanism; I do not want to make endless extra work for Members and staff. However, when an awful lot of effort has been put into producing these reports, and those reports' recommendations are accepted, we need to follow them up. The Chair and others will know that I have a particular interest in the Gypsy/Traveller work. People were so sceptical when they were giving us evidence for that review; it was like, 'Yeah, right; we've heard it 100 times before'. One mother said, 'We must be the most studied and then the most bloody ignored people in the whole of this country'. We said that it would take a long time, but we gave assurances that we would not let it go. Therefore, I am anxious that we find a mechanism whereby we do not let it go. The same thing will apply when we have done our piece of work on migrant workers, or on violence, and particularly the trafficking issues, and so on. Once we have a report, we need to ensure that, if the Government accepts recommendations, we have mechanisms for following up. I will leave that with you, Chair, to see what we can do.

[112] **Ann Jones:** On service provision for disabled young people, we have only done the forward work programme up to and including the meeting before the Christmas recess. We thought therefore that we would have that in the new year, around February. That will be roughly 12 months from when the last report was done. We thought of inviting that expert young group of people back in to ask them what their experiences are. One of those young people, from my patch, told me that she enjoyed coming here but she did not know whether it would work, so it will be interesting to see whether she feels that it has moved on.

[113] You are right about service provision for Gypsies and Travellers. We are four years on from that report. I vividly remember the comments that were made by people, and we gave them assurances that this would be different. We need to factor that in as well, probably in the new year. There are issues that we can look at in the new year.

[114] On mainstreaming equality in the Assembly's work, we will look at the Government's annual report on equality. That might be the time to deal with mainstreaming equality, or we may put it down as an additional item at the 22 November meeting, so that we have looked at that in readiness for having the Minister in on the Government's equality report. Therefore, we will have two items on 22 November, if that is all right. It will mean a slightly longer meeting, but I think that it is important to do that.

[115] 10.30 a.m.

[116] Is there anything else on the forward work programme? We have taken Joyce's point on board and we are going to look at equal pay. Does anyone else have any other issues? I see that no-one does, but if there are issues that crop up, Members should e-mail Claire and me and then we can look at them and consider whether they need urgent action. If they do, we will obviously act and, if they do not, we will programme them into the forward work programme. I see that you are content with that. Thanks very much.

[117] I propose to break now for 20 minutes for tea and coffee and then we will come back to look at our final paper.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.30 a.m. a 10.53 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 10.30 a.m. and 10.53 a.m.*

**Ystyried yr Opsiynau mewn Perthynas â Sefydlu Pwyllgor i Draffod Materion yn
ymwneud â Phlant a Phobl Ifanc
Consideration of Options Relating to the Establishment of a Committee to
Consider Children and Young People's Issues**

[118] **Ann Jones:** As we reconvene the committee, I remind Members who may have switched on their mobile phones, pagers and BlackBerrys during the break to switch them off again.

[119] We move to our last item on the agenda. It is a pleasure to welcome to the table Catriona Williams, the chief executive of Children in Wales, and Dr Mike Shooter, who is the chair. You are both very welcome. Members have received a paper. We wrote to Children in Wales in July to ask for its views on setting up a committee. We are delighted that you are able to join us; you have submitted a paper on your views. Would you like a few minutes to pick up on some of your key points? We can then move to our option paper.

[120] **Ms Williams:** Thank you all. Some of you may know that, prior to the election, Children in Wales went to each party to ask whether they would consider setting up a cross-cutting children's committee. In many senses, it is a reflection of how delighted we have been with the Assembly's embracing of children's issues. Every ministerial portfolio became interested in one way or another in aspects of children's lives.

[121] The other main thrust was the fact that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the basis of all of the Assembly's policies. By its very nature, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child covers every aspect of children's lives and every aspect of the Assembly's work—probably more than in any other nation that I can think of at the moment. The Assembly has been very accessible to us; we have been able to point out the potential unintended consequences of different areas of policy on children, and outline how a specific policy might impact differently on children. With the Government of Wales Act 2006 and the new functions of the Assembly—and, hopefully, many legislative developments—we felt that it was essential to help the field, particularly to implement policies. One of the key issues was the co-ordination across all of the portfolios. We felt that it was necessary to look at how it complemented or co-ordinated with work in other ministerial portfolios when different portfolios were involved in creating very detailed policy.

[122] We now have 240—we had 220 three weeks ago—member organisations. Everyone has told us that it is difficult at a local level, capacity wise, to deal with many different initiatives, unless there is leadership and a steer from the Assembly. So, that, combined with the fact that the annual report of the children's commissioner needs a home in which to be scrutinised, we felt that a committee on children could push agendas forward and probably save some time for Assembly Members and policy makers in terms of pulling it all together and scrutinising it. If things like the child and adolescent mental health services strategy—and my chair will speak from direct experience of CAMHS—and a range of other strategies were implemented, it would be essential to have a single steer. A child-centred approach accepts that children do not fit into structures; children are children. Disabled children, for example, touch upon every aspect of the Assembly's work: transport, health, education and social services. It would be very helpful.

[123] We have support. The Association of Directors of Education in Wales wrote me a note last week telling me that it fully supports the concept of a committee. With the new

committee structures, we were told that it would be impossible to have a children's committee, because there was a practical issue with regard to the number of Assembly Members available to service a lot of committees. That is why we first approached your committee: you have a cross-cutting role.

[124] There are two options in the paper. Children in Wales's preferred option has always been to have a stand-alone committee on children, because we feel that people need to be brought in to give evidence to the committee on any aspect of a child's life. We came here first because no other committee had a cross-cutting role. We wanted to open the debate. Our links with the Presiding Office had told us that there would be some limitations if there were a sub-committee, but that it was a good place to start. That is my angle. Mike might like to outline the potential impact on the field.

[125] **Ann Jones:** If you could do that briefly, because we have a paper with all the options here. If you want to add anything to it, that is fine, Mike.

11.00 a.m.

[126] **Dr Shooter:** Thank you; I will just add a little. Up until last year when I retired, I was a clinician working in child and adolescent mental health services in south Wales, and had been for 25 years. For half of that time, I was in Swansea—the old south Glamorgan and Cardiff—and for the other half, I was in north Gwent. I find it quite difficult to argue things through as an ex-clinician without thinking of real children and real families. If we had time, I would briefly describe a couple of children who illustrate Catriona's points very well, but I do not want to use your time unnecessarily.

[127] The lessons that I want to draw from all the children that I have seen is that it is not the case that there are no services willing to be involved with disadvantaged children—by disadvantaged I do not just mean children who are disadvantaged by living in poverty on windswept housing estates in the north of the Valleys, or wherever; I also mean some extremely sterile and abusive middle class professional households. It is not that there are no services to be involved with, because there are many such services—the problem is that they are involved with a very narrow remit for each of them. It tends to be rather a baton-passing exercise down at the family's level, in that a service becomes involved for the tiny bit of that child's and family's life that is within its remit, and then it quickly hands over responsibility to someone else.

[128] So, that means that, at any one time, there is no co-ordination between the services. No-one sees the child's and family's position as a whole in their community. Equally, no-one holds the whole trajectory of a vulnerable child's and family's life. We know where they are and we know these families, but no-one has the responsibility of seeing them through from the fallopian tube to adulthood, if you like, because it is no-one's responsibility to hold that wide view in mind. We have tried very hard to change that at local level, but at the moment it depends on individual people in charge of individual services. It is often those areas with the least resources that do it best, because they have no other way of doing it, and therefore they become more creative. They need a steer from the top, and I would suggest that that begins here. If we can be seen to co-ordinate all the policies as far as disadvantaged children and their families are concerned right here at the very top, we will also co-ordinate the way in which services act with them at the ground level.

[129] **Ann Jones:** Thank you. Members will be aware that the background to this issue was that we were approached, as the Equality of Opportunity Committee, to look at forming a sub-committee. It will sound as if I am continuing the baton-passing exercise, but Members asked for a scoping paper and some research into that. As a committee, we were clear that we wanted to see that the options were right if we were to go down that road. The worst scenario

is that you would say 'yes' to a sub-committee, and find that it was not able to operate in the way that children and children's organisations would expect. That would raise expectations and then dash them. That is the last thing that disadvantaged children would want. My mother always told me that whatever you promise a child, you should carry out that promise. She certainly did that to me: when she promised that she would ground me, she grounded me, and when she promised me that I could have jelly and ice cream, I had them. That was the lesson that I was taught. We should never promise anything that we cannot fully deliver. That was one of the reasons why we asked for the options paper. The options are before us and members of the committee need to decide the best option to deliver the aims that Catriona and Mike have outlined today on behalf of children.

[130] **Helen Mary Jones:** I would like to kick off as the chair of the cross-party group on children's issues. It is clear from what Catriona said that we only ever approached the Committee on Equality of Opportunity because we were being told at that stage that a freestanding committee was not viable. My understanding is that that position has been reviewed, and, in fairness, the new Assembly has been in place for a while, we have the committees up and running and we know what the capacity demands are. It obviously will not be a decision for this committee, Chair, but I hope that the committee will recommend option 3 in the scoping paper, which is for a committee in its own right. The advantages are clear. We are being told that it is a practical possibility now. In the column of potential disadvantages, it states that,

[131] 'Establishing a Children's Committee could set a precedent for other groups to seek their own committee.'

[132] I disagree. The issue of children is very particular. These are people who are hugely affected by the Assembly Government's decisions, but who have no voice in choosing that Assembly Government, whereas all other groups, be they disabled people, people from ethnic minorities, and even older people, all have a vote—children do not. I think that means that this Assembly has a special duty to them.

[133] In terms of the capacity of Members, we are not thinking here about a committee that will meet every week. It will have a particular job to do to address the issues raised in the report of the children's commissioner and then to scrutinise Ministers on their response to that report. The general consensus seems to be that, although that was a concern, we can probably cope.

[134] Also, with timetabling difficulties, now that things have settled down, the message coming from the Presiding Office seems to be that we can cope. The 'doing nothing' options are not acceptable, certainly not to me nor, I suspect, to most Assembly Members, let alone this committee. A committee of the whole Assembly is a nice idea, but it would meet once a year, which is not enough. We could perhaps get it to meet once a year to address the children's commissioner's report, but that would be it. So, if we cannot have a full committee, the advantage of a sub-committee of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity is that it could cut across subject portfolios, but it would be much better if we could recommend that a committee in its own right be established. I am not sure, Chair, what the mechanism for that would be, but you can tell us. Presumably, the committee would write to the Business Committee, if that was our view. However, I hope that, now that the practical difficulties are overcome, we can do this.

[135] **Ann Jones:** Lynne, Angela and Christine wish to come in, and then I will take questions from others.

[136] **Lynne Neagle:** Briefly, Chair, my preference remains establishing a freestanding children's committee. I was never comfortable with the idea of its being a sub-committee. It is

not right in terms of status or accountability for the wide range of issues. So, that remains my preference.

[137] **Angela Burns:** I concur with everything that Helen Mary said. As you know, in the previous meeting, I had strong views on the subject—I cannot believe that children do not have their own committee. I really do believe that it is our job as the Committee on Equality of Opportunity to push and push until the Business Committee gives in. Having a freestanding committee is the only way that children will get any teeth—and, by children, I mean everybody under the age of 18. They need those teeth, because they are sorely disadvantaged in this world.

[138] **Christine Chapman:** I am in favour of option 3, because there is so much to do, and it requires the work of this committee. I was very taken with what Mike said about the difficulties that we have had with children, in that different committees are looking at different aspects, and we are not really looking at the whole child. As Helen Mary said, children do not really have a voice, and this would be a really good mechanism. There is an awful lot to do, but I would really like to have a committee in its own right.

[139] **Michael German:** Having given Catriona the view in the election campaign, I will not turn from it now. I think that it is the right thing to do. Given that the only reason that we are not considering it—it has not been considered so far—is to do with capacity, it is quite clear to me now that it is not as burdensome as we thought it might be. It might become so if there were far more legislative committees, but I think that people are finding their way through this. I caution the committee against having a fallback position at this stage. It would be absolutely wrong to go to the Business Committee and say, ‘Come back to us if you cannot agree it’.

11.10 a.m.

[140] It would be the right thing to do and, from what I have heard so far, I think that there is unanimity on that. We have all given a commitment to this—I am talking from a wider perspective, not just about this committee—and we should carry that forward. The practical difficulties of timetabling can be overcome; I am positive about that. It does not seem to be as burdensome as people thought that it might be because people are cutting corners elsewhere, which allows room for more to happen.

[141] This is such an important issue. The only pressure that I could see coming from another sector would be for an older people’s committee, or something of that sort, at the other end of the scale. However, I have not seen pressure and momentum being built up for that in terms of the broader environment. I suggest that this committee should make known to the Business Committee that it believes that it is the right approach—I am sure that you could write a tome on it—and not make any allusions whatsoever to any fallback position.

[142] **Mark Isherwood:** This may be very timely, looking at the nature of the LCOs that are going through: we started with additional learning needs and vulnerable children and we are coming up to mental health, which will obviously include child and adolescent mental health services, so it is a very timely matter. I would perhaps disagree with Mike on one issue: once we have established an older people’s commissioner, we might start to build up a head of steam for a committee for that sector as well. That should not be a barrier to doing this, but it is certainly something that we should bear in mind for the future.

[143] **Joyce Watson:** The only option that makes sense is option 3; there is no other sensible option. There would be very little point in having it as a sub-committee of this committee. I would support option 3.

[144] **Helen Mary Jones:** I wish to make two very brief points. One is that I think that the committee should write to the Business Committee, but I also think that all of us, from the different political groups, should speak to our representatives on the Business Committee to remind them, as Mike has said, of the commitment given before the election. We should all do that, as well as the Chair writing formally.

[145] I do not think that we should start to worry about what other groups might come through. For me, the big difference between children and older people is that older people can, and massively do, vote—children cannot. However, we can have that argument further down the line if we need to. I think that that informal lobbying by us, as committee members, of our Business Committee representatives needs to be done, so that we are not setting a precedent.

[146] **Bethan Jenkins:** I want to endorse that. It is a small pedantic matter, but if we establish a full committee, can we call it the children and young people committee? I know that 18-year-olds do not like to be called children. I emphasise the need to bear in mind the scope of the committee and ensure that if it is going to be a children's and young people's committee that they can feed into it—I know that you will do that. We must consider how we can engage with children or it could appear to be just another committee as opposed to something that could really make a difference for them. That is my main point.

[147] **Ann Jones:** They may not like to be called 'children', but I have a 32-year-old and a 25-year-old, and they are still my babies, sorry. [*Laughter.*]

[148] I think that you are right that it should be called the children and young people committee. Do we say 'young people' or 'young persons'? We will use whichever is the correct one. We have gone around the table and everybody is in agreement. This is going to be a nice committee to chair, if there is not going to be any dissent. Option 3 is obviously the sensible one and I agree with Mike that we should just go for it. For us, there is no other option that is worthy of consideration. We should write to the Business Committee to say that and see where we go from there. The point that Helen made about going back and talking to your own representatives is probably a fair one; however, as the Committee on Equality of Opportunity, we cannot write that down. We will write a letter to the Business Committee endorsing option 3 and saying that it was a unanimous decision. Is everyone happy with that? Thank you very much for coming in—sorry that it was so short.

[149] **Ms Williams:** Thank you so much.

[150] **Ann Jones:** I thank everyone for attending. Our next meeting will be on 11 October. That brings our meeting to a close.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 11.15 a.m.
The meeting ended at 11.15 a.m.*