



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

**Y Pwyllgor Deisebau
The Petitions Committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 12 Hydref 2010
Tuesday, 12 October 2010**

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

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|--------------------|---|
| Christine Chapman | Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair) |
| Andrew R.T. Davies | Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives |
| Veronica German | Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats |
| Bethan Jenkins | Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales |

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

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| Andrew Cooksley | Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr, ACT Training Managing Director, ACT Training |
| Richard Newton | Cyfarwyddwr, Rathbone Cymru Director, Rathbone Cymru |

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

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|-----------------|---|
| Joanest Jackson | Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser |
| Andrew Minnis | Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk |
| Naomi Stocks | Clerc Clerk |

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9 a.m.
The meeting began at 9 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Christine Chapman:** Bore da. Welcome to this meeting of the Petitions Committee. I remind you all to switch off any mobile phones. We have not received any apologies.

Sesiwn Dystiolaeth: Ymchwiliad i Ddarpariaeth Dysgu Seiliedig ar Waith ar gyfer Pobl Ifanc sy'n Agored i Niwed—Rathbone Cymru ac ACT Training
Evidence Session: Work-based Learning for Vulnerable Young People Inquiry—Rathbone Cymru and ACT Training

[2] **Christine Chapman:** This is the second evidence session of the committee's inquiry into work-based learning provision. Today we will be taking evidence from work-based learning providers. I welcome Richard Newton, who is the director of Rathbone Cymru, and Andrew Cooksley, managing director of Associated Community Training. Before we begin, I declare an interest as a member of Rathbone's advisory council.

[3] We have read the papers that you have submitted. Would you like to make some brief introductory comments before we move into questions?

[4] **Mr Cooksley:** Good morning. Bore da. I am Andrew Cooksley, and I am the managing director of ACT Training, which is the largest work-based learning provider in Wales. I am also the chair of the all-Wales SkillBuild group, so I bring all the SkillBuild providers together every quarter. We train around 4,000 people a year in total, but there are around 1,300 to 1,400 people who belong to the group that we are talking about this morning, which is still a fairly substantial amount.

[5] **Mr Newton:** I am the director of Rathbone Cymru, which is a voluntary sector organisation, and which also has a large SkillBuild contract. We support about 2,500 young people in Wales each year, and probably about 1,200 or 1,300 of those would be on the SkillBuild programme. Our other programmes probably go to help the more disengaged, that is, those who are further again from education, employment, training and the labour market, and those programmes include street-based intervention for young people. So, those are some issues to improve engagement. We are starting new work with particular cohorts of the black and minority ethnic population and the Gypsy/Traveller population, and there is work relating to youth crime and community cohesion, all of which has an educational benefit. We take SkillBuild and work-based learning through what is called the 'preparation for work section', which is vocation focused. We move predominantly up to level 1 training and occasionally up to level 2, but mainly people progress and go on to organisations such as ACT.

[6] **Christine Chapman:** I will ask the first question, which is for both of you. Action for Children has suggested that most work-based learning schemes do not cater well for vulnerable young people and that a significant number of young people are failing. In your experience, is that a true reflection of work-based learning provision in Wales?

[7] **Mr Cooksley:** No.

[8] **Mr Newton:** No.

[9] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, thank you. [*Laughter.*]

[10] **Veronica German:** Action for Children also stressed that vulnerable young people face multiple barriers, and suggested that most providers are ill-equipped to deal with those, that perhaps the providers are not always understanding enough of young people's needs, and that there is not enough person-centred training and support to make the schemes a success for this cohort. Do you think that that is a fair criticism?

[11] **Mr Cooksley:** Yes. You could find pockets of provision that meet that description. The bulk of the provision has developed over the past couple of years, and most providers who are providing the training now have a learner-centred approach. There are a fair few providers who are stuck behind, namely those that are much smaller, and they will, frankly, find it difficult to provide that broad spectrum of support. We should not forget that these are the most vulnerable, most difficult-to-help young people, so that work is really challenging. It is a tough call to get your provision up there. I would say that the bulk of them have that provision now, but there are still a fair few lagging behind.

[12] **Mr Newton:** I agree with everything that Andrew has said. You still find some providers who do not understand some of the issues faced by these young people, and you find some that are perhaps selective about the learners they take on board. However, there are a lot of providers who are not selective and who provide a lot of intensive one-to-one support for those young people. In Rathbone, the maximum ratio is 1:10, and we do a great deal of work at 1:2 and one to one, where needed. There is a great deal of pastoral support. Where work-based learning differs from some of the college systems is that it is flexible about the speed of progression for the young people, provided the young person is endorsed by Careers Wales to be with you. Obviously, you have to continue to show progression with the learner,

but you are not saying that they must reach a certain stage by week 4 or week 5. We can go back to Careers Wales and say that we need to extend the young person's endorsement because they have literacy or numeracy issues. We have the flexibility even to suspend learning, which does not mean leaving learning. If someone has significant issues outside the learning environment at home or wherever, we can take time out to address those. We can tell them that they need to address those before they will make any progress with their learning, so we take four weeks out and tell them that their priority is to address those and then they can come back. There is a great deal of flexibility in the frameworks offered.

[13] **Mr Cooksley:** If you look at the history of the development of this programme and weigh up the way in which the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills has dealt with it, or Education and Learning Wales as it was before, or even the training and enterprise councils before that, you see that it has been a bit of a lost programme. There has been no strategic aim; it just seems to be a mopping-up programme for young people who have not done very well in school. That is about as much thought as has gone into it. In the past four years, we and DCELLS have really got hold of this, and we are really driving it to be a much more inclusive programme. That is the key. There are still providers that are not particularly developed. We get a lot of lads, for want of a better term, struggling with behavioural issues and challenging behaviour, and I do not think that providers are very well equipped to deal with them. It is just like many schools. You could point the finger of blame at the education sector across the piece. Our hearts are in it, but it is a tough job. To get to where we are now from where we have come is pretty good progress.

[14] **Veronica German:** Are there enough of these work placements? If not, can you outline any steps that you are taking as a provider to encourage more employers to take learners on? Perhaps you could say a quick word on the recession and whether that has had an effect on the availability of work placements.

[15] **Mr Cooksley:** Each provider has developed their links with employers—the employee engagement arm—differently. We have a dedicated team of highly motivated, happy people banging on employers' doors, and that seems to be pretty successful. You have a slightly different approach in Rathbone, but it is equally successful. Many providers get their training staff to go knocking on doors, which I do not think is particularly effective. There is a little bit of sharing of good practice on this now. At the moment, we have more places than we can fill. That is weird, is it not? I know from a meeting last Friday that, in Cardiff, we have 39 places that we cannot fill with young people. The employers are keen to have a couple of challenging ones, so it is weird.

[16] **Veronica German:** Is it geographical? You say that you have excess places in Cardiff, but what about elsewhere?

[17] **Mr Cooksley:** We have a big centre in Bridgend. That is a little more difficult.

[18] **Veronica German:** I was thinking more of further up the Valleys or further north.

[19] **Mr Newton:** We have more of a presence in the Valleys than ACT perhaps. We operate in Gwynedd and Ceredigion, and, as of yesterday, we have 670 learners in placement, and we have 810 placements open. That means that they are health and safety-checked and ready to go.

[20] **Christine Chapman:** What about the different sectors? Is the range of sectors broad or narrow, would you say?

9.10 a.m.

[21] **Mr Cooksley:** It is localised a little, but generally we have a bit of everything, from taxidermy on.

[22] **Mr Newton:** I think that there is a broader range of sectors. It might be different for you, Andrew, but we operate a lot in the Valleys and over in west Wales, and perhaps slightly reflective of the environment is the fact that we have a lot of placements that are reflective of the SME base, and we struggle to get many of the top 300 FTSE companies on board, although they are attractive to the young people because of the brand-name. We are trying to address that, and we have a partnership that is developing business in the community to engage its members to take up placements. You get young people who want to go into hairdressing, and they want to go to Toni&Guy rather than to Snippets up the road, but that is where the placement is.

[23] **Bethan Jenkins:** Action for Children said that people get the training provision, but only one person in however many years actually got a job from it. Do you have evidence that you could provide to us to show that they do get jobs at the end and that those jobs are sustainable?

[24] **Mr Cooksley:** That is what DCELLS monitors us on, so we do have evidence on that. Some 85 per cent of our people last year progressed to jobs, so it is a pretty substantial number. That is almost 1,000 people.

[25] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** How long do they last in those jobs? The key question is not necessarily one of turning up for the job—

[26] **Mr Cooksley:** We pick them up six months after the event, so it is pretty sustainable. There are two outcomes from this strand of funding, and it is often the case that they go on to higher-level learning, which means that we are constantly with them for maybe two years. If they do not go on to higher-level learning, we pick them up in six months' time to see where they are at, and that is part of the monitoring that we have to carry out as part of our contract.

[27] **Veronica German:** This question is for Andrew in particular, because you state in your written evidence that the availability and quality of the SkillBuild programme 'is not an issue' when it is delivered properly, and that Careers Wales should be ensuring that poor and inadequate provision is communicated back to DCELLS, presumably, for investigation. Does that imply that you think that reporting is not taking place?

[28] **Mr Cooksley:** I do not think that there is a mechanism to pick up and do something about poor provision. We have raised it with the Assembly Government. Quite frankly, some of the provision is just not flexible enough, and learners have to fit into that provision as opposed to the provider having to fit the learning around the person, which would be good provision. Where you see poor provision, it is just like a sausage factory.

[29] **Veronica German:** Presumably, that is not very successful.

[30] **Mr Cooksley:** No, but because it is in, say, a patch in west Wales, and they have no other provision, Careers Wales is mindful not to upset the provider or make waves, because that is the only provision for the young people are. It is tricky.

[31] **Mr Newton:** You get into a position of Careers Wales being under pressure through the youth guarantee to move somebody on before the guarantee expires, and it not wanting to lose the provider that it has if there is nobody else. We notice great inconsistencies between the different careers services operating throughout Wales. There are hugely different approaches to the prioritisation of SkillBuild in the learning mix, particularly the way in which the most vulnerable young people are handled, so they are trapped and no contact is

maintained with them. Some careers services are much better at keeping the register, at keeping on top of the number of those not in employment, education or training, and at staying in contact with those young people. Other careers services will tell you that there is nobody in the area who requires training.

[32] **Veronica German:** Really? That would be an interesting place to go.

[33] **Mr Cooksley:** In the figures for Wales as a whole, there are potentially 12,000 young people who are NEET, but careers services would say that there are only 300 requesting a training place. So, that is lot of young people at home.

[34] **Mr Newton:** There has to be an obligation on someone to drill down into that great cohort that is ‘clusters not known’, because, if they are not known, the greatest likelihood is that they are NEET because they are not engaging with anyone.

[35] **Veronica German:** How do we do that?

[36] **Mr Cooksley:** The careers service has a role in that. If you counted everyone who starts secondary school, you would come up with a figure.

[37] **Mr Newton:** It is about outreach; it is about going out and finding these people, because these people are not going to walk across the threshold into a careers office. If they are making a conscious decision—for whatever reason—that they do not want to enter employment, education or training, they will not cross the threshold. We have a worker in Newport who is presently funded by the Vodafone Foundation who is doing street-based outreach work, such as DJing, rap, hip hop and MC beatboxing in the community, and working in partnership with the careers service. I received some figures the other day that he had found 40 of the 110 ‘not knows’ in the last six months.

[38] **Mr Cooksley:** There are 27 NEETs in Cardiff bay according to the last published statistics, but I do not believe that. All the Somali and the young lads would add up to over 50 easily, but they are not engaged, and they are struggling to engage with them.

[39] **Veronica German:** In 2008-09, Estyn inspected 16 work-based training providers in Wales out of a total of 80. Is that a sufficient number to inspect in a particular year? Apart from inspection—because we all know about the flaws of inspection—are there any other ways in which the quality of work-based training provision could be monitored?

[40] **Mr Cooksley:** Estyn is the key body in that regard, and we would not want to undermine that organisation. The Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Sport has a quality effectiveness team headed by Marian Jebb, and she is pretty good. It has made some great strides in the past three or four years to push up quality. That is gaining some momentum, and I think that that is where we are today. There is a lot of history of poor performance and bad Estyn inspection results, and so on, but there is also more success, higher progression on programmes and a more varied mix of learning. If Careers Wales spots poor provision, people being poorly dealt with or just generally rubbish stuff going on, it should have a mechanism to make some noise about it. I feel that it has no teeth or it does not want to do it. I get annoyed about it. Ultimately, what will happen is that a lot of young people will be failing as soon as they leave school, where they have had a poor—

[41] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Are you saying that Careers Wales has no teeth?

[42] **Mr Cooksley:** There is no mechanism between DCELLS and Careers Wales for whistleblowing or for someone to be able to raise a concern and for it be acted upon. DCELLS does not have anyone in that particular role to bring up issues; it seems to be very

streamlined now.

[43] **Mr Newton:** To pick up on the point about quality of provision, it is also important to get learner feedback so that we can look at the positive progression rates, the qualification rates the retention rates, and what the young people think of their experience. That is something that we collate regularly, as do many providers. However, it could be collated and evaluated independently.

[44] The other thing to look at is what we call ‘soft skills development’—those things that are harder to measure, such as confidence and the maintenance of self-esteem. We are working with DCELLS at the moment on a pilot. There are loads of different products out there in the marketplace that are supposed to measure that, but it is about getting one in the right language and format for the young people who we deal with and which allows you to do something sensible with it in terms of reporting and management information, such as allowing you to say, ‘We have 1,500 learners and we are finding bigger issues in east Wales, west Wales or in certain routes’. This is coming and it is at the pilot stage, but it has been a long time in the making.

[45] **Mr Cooksley:** It is a difficult nut to crack. How do you measure something that is hard to measure? That is what we are talking about. If someone gains a qualification, it is tangible, but if someone is just improving their attendance and attitude and their motivation is increasing, it is difficult to put a mark on it. However, to be fair to DCELLS—and going back to the quality effectiveness programme—it has put a pile of software together, which is okay, and it is a move in the right direction on that sort of stuff.

9.20 a.m.

[46] **Christine Chapman:** Andrew R.T. Davies has questions on progression between work-based learning schemes.

[47] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I wish to clarify a point first. Andrew mentioned Careers Wales and DCELLS and said that things are far more streamlined now, in the context of being able to whistleblow—I believe that that is the word that you used; I might have used the words ‘raise concerns’. You used the words ‘streamlined now’, which indicates that, before, there might have been a better model to raise those concerns. What does ‘streamlined now’ mean?

[48] **Mr Cooksley:** About 28 contract managers were based in Bedwas. They would manage, and look after, as it were, about four or five providers. Those people are gone now.

[49] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, there is no unit in DCELLS to address or deal with these concerns, if they are raised.

[50] **Mr Cooksley:** No. I kind of like the fact that we have been given much more autonomy—that is a brilliant move, so let us not get carried away, because we are responsible for what we do. However, where there are issues, such as the ones that you mention, and there are still far more than there should be, there should be some sort of mechanism for raising concerns, which does not exist at present.

[51] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** What barriers do young people face in progressing through work-based training—if any?

[52] **Mr Cooksley:** They do face barriers—it is a struggle. We are picking up 16-year-olds, who, potentially, have not been to school for a long while. The school has probably been claiming the funding for them, but that is another story, but I had to say it. That is a little bit

of whistleblowing. [*Laughter.*] That is a crime in my book. Consequently, they turn 16 and they are far away from where they need to be—the gap between where they are and where they need to be in order to get a good, meaningful placement or job is massive. There are all sorts of things going on in their lives, which is a huge issue for us. We have to bridge that gap. Talking about a work ethic may sound old fashioned, but that is what we are working up to—there is none of that among many of the youngsters that we see. We have to try to get that going.

[53] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Therefore, the main obstacle, as you see it, is a lack of motivation and identification in the secondary sector? Pupils turn 14 or 15, and they could well have spent a considerable time, although on the school register, outside any sort of formal education that could motivate them. Is that a fair summary?

[54] **Mr Cooksley:** Yes, precisely.

[55] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Therefore, you do not believe that the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 on provision for 14 to 19-year-olds is making any difference.

[56] **Mr Cooksley:** It does, but not enough; we need to give it a few years. We are going to get more involved in that and we hope that that will make a difference. It is about the transition between that date in June when everyone leaves school and what happens to those young people then. There are poor transitional arrangements, and Careers Wales has a better role to play in that.

[57] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** That leads me on to my next question. The evidence that we received from Action for Children indicated quite a high ‘churn rate’ of placements—those are their words not mine—with people going from one training set to another, and not achieving any meaningful qualification. Is the churn rate so high because you are getting them out of the secondary sector with little motivation, and little work ethic, and it is therefore hard to find the right placement for them, given this deficit that you have identified as they come out of the secondary sector?

[58] **Mr Cooksley:** I have called for the Assembly Government to monitor the churn rate per provider. A good provider would have very few people leaving its programmes, and going back on the same programme as someone else. That might be suitable for a small minority, because young people tend to fall out with each other and they might need to go somewhere else—so, for a small percentage, that needs to happen; they need that safety net—but if it is happening in the majority of cases, that would be far too high. If you look at the providers, and look at the amount of people who are leaving their programmes and going on to other learning programmes, doing the same thing, you could find out who they were and why Action for Children has said that.

[59] **Mr Newton:** To develop some of the concepts that Andrew mentioned, it is also about how providers use the structure and the framework that we have. There is the period that is called pre-vocational learning, preparation for work, or whatever the different providers call it, which is the time when you are supposed to work with the young person to get them to a basic level of work-readiness, and to get them to build a vocational focus. As you help learners to progress from that stage to level 1 learning, you should be asking why they have made that choice to go into hairdressing or construction or whatever and whether they can evidence the fact that they have tried it and are going to stick with it. You should be establishing, for example, that they have gone on a construction placement and got up at 6.30 a.m. to get the van and so on. Those things are important when they are moving on.

[60] It is also about challenging the learner. We get learners coming to us and we deliver, primarily, up to level 1 and enable them to progress from there. It is about ensuring that the

provider recognises the importance of that progression. We have relationships with ACT and the colleges to get learners to progress to other provision. We have that handover. It is also about making that separation, because we have learners who want to stay with us to do another level 1 qualification, but that is not what it is about; at that point, it is time to go. However, there are providers that will let them back through the door. Going back to what Andrew said about Careers Wales, it should be saying that it will not re-endorse a learner for another level 1 qualification; once a learner has that, it is time to move on.

[61] **Mr Cooksley:** The thing is that Careers Wales needs to challenge the issues. I would go back a bit and think this through. Potentially, DCELLS are not the people to get involved; Careers Wales is more challenging. The thought that the provider might have is that DCELLS might get involved if it does not sort out the issues.

[62] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** That leads us on to the issue of DCELLS targets. Careers Wales and other organisations have indicated that they believe that some of the progression targets encourage cherry-picking of candidates or placements. Do you agree?

[63] **Mr Cooksley:** I do not know whether anyone would cherry-pick. That would mean that they were turning a lot of people away, would it not? I am not aware of that happening.

[64] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, you do not identify with that.

[65] **Mr Cooksley:** No. To a degree, we will take anyone on, provided that they are fairly motivated. There needs to be a bit of buy-in. That is all we are asking for really. We are expecting there to be challenges.

[66] **Mr Newton:** I can think of two areas where we operate where we get learners who have been rejected by the other provider.

[67] **Mr Cooksley:** Even the Military Preparation College, with which we have a close relationship as it is subcontracted to deliver learning for us, and where you can imagine you need to be a bit further up the ladder of motivation or potential, is not particularly picky.

[68] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Andrew, could you elaborate slightly on the two areas where people have been rejected, as you said, by the other provider?

[69] **Mr Newton:** In certain areas, I can think of a couple of providers that have criteria.

[70] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Does that come down to the DCELLS targets?

[71] **Mr Newton:** The providers put those in, and I can only think that the rationale for doing so is to get a learner who is easier to work with. If you look at Rathbone's intake last year, 91 per cent had below level 1 basic skills ability, so there is a great deal of intensive work to do with them, and if you can bypass that—

[72] **Christine Chapman:** Are the entry requirements published or are they informal criteria?

[73] **Mr Cooksley:** We do data collection on that. Everyone does a basic skills entry test at the start of the programme. We collect and compile the data and it is a bit of management information.

[74] **Christine Chapman:** What about on other programmes?

[75] **Mr Newton:** I do not think that any providers publish entry criteria, but there is an

initial assessment with Careers Wales of the candidate, and they have the ability to say, 'No, we won't take that learner'. To finish the point about the DCELLS targets, there are many genuinely non-selective learning providers that will take all learners, and they are reaching their targets, so the targets are achievable.

[76] **Mr Cooksley:** Funnily enough, that is what we are paid to do.

[77] **Mr Newton:** It is, but it is not as though we are moaning that the targets are too high and that they are never going to be met.

9.30 a.m.

[78] **Mr Cooksley:** Yes, they are easily deliverable. I think that many people have been writing these young people off, to a degree, and have a poor view of them. Society is a bit like that, is it not? They are thought of as tough people: they are the poorest in our communities, they really struggle with getting involved socially, and they fail school, and have all that going on.

[79] **Christine Chapman:** We will move on to Bethan, who has some questions on financial support.

[80] **Bethan Jenkins:** I will ask my questions in Welsh.

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| <p>[81] A ydych yn teimlo bod y trefniadau ariannol presennol ar gyfer pobl ifanc agored i niwed sydd am fynd ar gynlluniau dysgu seiliedig ar waith yn ddigonol, yn enwedig gan fod tystion wedi dweud nad ydynt yn creu'r awydd mewn pobl ifanc sy'n byw yn annibynnol i chwilio am hyfforddiant?</p> | <p>Do you feel that the current financial arrangements for vulnerable young people who wish to take part in work-based learning schemes are sufficient, especially as witnesses have said that they do not encourage young people who live independently to seek training?</p> |
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[82] **Mr Newton:** I am sorry, I did not catch the first part of the question, as I was on the wrong channel.

[83] **Bethan Jenkins:** I try my best to do this in Welsh. [*Laughter.*]

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| <p>[84] A ydych yn teimlo bod y trefniadau ariannol presennol ar gyfer pobl ifanc agored i niwed sydd am fynd ar gynlluniau dysgu seiliedig ar waith yn ddigonol, yn enwedig gan fod tystion wedi dweud nad ydynt yn creu awydd mewn pobl ifanc sy'n byw yn annibynnol i chwilio am hyfforddiant?</p> | <p>Do you feel that the current financial arrangements for vulnerable young people who wish to take part in work-based schemes are sufficient, especially as witnesses have said that they do not encourage young people who live independently to seek training?</p> |
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[85] **Mr Newton:** I think that they are adequate. There is not necessarily an incentive to enter training. Young people can see that it is possible for them to get a greater financial return from engaging in other training activities or work. For the young people of the age that we deal with, who are in the 16 to 18 age group, who use SkillBuild and who are living independently—as of yesterday, about 9.2 per cent of the young people we had were living independently—that is a real tough nut to crack financially, because £50 a week is not a lot of money. I know that they are eligible for other benefits, but something could perhaps be done to further incentivise those who are, legitimately, living independently at that age.

[86] **Mr Cooksley:** Not to sound like Norman Tebbit, but I would say that it works well at the moment. They are on £50 a week and are living independently. It is tough to live on £50 a

week. The majority of the young people smoke as well, so what they spend their money on is another thing to get your head around. We want to provide an incentive for them to get into work, because that is what it is all about, and so there needs to be something to work towards. It would do a disservice to them to make it comfortable for them to be on these programmes. That sounds slightly right wing, but I do not mean it like that: we have to get them moved on and show them the benefit of work. There are a few people who might struggle on work-based learning schemes, but they would struggle wherever they were. We have just done a piece of work with Estyn, and we looked at the issue of the £50 a week. I have to be honest and say that the general conclusion was that it was great for people and that they benefit from being on £50 a week. There will be one or two of those who are living independently who are broke and for whom it is not enough money, but all their housing benefit is paid and they get other allowances and so on, and we can help them with that as well. However, it is work-based learning, and we are trying to get people to have a work ethic and have what it takes to get a job and get paid every week.

[87] **Bethan Jenkins:** Ar y pwynt hwnnw, mae elusennau wedi dweud bod pobl ifanc yn cael mwy drwy dderbyn budd-daliadau nag y byddant drwy fynd allan i weithio. Dyna'r broblem y maent yn ei hwynebu: y diffyg o ran mynd allan i weithio os ydynt yn cael mwy o arian drwy'r system budd-daliadau. Gallwch ymateb i hynny fel rhan o'r cwestiwn nesaf.

Bethan Jenkins: On that point, charities have told us that young people receive more if they are in receipt of benefits than they would earn if they went out to work. That is the problem that they face: the deficit from going out to work if they are receiving more money through the benefits system. You can respond to that as part of the next question.

[88] Dyma gwestiwn i ACT Training. Yn y dystiolaeth ysgrifenedig yr ydych yn nodi bydd y newidiadau a gyflwynir gan yr Adran Plant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau yn golygu y bydd llawer o bobl ifanc sydd yn agored i niwed ar gynlluniau dysgu seiliedig ar waith yn gweld eu lwfansau yn lleihau o'r swm presennol o £50 yr wythnos i £30 yr wythnos o fis Awst 2011. Mae hyn er gwaethaf y ffaith bod yr adran honno wedi clywed llawer am yr effaith negyddol y bydd yn ei chael ar fwyafrif y pobl ifanc sydd yn agored i niwed. Beth yw'r cefndir i hyn, a beth yw eich dealltwriaeth chi o'r rhesymau dros gyflwyno'r newid hwn a'ch asesiad chi o'r effaith bosibl y caiff hwn ar bobl sydd yn mynd am hyfforddiant sydd yn rhan o'ch cynlluniau chi?

This question is for ACT Training. You state in your written evidence that changes being introduced by the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills will mean that many vulnerable young people accessing work-based learning schemes will see their allowances reduced from the current £50 a week to £30 a week from August 2011. This is despite DCELLS being repeatedly told of the negative impact that it will have on the majority of vulnerable young people. What is the background to this, and what is your understanding of the rationale behind introducing this change and your assessment of the potential impact that this could have on those people accessing training, who are part of your schemes?

[89] **Mr Cooksley:** At present, the educational maintenance allowance is paid to everyone in post-16 learning, in further education or sixth-form colleges. I think that DCELLS wants to bring it in line with that and for work-based learning to have a £30 a week allowance in line with that. That is the thinking behind that. As I touched upon earlier, many people will not mind it being £30 or £50. They may be well supported at home, or have cheap places in which to live. However, it will be disastrous for that group of people who are really vulnerable, because £30 is a lot less than £50. I am worried about it; I think that there should be an exception to the rule. What DCELLS is trying to do is to make this sort of engagement programme part time, so that is how it will get away with paying £30 a week. I am kind of supportive of that, in a way, because it is another incentive to go full time and get more stuck into learning to get £50 when you are on level 1 training, because the money will go up once

you go full time.

[90] Most people come through the engagement process and it will be £30 a week. I have already mentioned it to Nick Lee in DCELLS, saying, ‘Surely we can make them full time and pay the £50 a week?’, but he is not keen at all. It would be great to put some pressure on the department. Careers Wales could endorse it; it could not be a case of just us deciding, ‘Let us pay everyone £50 a week’—Careers Wales could say, ‘This young person’s situation is such that he or she should be paid a full-time allowance’.

[91] **Mr Newton:** I would endorse what Andrew has said. I do not have the data to hand, but I know that when changes were made in England—Rathbone is a UK organisation—in the payment to learners, and it went from a fixed rate to something that was much more around the educational maintenance allowance system, there was a significant drop in the most vulnerable young people accessing the programme.

[92] **Bethan Jenkins:** Mae fy nghwestiwn olaf am gymorth personol. Yn y dystiolaeth ysgrifenedig gan Gyrfa Cymru, dywedir bod anghysondeb mawr yn y lefel o gymorth personol a ddarperir gan wahanol ddarparwyr dysgu seiliedig ar waith. Mae’r comisiynydd plant hyd yn oed wedi argymhell bod angen gwelliannau yn y maes hwn, a dywedodd Barnardo’s y dylid craffu mwy ar ddarparwyr o ran cefnogaeth bersonol. Beth yw eich profiadau chi yn hynny o beth? A ydych yn rhoi’r cyngor personol hwnnw? Credaf y dywedodd Achub y Plant bod angen mwy o fentora ar gyfer pobl ifanc fel nad yw’r gwaith yn stopio a bod ganddynt y cyngor personol hwnnw nad oes ganddynt ar hyn o bryd.

Bethan Jenkins: My final question is on personal support. In its written evidence to the committee, Careers Wales refers to the ‘considerable inconsistency’ in the level of personal support provided by different work-based learning providers. The children’s commissioner has even suggested that improvements need to be made in this area, and Barnardo’s has stated that providers should be subject to more scrutiny with regard to personal support. What is your experience in that regard? Are you providing that personal advice? I think that Save the Children suggested that we need more mentoring for young people so that the work does not stop and they have that personal advice that they do not have at present.

[93] **Mr Cooksley:** Yes, absolutely. We should be monitored and measured on it. It is too hit and miss. The SkillBuild programme does not have a curriculum. If you do a modern apprenticeship, it is an NVQ level 3, where you receive a technical certificate in three key skills. SkillBuild covers anything and everything that will get you into work. The responsible providers have put together a curriculum that is transformational; it includes a lot of personal support and the use of other agencies, where we do not have that expertise. That is what you will see from a good provider: bringing in expertise or signposting the person to access that expertise as part of the learning programme. A good example is the self-harm project in Cardiff, the Amber Project. I am amazed at the number of youngsters who use it and come on our programmes. I think to myself, ‘What is going on?’ That kind of issue is something that we could never deal with.

9.40 a.m.

[94] There is a lot of that going on, but not enough. It is not measured and people are left to their own devices. Pressure needs to be put on these providers to shape up and to provide much more meaningful programmes. It is too hit or miss. Having said that, the personal support side of things is very much in the curriculum tender for August 2011 onwards. DCELLS has listened to us, Careers Wales and other stakeholders. So, it is very much part of the new curriculum, and so, although it is of concern now, it will not be much of a concern in future. I think that DCELLS would say that it has taken this into account for the new programme, which we have developed with it.

[95] **Mr Newton:** There is a varying level of personal support across providers, and it can take so many different levels and functions. We and other providers have a lot of one-to-one time with our learners; we also have specific drop-in times when a learning coach or someone will always be available. It is also about the relevance of the learning. We talk about the key skills or essential skills that they are migrating towards and how you teach those, and everything else. When we go around and look at other teaching resources, we sometimes see young people being taught to plan a fake holiday to Benidorm as a problem-solving exercise, but given that these young people have so many problems of their own, it could be made more relevant to their own lives.

[96] **Mr Cooksley:** They could be going to Benidorm. [*Laughter.*]

[97] **Mr Newton:** Yes. We teach numeracy around budgeting and money skills for life. So, those sorts of things make it relevant to their own lives. Our staff and curriculum teams are always coming out with more and more ideas, because of the feedback that they receive from learners, who ask, 'Can we bring that in?' So, it engages those learners and creates a better curriculum all round.

[98] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I want to go back about five paces to the question that I asked about the support in the secondary sector, and the churn rate and progression. You say that in the 2011 tender documents there is a requirement for greater tutorial/personal support, but surely it would be better—almost like a public health message—to get in there at the start and address the shortcomings in the secondary sector, so that when young people arrive with you, as providers, you do not have such a challenge, and, ultimately, a greater cost, given that what you are providing is a far more expensive mentoring model than would be the case had this been provided in secondary schools.

[99] **Mr Cooksley:** Yes, I think that is the aim of—

[100] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The fundamental flaw is at that 14 to 16 stage.

[101] **Mr Cooksley:** Yes, but there is good practice out there, Andrew. You see a lot of good provision supplied by the local education authority, but it is not enough. Every patch is different. There are some really good 14 to 19 programmes in place, and the pre-16 stage is part of that, and schools are buying in all sorts of specialist stuff. We have about 40 to 50 youngsters from three local comprehensives with us this year, which is lovely. Those youngsters do not want to be in school. So, it is good, but there is not enough of it.

[102] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Is it that it is not enough in a local authority area or in a geographical area? You say that there is best practice, so does that mean that we could look and say, 'That authority is doing it right'? Is it down to a school, rather than to a local authority area?

[103] **Mr Cooksley:** No, it is local authority areas, because it is governed by the 14 to 19 network.

[104] **Mr Newton:** I gave evidence a few months ago to the Enterprise and Learning Committee, and the questions that came up were about the amount of young people who are coming to us with significant basic skills needs and everything else, whether schools were failing those young people and why were they leaving school at that level. What we tend not to address or gloss over sometimes is the fact that large cohorts of the young people whom we deal with did not attend school regularly. So, schools are getting results for those people who are staying and engaging with school, and the curriculum is becoming more varied all the

time, as Andrew said. However, there is a significant cohort of people who need our help.

[105] **Mr Cooksley:** We easily pick up 12 people in Cardiff every year who just trip across us. They are not going to school at 15 years of age, and we ask them, ‘What are you doing?’ They tell us that their brother or someone told them about it and they want to get in. We then have to negotiate with the school to put on a curriculum for them. The school will say ‘It is our money; we cannot go buying anything in for these young people’. It is wrong. The money should follow the learner in some cases, and if we pick up young people, it is healthy that we challenge the school to be a little more responsive—

[106] **Christine Chapman:** We will take evidence from the Minister in the next few weeks. These are good points that we will be able to raise with him.

[107] **Mr Newton:** On schools, it does not start at the age of 14, but at the transition point between primary and secondary education.

[108] **Christine Chapman:** The last two questions are from me, and the first is on collaboration. Collaboration between training providers, voluntary sector groups and Government departments has been identified by most witnesses as vital in supporting vulnerable young people on work-based learning. What are your experiences of such partnership working, and how could things be improved in the future?

[109] **Mr Newton:** Partnership working is out there and becoming stronger. There has been a transformational change and a push to have partnership working, not only through the education agenda but through structural funds and so on. So, people are working more closely together. It has taken a while for people to build those links, that trust and those relationships, and they are getting stronger. In the work-based learning and the SkillBuild sectors, those partnerships exist, particularly in progression and cross-referral. I could list a number of other training providers that we work with and refer to. Andrew has mentioned the environment that we are in with the re-tendering round for the new traineeship programme that will replace SkillBuild as of next August. That sets the agenda for partnership and for expecting partners to work together with a lead provider for work-based learning in each area. We are also on the 14-19 partnership.

[110] **Mr Cooksley:** Collaboration is essential. You have to work together, because no provider can do it all. A lot of collaboration is going on, but it is patchy and there is not enough in some places, while there is a lot in others. Some providers are highly responsible and share their good practice, while some are not. It is a competitive world. We all look at the same placements and we all knock on the same employers’ doors, to a degree, so there is an element of competition—

[111] **Christine Chapman:** Richard said that partnership working is getting stronger, and you said that it is not as good in other areas. What is preventing it from being as good there as it is in some areas? Why is it not happening consistently?

[112] **Mr Cooksley:** I would say that it is the providers in particular localities. They do not feel that they need to be challenged. They feel that their programmes are okay. They are not very self-reflective and do not think that they could do a better job. It is like every poorly performing school or college. The answer lies with particular providers. They have to get out more and start working with people.

[113] **Mr Newton:** We found it with other providers, or you could take the example of local authorities, some of which are much more open to the idea of your going in to talk to people at cabinet level or officials and start to develop programmes, while others have closed doors to people going in. Those parties may have the same attitude or culture.

[114] **Christine Chapman:** Finally, are there any other issues that either of you would like to raise that we have not covered this morning?

[115] **Mr Cooksley:** It is an odd time to be here today, because we are in the middle of this transformational programme and so on. A lot is going on, and if you held a post mortem on what has been going on, you would see that it was poor and you would be shocked. However, the networks are moving in the right way. There are too many providers of SkillBuild programmes—I think that there are 46 in Wales. Some provide for 50 people a year, while we provide between us for almost 3,000 young people a year. With that scale, we have a counsellor—like *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, we have an onboard counsellor—who goes around speaking to the young people, and you have counselling support as well, do you not? However, it would be difficult to do that if you were a small provider.

9.50 a.m.

[116] **Mr Newton:** There is also the difficulty of small providers maintaining the quality and the curriculum-development side of things. I had a conversation with someone the other day, and he said, ‘How do I get a SkillBuild contract? I only have 25 people.’ You will never provide the rounded package to people with those numbers.

[117] **Mr Cooksley:** But, we would say that, would we not? While we are at it, give us bigger contracts. [*Laughter.*] No, it is not about that, but those providers should be linking in more and using our provision. It is a difficult job, and these can be difficult young people, highly challenging—the vast majority come with all sorts of issues. We did a boat trip to Flat Holm and none of them had been on a boat before. You forget that kind of thing. One guy did not realise that he had a shoe size. We could sit here all day and give examples like that.

[118] **Mr Newton:** We took 22 young people from the south Wales M4 corridor area over to the European Parliament in Brussels, and they had to get to Cardiff at 9 p.m.. When we took a step back we realised that, of the 22, 18 of them had never been to Cardiff. Bear in mind that they all live in south Wales.

[119] **Mr Cooksley:** In general, it is forgotten that this is a very difficult group and yes, the programmes in place can do better, but there is enough provision around to build on. It is kind of a concern, but not so much now that the PS3 project team at DCELLS, love them, are going to sort it all out.

[120] **Christine Chapman:** I thank both of you for your evidence. It has been a valuable session. Thank you both for attending. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of the meeting for you to check that you are happy that there are no errors. Thank you for coming.

[121] **Mr Cooksley:** It was a pleasure. Thank you.

9.52 a.m.

Deisebau Newydd New Petitions

[122] **Christine Chapman:** We have two new petitions. The first, P-03-299, is on the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, and was raised by Danny Clark, who collected 65 signatures. It calls for the Welsh Assembly Government to ensure that recent proposed changes to staffing and working arrangements at South Wales Fire and Rescue Service are in line with the national service framework, and if not, that appropriate action is taken to ensure that they are brought in line. I have written to the Minister for Social Justice and Local

Government seeking his views on the petition. Are you happy to await his response?

[123] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Would it be appropriate to write to the fire authorities as well, to see what their view is about compliance and the ability to meet standards? The Minister will give us the overall picture, but there might be quirks in the system given the existence of four separate fire authorities—are there four, or three?

[124] **Ms Stocks:** We need to check.

[125] **Bethan Jenkins:** I declare an interest as I have been involved in this petition. I know that there have been changes since the petition was sent. I do not think that the issues that the petitioner raised are being taken forward, but if we are to write to the fire authorities, we should write to the Fire Brigade Union as well.

[126] **Christine Chapman:** Is everyone happy with that? I see that you are.

[127] The next petition, P-03-302, is on a compost processing plant. It was raised by Councillor Hefin David, who collected 642 signatures. It calls for operations to be suspended at Bryn Composting until the operators can satisfy the Environment Agency Wales that the odour pollution will be halted. In line with committee protocols, I have written to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing seeking her views on the petition. Are you happy to await her views?

[128] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I declare a possible interest. I will have to check, but I know a recycling operation in that area. I am not quite sure whether it is this one, but I will check to be on the safe side.

9.54 a.m.

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[129] **Christine Chapman:** The first update is on P-03-134, the call for a Welsh honours system. We have received correspondence from the First Minister and the office of the Presiding Officer, and you can see that they are not inclined to take this forward. What are your views on that?

[130] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that we need to close it, because we will not get any progress. However, I will say for the record that I am quite disappointed by the First Minister's response, because it does not seem very open in terms of how the public can get involved. It says that it issues a press release during or after the reception at which people's achievements are recognised. It is basically a round robin of who the Welsh Assembly Government departments put forward. He used a particular word—what was it? It was quite phenomenal. We have written to the Presiding Officer and the Government; I do not see how we can progress. All that I can say is that, because we did a blog, and because we wanted to expand the number of people involved, it is disappointing that the public does not seem to know much more about what is happening. I did not know, for example, that the next one will be on 21 October at Ruthin castle. It is a poor show that there is not more information.

[131] **Christine Chapman:** Are you suggesting that we write to ask that publicity for these recognising achievement receptions be much more widely disseminated?

[132] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** That is a course of action, but above all, we cannot move the petition as it is any further. It is regrettable in some respects that the opportunity has not been taken to explore it further, but that is the prerogative of the First Minister and the Presiding

Officer. As the petition stands, we have taken it as far as we can.

[133] **Veronica German:** With regret, I agree.

[134] **Christine Chapman:** The next update is on P-03-156 with regard to sleep apnoea. The petition calls for an effective policy for all patients with sleep disorders, including the provision of constant positive airway pressure machines for diagnosed sufferers of obstructive sleep apnoea. We have correspondence from the Minister and each health board indicating the various provisions. They note that the average waiting times vary between local health boards from 18 to 36 weeks, and all local health boards provide these CPAP machines. What are your views on this petition?

[135] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** We have a weight of evidence now. I think that we should ask the petitioners for their opinion of the evidence, and see whether there have been many improvements in the 2008-09 National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidelines for these machines. We should also find out from the Minister whether the audit undertaken in September this year has turned up any areas of concern. They can address those areas.

[136] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Is there anything else? I see that there is not.

[137] The next petition is P-03-200, calling for support to be given to the creation of a Glamorganshire canal historic route. We have received correspondence from Rhondda Cynon Taf and Cardiff councils. Are there any thoughts on this one?

[138] **Bethan Jenkins:** Can we ask whether the petitioners can take part in the consultation that Cardiff Council is initiating on the strategic cycle network? Also, can we ask Pontypridd Town Council for more information about its discussions with the South East Wales Transport Alliance with regard to its schemes? It has been quite quick in making the point that the schemes are aspirational, but I would like to know whether SEWTA is going to take forward those plans. I met representatives of SEWTA last week on a different issue altogether, and they told me that the more people that they have responses from, the stronger the case will be for them to look forward in terms of carrying out the work. Perhaps the petitioners could be invited to submit their aspirations to SEWTA as well.

[139] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. The next one, P-03-204, calls for greater transparency of scrutiny in higher education in Wales. We have had correspondence from the Minister, from the National Union of Students, Higher Education Wales and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. We are awaiting a response from the University and College Union. Are there any thoughts on this one?

[140] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The Minister made a statement on higher education governance, did he not? He has launched a review into it, so really, we cannot pre-empt the conclusions of that review. We just need to be kept informed of the review's progress. Do we have an end date for that review?

[141] **Ms Stocks:** It is due to report in January next year.

[142] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. The next update is on P-03-227, against the access road at Llanmaes, and P-03-252, opposing the RAF St Athan northern access road at Boverton. These petitions call for plans to construct the northern access road for the proposed RAF St Athan development to be halted. We have had correspondence from the Ministry of Defence. Are there any thoughts on this matter?

[143] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The whole scheme is in the mix of the strategic defence review. Clearly, a lot of work is being done at the moment that will come to fruition in the

next couple of weeks. This area is outside our control, but we need to keep a watching brief on it until the strategic defence review reports.

10.00 a.m.

[144] **Bethan Jenkins:** It is working in parallel, so we need to be mindful of the fact that they are still working on the defence training.

[145] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The work on site is going on, but I understand that this access road is outside the site. I stand to be corrected, but I understand that the access road would be constructed only if the entire defence training academy came there. So, the preparation of the site is still ongoing within the fence, as it were, but this access road would be outside the fence because it will be the main service route into the academy.

[146] **Christine Chapman:** So, we will wait until the review is completed and we will revisit the petition at that time.

[147] The next petition update is P-03-230, which calls for international conscientious objectors' day to be marked. We have received correspondence from the First Minister and the office of the Presiding Officer, and they have expressed the view that they will not be taking this one forward. So, what are Members' views?

[148] **Veronica German:** We should write to the petitioners and show them the responses that we have had. I do not think that there is much else that we can do.

[149] **Bethan Jenkins:** I do not want to keep petitions open when they do not need to be, but there are so many different days, such as United Nations days, such as disabled people's day, and sometimes the Assembly Commission does things, and sometimes the Welsh Assembly Government does them. Is there a strategy or protocol for the ones that they celebrate or put events on for, compared with those that they refuse immediately when they are approached? There is no evidence in the correspondence of how they have looked into it.

[150] **Christine Chapman:** It is good to put the petition into context. That is a good question to ask, so we could do that.

[151] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The other point arising from the Presiding Officer's correspondence—and, as Assembly Members, we probably take this for granted—is that an organisation that wants to put on an event here can simply ask an Assembly Member to sponsor it. There are magnificent facilities here, so the event does not necessarily have to be held by the Assembly Commission or the Government. We should never fail to reinforce that message to organisations, namely that any one of the 60 AMs here could host an event if that was deemed appropriate. That could be the catalyst to move on this petition.

[152] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, we will do that then. The next update is P-03-231, calling for a review into the guidance on the proximity of wind turbines to homes. We have had further correspondence from the petitioners. We have had correspondence from the Minister relating to a different petition to do with the transportation of wind turbine components. Technical advice note 8 is currently being reviewed, and it is envisaged that it will be completed by the end of the year.

[153] **Bethan Jenkins:** Could we ask if these concerns have been fully considered in that consultation on TAN 8? From what I can gather from the petitioners' response, they are quite unhappy, let me say, with the Minister's responses. I do not know what the answer is, but they do not seem to be happy with the Minister's response on the powers that Scotland has. Is there any way that we could draw out more from the Minister about what happens in other

countries, and ask her whether she would be minded to look at what other countries do, just to address the discomfort that the petitioners felt that she did not look at that sufficiently?

[154] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I agree with that. In reading the letter, you can see that the petitioners feel aggrieved, and they perceive the Minister's response to their concerns about the placing of windfarms as glib at best. I believe that TAN 8 is being reviewed, and, hopefully, that will offer a genuine opportunity for these issues to be aired and taken on board. Can we check whether the petitioners are involved in that consultation process? If they are not, could we facilitate their involvement?

[155] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, we will write another letter to the Minister exploring some of the issues that have been raised.

[156] The next petition, P-03-239, calls for a requirement to be placed on Welsh universities to provide a lifelong learning programme. We have had correspondence from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and Higher Education Wales. Are Members happy to seek the petitioners' views on that correspondence, initially? I see that you are.

[157] **Bethan Jenkins:** Sorry to be a pain, but could we seek the petitioners' opinions on what they perceive 'lifelong learning' to be? From the letters that we have read, there seems to be a starting point and a philosophy of lifelong learning that may not fit into what the petitioners believe is lifelong learning. If we could clarify that, it might help to progress the petition.

[158] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. The next petition, P-03-272, calls for an end to equines being used underground. It calls for the code of practice on the welfare of equines to be amended to prevent the use of equines underground. We have had correspondence from the Minister, from the chair of the cross-party group on the horse, and from the petitioner. What are Members' views on this one?

[159] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I believe that there is a review into this at present. Did the Minister's earlier evidence not indicate that there are currently no horses working underground in Wales? That is not to say that there do not need to be safeguards in place. What we need to ensure is that the code of practice, which comes in in 2011, I believe, takes on the petitioners' views and includes the points that they raise. While we understand that no horses are involved at present, there could be that potential, unless we take a belt-and-braces approach to this process.

[160] **Christine Chapman:** Are Members happy with that? I see that you are. The next petition, P-03-284, calls on the Government to reconsider the use of Government-owned land in Brynmawr for social housing. We have had more correspondence from the petitioner and from Melin Homes. Are there any views on this?

[161] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could write to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to ask at what stage the planning application is, and how it is engaging the community in that process. I have one other question, and I may just need clarification on this. The last paragraph in the action group's letter mentions the fact that the Government has passed on all responsibility to Melin Homes. It seems to suggest that there is a lack of accountability from the Government, because it has passed the responsibility on to a development company. On accountability, can we clarify the link between the Government and Melin Homes, so that we know that, if residents have concerns, the Welsh Government will still be responsible, and not the development company? We need to ensure that, because it is the Government's affordable housing policy, and so the people involved will know that they can always take their views to the Welsh Government and not have to deliberate it with a third party, so to speak. That may be something that only I am not clear about.

[162] **Veronica German:** Melin Homes is a social housing provider.

[163] **Bethan Jenkins:** Is it? I see.

[164] **Christine Chapman:** Are you happy with that, Bethan?

[165] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, that is fine. I thought that it was a private company; I did not know that it was a social housing provider.

[166] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. We will take up those actions. The final petition today is P-03-294 from the Wales Women's National Coalition. It calls for the publication of plans to ensure that the voice, needs and views of women will be reflected in policy and decision making in the absence of the coalition. Again, we have had correspondence from the Minister and from the Committee on Equality of Opportunity, which has been considering this issue. Are you happy to ask the Minister for further details on how he plans to take this issue forward?

[167] **Bethan Jenkins:** It is about the timeline again. We never get much of a timeline from Ministers.

[168] **Veronica German:** He is probably considering all the available options, but how long will that take? It could be after the next election.

[169] **Christine Chapman:** We are looking at that issue, as a committee. The first time that we write to a Minister, we will ask for timelines, rather than having to go back to ask for that information. So, we just need some further information on this one.

[170] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I asked at the last meeting whether we could consider the petition on parking at the University Hospital of Wales, in Heath.

[171] **Ms Stocks:** We have not had a response from the health board or the petitioners, which is why it is not on the agenda. However, we hope that it will be on the agenda for the next meeting on 2 November. We will be chasing those responses, because they are due to be considered at the next meeting.

10.10 a.m.

Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion

[172] **Christine Chapman:** We need to go into private session for the last two agenda items. I move that

the committee resolves, under Standing Order No. 10.37, to exclude the public from the final part of the meeting

[173] I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.10 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.10 a.m.*