



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

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Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

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[The Children, Young People and Education
Committee](#)

02/11/2016

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Public from the Meeting

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Mohammad Asghar Bywgraffiad Biography	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Michelle Brown Bywgraffiad Biography	UKIP Cymru UKIP Wales
Hefin David Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
Andrew R.T. Davies Bywgraffiad Biography	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (yn dirprwyo ar ran Darren Millar) Welsh Conservatives (substitute for Darren Millar)
John Griffiths Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
Llyr Gruffydd Bywgraffiad Biography	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Julie Morgan Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
Lynne Neagle Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Nigel Brown	Prif Weithredwr Interim, CAF/CASS Cymru Interim Chief Executive, CAF/CASS Cymru
Jo-Anne Daniels	Cyfarwyddwr, Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi Director, Communities and Tackling Poverty
Albert Heaney	Cyfarwyddwr, Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol ac Integreiddiad Director, Social Services and Integration
Carl Sargeant Bywgraffiad Biography	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant) Assembly Member, Labour (The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children)

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

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
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Mark Wyn Jones Clerc
 Clerc
Sian Thomas Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil
 Research Service

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:30.
The meeting began at 09:30.*

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

[1] **Lynne Neagle:** Good morning, everyone. Can I welcome you all to this morning's meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Committee? We have received apologies from Darren Millar, so I'm pleased to welcome Andrew R.T. Davies who is substituting for Darren this morning. Can I ask, are there any declarations of interest? No. Okay, thank you.

**Craffu ar Gyllideb Ddrafft Llywodraeth Cymru ar gyfer 2017–18:
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant
Scrutiny of Welsh Government Draft Budget 2017–18:
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children**

[2] **Lynne Neagle:** Item 2 this morning is a scrutiny session on the Welsh Government draft budget. I'm really pleased to welcome Carl Sargeant, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children, to our meeting. Thank you for attending and for providing a paper in advance of the meeting. Can I just ask you to introduce your officials for the record, please?

[3] **The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children (Carl Sargeant):** Good morning, Chair, and good morning, committee, it's a pleasure to be with you for this scrutiny session. Can I ask my team to introduce themselves? We'll start with Albert on the left, please.

[4] **Mr Heaney:** Good morning, committee. My name is Albert Heaney, I'm director of social services and integration.

[5] **Ms Daniels:** Good morning, I'm Jo-Anne Daniels, director for communities and tackling poverty.

[6] **Mr Brown:** Good morning, I'm Nigel Brown, chief executive of CAF/CASS

Cymru.

[7] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you very much, all of you. If you're happy, we'll go straight into questions. The first question is from Hefin David.

[8] **Hefin David:** Cabinet Secretary, you've taken the decision to merge Flying Start, Families First and Communities First into one budget line. It's made it a little bit more difficult for this committee to scrutinise that, given that there's a reduction in funding from last year. Can you give us some indication as to whether there's an area that has faced a particular reduction in funding in those three headlines?

[9] **Carl Sargeant:** Thank you, Hefin, for your question. What we've tried to do here—and I'm sorry if it causes confusion for committee in the scrutiny of that, but maybe I can help with some of the numbers in regard to the expenditure within that budget expenditure line. We expect the budget for Flying Start to be £76.89 million, Families First to be £42.58 million and the rest of that budget around community purpose. We've purposely done that because the sectors and delivery unit are telling us that they need to have more flexibility in the way the budgets are delivered for them too. What we've done, from the announcement of the week before last on resilient communities, is we're starting to look about how do we best make maximum gain from the interventions of finance into our communities and how they can use that money better. So, the long-term plan for us, while all of that budget's been brought together for us, is we're looking at how we can give some authorities flexibility between working between Families First and Flying Start and other community programmes that may be considered, but also with the knowledge that we do currently have a listening exercise on, regarding the future of Communities First, and the budget line is within that BEL.

[10] **Hefin David:** And Families First, particularly, how do you view the future of that programme?

[11] **Carl Sargeant:** I think it's very positive. I've been very committed to Flying Start and Families First, but the problem with budgets is that this is a one-year budget round. So, my personal view is I'd like to have a long-term commitment to those programmes—probably not, as I said earlier on, as defined currently. Maybe there will be flexibilities when we understand more about our communities and what we need to do with them. But unfortunately, the budget is a one-year budget and that's all I can commit

to. But, longer term, I'd like to see Families First and Flying Start continuing.

[12] **Hefin David:** I visited an Action for Children centre in my constituency and the service co-ordinator, Carolyn Jones, her role is in the Families First pathway to inclusion project, and she expressed some concerns and uncertainty around it. Do you have any plans to cut any funding from the disability strand?

[13] **Carl Sargeant:** No, we don't. The budgets are relatively flat-line. On the overall budget, while it's been extremely challenging for Government, I've done particularly well, I'd say, in the communities division, in managing to protect as much of my budget as possible. We've had about a £1 million reduction in the overall budget. That will come out of that block line of the overall number—the £154 million. That's where that £1 million will come from. But, I'm not seeing that as overall significant. I won't tell the finance Minister that—that I'm not as concerned about the £1 million reduction—but we'll be able to manage that within the year.

[14] **Hefin David:** So, the practical impact would be that, for example, the Action for Children centre in Caerphilly wouldn't see, necessarily, any change in the ability to bid for funding for projects.

[15] **Carl Sargeant:** I would not like to get drawn into specifics on that. I'm more than happy for you to write to me in particular on that case.

[16] **Hefin David:** What about the range of programmes, collectively, across the—?

[17] **Carl Sargeant:** The Flying Start and Families First programmes will remain, currently, relatively the same as what they were prior to this budget round. There may be some flexing in the budgets and opportunities to do more—that's what I'm saying about merging of budgets. We're going to do some pilots with local authorities to see how they can work around some of the postcode stuff around need, as opposed to area based. So, we're trying to give more flexibility in the scheme. That may result in some local authorities having a local determination about what they're funding or what they're not funding, but the principle of what they could do hasn't changed significantly.

[18] **Hefin David:** So, just to press that and pursue that just one step further, these programmes that are reliant on this area of funding should

not, therefore, see a significant difference in their ability to bid for funding.

[19] **Carl Sargeant:** Correct.

[20] **Lynne Neagle:** Cabinet Secretary, can I just ask you—? The figures that you've given us for Flying Start and Families First are exactly the same as the current year's expenditure, so that leaves just under £30 million in that budget expenditure line, which I'm assuming is the Communities First pot. But you've announced that you are minded to phase out that. What will happen to that money if you do go ahead with a decision to phase out that?

[21] **Carl Sargeant:** Obviously, the Chair is right to say that I haven't made a decision on this yet. We are in a consultation period in terms of that process. That's why the financial line is still within the communities budget. My figures suggest that there's around £36 million in the communities 'purpose' budget—that also includes funding for the Lift programme and the Communities for Work programme, which we are committed to continuing whatever happens to the Communities First programme.

[22] The decision to look at Communities First in detail isn't a fiscal one. This is about making sure that we are absolutely sure we are tackling the issues around poverty—that I'm certain that all our programmes are working better, are working well and can intervene in the areas where we are trying to see success. I am not yet convinced that the Communities First programme alone is the only programme that can deliver and tackle poverty, and that's why I've asked the team to look at it very carefully. But, it isn't a fiscal decision—the money is in the pot, there.

[23] If I get to a position of seeking to reduce the programme, then that will be a phased approach; therefore, we would still need a budget to manage that process. But, I do see in this year that we are able to have some flexibility in delivering community projects around this.

[24] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. John, is it on this merging of the budgets?

[25] **John Griffiths:** It is, really, Chair, but more particularly, perhaps, on Communities First—it picks up on what the Cabinet Secretary has just said.

[26] **Lynne Neagle:** Go on then.

[27] **John Griffiths:** I think you've been quite clear—and you've restated it this morning, Cabinet Secretary—that the decision to review Communities First isn't a budget-driven decision. But, the particular budget line, or the allocation for Communities First within the budget line for all three, is the allocation that's reduced. So, what you're saying is, 'The money is still there, but, inevitably, whether it continues or not, Communities First, there will be a reduction in provision'.

[28] **Carl Sargeant:** As I say, I have not made that decision, but if we were to continue as is with the Communities First budget, Flying Start and Families First, there is around a £1 million difference in the overall budget line. We will be able to manage that within that system. It would come out of the Communities First line element, but there is, I believe, enough flexibility within that budget to manage that. I have to manage reductions in budgets; £1 million is what I'm reasonably comfortable with managing. I've had to deal with much different scenarios—much bigger than £1 million.

[29] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Andrew.

[30] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I'd just like to ask, if I may, on Flying Start, but just taking that Communities First point that you were talking about, and making the decision, and there might well be some reduction, I think you alluded to there: what is the timeline that you're working to? You've tasked the team with looking at this. What is the timeline that you're looking to, and given that timeline, how might that impact the budget?

[31] **Carl Sargeant:** Okay. So, I made an announcement around two weeks ago on resilient communities, about being minded to exit Communities First, subject to discussions about what community resilience looks like. We started that engagement process. We're online, with some survey data coming back to us. That's already receiving a good response. I'm at an event tonight, although I'm being criticised by some Members about me talking to people regarding what the future of resilient communities looks like. I don't think it's a bad thing to talk to people and ask their views, but that's another process of communication. I'm looking to end that to have some more advice back from my team in the early new year, probably January I'm hoping for. Over Christmas we can look at that in detail. Subject to what that advice says, I will then make a decision on whether to exit or not exit. If I decide to exit, it will be a controlled exit. If I believe we should maintain the programme or part of the programme, or whatever that looks like, it will start from then. So, I expect clarity around this, probably, I would say, the earlier part of

January—February at the latest.

[32] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** And that will be the decision where the changes will start to roll out from.

[33] **Carl Sargeant:** Indeed.

[34] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** That late part of January, early part of February.

[35] **Carl Sargeant:** Well, it would lend itself very nicely to the decision line for the implementation of this new budget. So, that's when we'd start the principle of change if we were going to do that.

[36] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Can I just ask you as well on the Flying Start programme? In particular, what assessment have you made of the outreach element of the Flying Start? I think there have been observations and criticisms about the postcode nature of Flying Start. In 2014, obviously, the outreach operation was brought in. Have you made an assessment of that yet?

[37] **Carl Sargeant:** We have. The outreach programme is still an integral part of the mainstream programme as well. It's still run by the same management team and the assessment of that. This is partly the reason why we've merged some of the budgets, because we're going out to local authorities who are operating this well to see whether there is some flexibility between Families First and Flying Start and other community-based programmes, to see whether we can get a better integration of service for need. I'm not convinced about area-based programmes. I think we do miss people out in terms of need, and I think there has to be some flexibility. This is what this work has proved: that it can work effectively. But it's still quite tight. I want to give a little bit more local influence and local determination about how that may work for the future.

[38] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, just for my understanding, you believe that the outreach programme has alleviated the bulk of that postcode lottery that was existing prior to you bringing forward that in 2014.

[39] **Carl Sargeant:** I wouldn't say the bulk of—I would say that it started to address the issue, and that's why I'm doing this significant piece of work on the communities unit about what a resilient community looks like, and what are our best intervention techniques. Look, we've had Communities First for

around 15 years, and it's been a great success in many communities and we've got some great success stories—real stories of life-changing experiences for people and communities—but when we look at what the programme is specifically—it's a poverty-tackling programme. It's very specific in what it does. It's an area-based control mechanism, with 52 clusters across Wales and around 25 per cent of the population in terms of coverage. I know, and colleagues of all parties have told me, that there are areas of deprivation outside of those zones that we cannot really tackle. We don't have any programmes to do that. I don't think that's right. I think that we have to have some more flexibility on the need basis. That's why I've done a major overhaul. This is not an easy decision for me. As I said, it's not a financial one; this is about doing the right thing for the right reason. I think it's quite—you may not agree, and that's just the politics of this—brave, actually. We've got to look for the long-term here about tackling the issues of poverty, and I don't think we've just quite got it right at the moment. I think we need some flexibility in the programmes. So, that's why we're moving in this space.

09:45

[40] **Andrew RT Davies:** Just to put a light note on that—normally, when civil servants tell a Minister 'It's brave', that normally is a cautionary 'You shouldn't go there, Minister.' [*Laughter*]

[41] **Carl Sargeant:** That's been on my desk every day—'You're brave, Minister.' [*Laughter*].

[42] **Andrew RT Davies:** Thank you, Chair.

[43] **Lynne Neagle:** Llyr.

[44] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Yes, I just wanted to—. Clearly, this is a one-year revenue budget, because we can't look much further than that at the moment. Hopefully, that'll address itself with time. But I'm just looking, really, for an indication from you, that you very much see a long-term future for Families First as a programme, and, notwithstanding any budgetary pressures that might be forthcoming, that you fully intend to continue with that programme.

[45] **Carl Sargeant:** Well, I think—. It's been unhelpful—there's only just a timeline, really. I think, the new Government coming in has presented an

opportunity to review our programmes and what we're doing. I thought I'd been quite clear in saying Families First and Flying Start play a large part in community change. They do some great work—as does Communities First, and the staff around that do some fantastic stuff—but we've got to look at the facts and look at what the issues we're trying to tackle here are.

[46] I looked at the poverty statistics—Ken Skates is the lead Minister on poverty, but we've got some of the poverty intervention programmes within the portfolio—and the stats for poverty bounce along the bottom. We've had no real significant change in tackling poverty for many years. I think there're lots of reasons for that; some of them not of our own making—whether that be benefit changes or things that we don't have leverage over. So, I'm genuinely concerned about what our intervention programmes can be, and where we can have maximum impact.

[47] That's why the two themes I talk about in community resilience are well-being and tackling adverse childhood experiences, the issue around intervention with young people, because they're planning for the long term. They are our future, and if we get that wrong early on, we pick up the pieces for the long term. The other one is about economic regeneration, giving people job opportunities, and that's why the Lift and the PaCE programmes are really important, giving people the ability to earn and grow. I think, if we can have a very clear focus on those two elements, then we can maybe start to see a shift in the poverty figures. But, at the moment, we're not seeing that, so we have to do something different, and this is the brave move, I think, we are embarking on.

[48] The problem with this—and this is the brave bit—is that it's generational. So, in politics, we'll be decided on in five years' time—the term in five years—and they'll say, 'Well, what have you really done on tackling the issues of poverty?' I think we'll be looking at 10 or 15 years before we start to see real change. That's why—back to your original question, and with a very long answer—Families First and Flying Start are integral in terms of making that long-term change. But it's a one-year budget—I can't commit to any longer than that, because of the finances. But my personal commitment, the Government's commitment, is that, of course, there is a focus on what they do, where they play a part and what they should do. But it doesn't mean they'll always be the same either, though. I think there is a delivery mechanism we have to think about.

[49] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Oscar, on Flying Start.

[50] **Mohammad Asghar:** It's not—it's Communities First. Thank you, Chair. What it is, I know, Minister, is that you're actually phasing out this budget for Communities First, which, to me, is a bit of a surprise. You're making a very brave decision on this. Community cohesion—that budget has been serving pretty good in the past. What actually made you to, really, phase this out?

[51] Community cohesion is a paramount law in this country, to make sure that we all enjoy ourselves—the various communities together. The allocation list is not there, on which community gets what, so basically—. I can tell you one thing, Chair, that none of the Muslim community organisations have received any funding whatsoever in previous years. So, I need to have a list somewhere—how you're putting this community cohesion in Communities First, and then you're phasing it out because the budget is not going in the right direction. So, could you explain that, please?

[52] **Carl Sargeant:** I can. Unfortunately, your comments are incorrect. I'm not phasing Communities First out—I've not made that decision yet. The budget line is still in place. The second point around community cohesion: that is in a different budget line. That is in the equality and inclusion budget line, which hasn't seen a decrease. So, I'm not sighted on the content of your question in terms of what you're trying to get at there. I think there is a long-term decision to be made on Communities First; I accept that that is in consultation phase, and I hope the committee recognises that. But the point you made on equality and inclusion—it is still within the budget. I don't recognise the figures you raise.

[53] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Are there any plans, Cabinet Secretary, to undertake any further evaluation of Flying Start, because the evaluation results have shown mixed delivery and are measuring only some of the entitlements?

[54] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes, of course. We continue to evaluate the programme. What we see in the work that we've done in terms of working with people who've accessed the support is a dramatic change in their well-being, the futureproofing of the young people who are in the programme and how to get them school-ready. So, there are lots of data that we gather from people within the service. As I said earlier on, we are obviously looking to expand on how that programme works. So, Flying Start and Families First, they all do something slightly different, but, actually, I'm asking the teams now to look at people: how do we wrap around that person, that family? Rather than,

because Flying Start or Families First only do this, it doesn't mean that they shouldn't be able to access other services as well. So, what are the things that families need to make them resilient?

[55] That's why, on the issue of children's zones that we announced in the programme—this isn't a money-driven exercise in children's zones, actually, this is just a concept of trying to rebuild all of these interventions. Swansea's got the start of a good example of this about how they look at a family or an individual and say, 'What's the need of that family? It may not be in a Families First or Flying Start area, but what is it that we need to support them?' That's why we can pull all of these intervention in and that's why we're going to do some pilots around the children's zones as well. So, I think we've shaken the whole department up in terms of what community services look like. We're learning still. But Families First and Flying Start, there needs to be some more flex in there in order for us to meet the needs of people rather than Government saying, 'This is what you need' and actually they don't need that sometimes; it's something else they need. But we need to understand the professional advice to make sure we can enable that.

[56] **Lynne Neagle:** Thanks. John.

[57] **John Griffiths:** I just wondered—[*Inaudible.*]*—*the geographical nature of provision, then, Cabinet Secretary, and a children's zone could address those, not within the postcode areas for Flying Start or Families First example. 'Zone' suggests a geographical coverage in itself, doesn't it? So, it doesn't get around that problem, then.

[58] **Carl Sargeant:** I think it's the language you use. I think it's always difficult in description. I mean, we had a discussion with the team about how we describe community resilience and we had 30 different titles about what that may or may not mean. I think it's about what you're able to explain underneath that and children's zones is another good example, really.

[59] So, what we intend to do, working with Public Health Wales, with the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and with other agencies—South Wales Police are interested, too—is about what all the interventions that we have in place for families and particularly young people are, and how we integrate them into a service. The children's zone could be a school or it could be a much broader element. In the States, there is an example of a children's zone, I think it's in Harlem, where there is a children's zone there where they turned a dysfunctional school into a very high-performing school

by just looking at the interventions that are available to young people. It's a concept as opposed to a physical entity; it's about the principle of how we operate collectively around an individual or a family. We've got the integrated family support services programme, we've got Families First and Flying Start—all of these areas doing something slightly different, maybe treading on toes sometimes, but is it co-ordinated well enough? And that's what we're trying to seek to do here. It's about what our interventions are collectively and who is taking responsibility for that unit. That's what the children's zone is intended to be. So, it's not geographical, as such, but we're going to do some pilots across Wales to see how that pans out.

[60] **Lynne Neagle:** Llyr.

[61] **Llyr Gruffydd:** I just wanted to refer back, if I could, to the answer you gave to Mohammad Asghar about a budget line that's not been cut. It was the equalities and—?

[62] **Carl Sargeant:** Inclusion.

[63] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Equalities and inclusion budget line. But in which of the BEL titles is that, then? Because the difficulty we have as a committee is that we've not seen the figures beneath the BEL.

[64] **Carl Sargeant:** With respect, if you haven't got that, I can understand, maybe, the questioning from the Member. I will see if I can send that SPA line through to you. It comes under the—. This is the next level up, isn't it?

[65] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Yes, but I think that highlights an issue for us as a committee here, because we were only today told that, despite asking in written form for further information, the Families First and the other lines would remain flat. But, of course, we didn't know that until this morning, and it does make scrutiny rather difficult for us when we're working on seven or eight broad BEL titles and nothing underneath that.

[66] **Carl Sargeant:** I accept your concern, but, with respect, Chair, we've not done anything different to the way that we've presented anything any other year, but if there are specifics that you are concerned about, I'm more than happy to address them—of course I am.

[67] **Lynne Neagle:** If we could maybe have a note on that—. I think part of the problem has come because the communities money, which wouldn't be

under the remit of this committee, is now in with the children's money, isn't it? So, maybe if we could have a note on that, that would be helpful.

[68] **Carl Sargeant:** I'm more than happy to do that. Look, this isn't about trickery; I genuinely don't mind the scrutiny. Actually, I've got a very positive budget, so I'm quite happy to take questions on this budget.

[69] **Lynne Neagle:** Julie.

[70] **Julie Morgan:** I'm very supportive of the concept of the children's zones; I think we have to get our heads around it. But, in terms of the finance, if you map all the interventions that are happening in a certain school, for example, then the budgets for all those different interventions, which may come from the budgets of different Ministers, would then be merged. How do you see that process happening?

[71] **Carl Sargeant:** That's where the problem lies—but not a big one. Actually, we've already started the discussions between ministerial departments about how that may or may not operate. As I said, we've already started significant work, working with external agencies that are looking at a hub model of delivery, and that will ultimately need some flexibility in all our budgets. I'm very comfortable with that, if it's the right thing to do. We have to get out of the space of protecting health budgets or Welsh Government budgets with regard to looking at what the intervention is, and I think we can be much more clever and, actually, cost-saving if we start to look at this. That's why we're going to do some pilots to see if it works. Where it falls down, then we have to intervene, but I think it's quite exciting. But we tread carefully on that journey as well.

[72] **Julie Morgan:** Obviously, some elements of that are under our scrutiny, and, with others, we haven't got that direct information. So, I think it's absolutely the right way and flexibility between budgets is so important, but it makes it more difficult to scrutinise.

[73] **Carl Sargeant:** I don't deny that. Therefore, we should look at the way we scrutinise, I think, or what we scrutinise, because what we shouldn't be restricted on is giving good-quality public services where they're needed based on our reverse engineering of our ability to scrutinise. We should be looking at what do we deliver well and work back and say, 'Well, what's the best way to scrutinise this?' So, it may be something that you, as a committee, may want to think about, as well as other committees, as to what

that scrutiny process is. I can understand the high-level element of the budget here, but, actually, I'm really concerned about what do we deliver on the ground. We've got to get our heads round how we scrutinise that and how you do that, too.

[74] **Lynne Neagle:** Andrew.

[75] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Thanks, Chair. You said an interesting thing there, Minister, and I don't criticise you for it, because there have been observations in this budget round and other budget rounds that the way the budget is going generally, we're going to turn into a giant health board, or the Government will turn into a giant health board. We're nearly at that tipping point of 50 per cent. You said we need to get away from protecting health budgets. I just invite you to offer a view on the importance of budgets actually not just looking in their own silos, but at how they can impact on other portfolio areas, because, very often, when we're questioning in that Chamber there, it's not that specific area that's got the money—it's another part of Government that's got it. I just invite you maybe to elaborate a bit more on what you just said about getting out of the mindset of protecting the health budget, and how that could actually help other departments within the Government.

10:00

[76] **Carl Sargeant:** It's a really difficult question and I'll try my best to answer it as openly as I can. Discussions with the health Cabinet Secretary are always interesting ones, because he is—as wherever you are a health Minister in the UK—sort of firefighting as well in terms of delivering the here and now. I've seen some long-term statistics that are very clear to me. The evidence is very powerful to suggest that if we don't start looking at prevention, then we will become the regional health board, or whatever that looks like—whatever that title would be. Talking to the health Minister about this, about what interventions they can do to help us to help other departments, is an important one, and he recognises that too. Whether that's through social services or health, how can they make clever interventions on prevention?

[77] That's why the work we're doing on communities, particularly around adverse childhood experiences—. We know that, if we can get into the space of dealing with intervention at an early age, it saves—. Well, there are two areas: it's morally right, and fiscally right long term. That's why the children

zones are a good example of bringing the health boards in, Public Health Wales, very well informed people, to say, 'If we were to do this, actually, we'll start to change the long term'—the generational change that's needed.

[78] That's why I said it's brave earlier on. I think—and I don't step away from that—we're hopeful that this might work. But, if we don't do something, then inevitably there will be a significant crisis, both in the health and well-being of our nation, not just in Wales, but globally. We've got to do some early intervention work and I think we may have—. You see, I'm not convinced that the way that we tackle poverty—and this is back to the earlier questions, really. I'm not convinced that the way that we tackle poverty, the underlying questions about poverty, have really fundamentally been answered yet. I think ACEs might be something in there, because one of the questions I'd pose to committee—not that I'm supposed to be posing questions—is: why, in significant areas of poverty, do some people succeed and some people don't succeed? That's not about poverty intervention programmes. I think it's about life chances and their background. So, people—and the evidence is very clear—people who have suffered four or more ACEs, the likelihood of them experiencing severe trauma in some way later on in life is huge. Four or more ACEs and you're 20 times more likely to be incarcerated in your lifetime, and sixteen times more likely to be a victim of domestic violence or a perpetrator of domestic violence.¹ These are big, big numbers. Fourteen per cent of the population of Wales has four or more ACEs.

[79] We need to do something about this, and that's why the health budget and all our budgets need to be integrated in terms of working across our natural boundaries, and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, I think, while it was a little bit of—I'll say it—a little bit of a motherhood-and-apple-pie Act, actually, if we get underneath that, that gives us the framework, the toolkit, to do something different. That's why the 44 public bodies, if they get this right, can move beyond our natural boundaries of operation. But it's people. We're talking about people who are protected, protecting their budget lines. We've just got to get over that, because there is a fundamental reason why we should do this, and I think we're on the cusp of doing that. Wales could be something very different if

¹ Eglurhad/Clarification: The general point is correct that 4+ACEs increases risk of health harming behaviours. Figures from PHW are: people with 4 or more ACEs are 15x more likely to have committed violence against another person and 14X more likely to have been a victim.

we started to tackle some of those issues. It's not a political point; I think it's genuinely a real observation.

[80] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Thank you. We're going to move on now to childcare. John.

[81] **John Griffiths:** Thank you. I wanted to ask the Cabinet Secretary about the childcare workforce. There's the 10-year plan to address workforce issues, and of course it's about numbers, but it's also about the quality of the workforce. So, within the budgetary provision that you've set out, could you say something about the existing childcare workforce, because obviously there are a lot of people working in this sector, and opportunities for them to upskill while still working are important? Also important, I guess, is what cost there might be to them were they to go down that route. So, could you tell the committee a little bit about how it will work in practice, within the budget provision?

[82] **Carl Sargeant:** Okay. When the Government was set up, I was delighted when the First Minister asked me to do this portfolio. I think it's an amazing opportunity to make community change and build on what we've been able to do over the past number of years. I wasn't so excited when he gave me some of the portfolio activities, including the childcare pledge, because I thought, 'This is going to be interesting, delivering this'. It is a huge task to do this, and you'll see this just over the border in England, where they are pursuing this programme, too, and it's challenging, to say the least. I'm fortunate that I've got a great team that is working incredibly hard to start looking at the implementation, the long-term programme and how that will pan out.

[83] There are lots of factors that are unknowns: take-up, the workforce planning. And I've had many exchanges, often with Llyr, in fact, about the workforce programme and the workforce plan. We're not ready to go with that yet; we're just not in the space of understanding the need base of this. We know there is a capacity issue within the sector. All of the things you recognise, John, about training, quality childcare—whatever quality is—the Welsh language, open access, the mix in the way that the service will be delivered, whether that will be through school settings, private settings, or a mixture. And we've started a programme called Talk Childcare—it's a web-based programme—and we've also started some physical activity programmes, going out to talk to private sector employers and public sector employers—to talk to real people about what are the challenges of childcare

for people. Governments, as I said earlier on, can say things and do things, but, actually, the programme might not work at the end. We need to understand what's good for parents and good for children. So, we've started that. We've had, I think I'm right, around about 1,000 responses already on our Talk Childcare programme, which is significant in terms of our intervention. So, I'm really interested in getting real evidence back.

[84] In terms of specifics around budgets, this year, this coming year, the allocation within the budget is around £10 million. We intend to start some learning pilot work in September of 2017. I'm hopeful that I'll be able to announce some lead authorities that will start the programme, and we will roll out that programme as we move forward. That learning exercise will be a mixture of all-school-based setting or a mixture of school and private settings, understanding what may work for the future, because it is complex. We think £10 million will get us around about 8 to 10 per cent of the capacity within the sector early on, but it's a learning curve for us as well. I don't underestimate the challenge of this. If there's anything that keeps me awake at night, it's this, because of the development of this programme. I want this to work. It has so many advantages, if we get this right. So, the team and I are working very closely, and with the sector as well, including the workforce, about how we get to a place that will deliver a good, quality service.

[85] **John Griffiths:** There will be, then, opportunities for the existing childcare workforce to increase their qualifications and their abilities within the overall programme.

[86] **Carl Sargeant:** Well, we're already talking—. I'm meeting, actually, with three of the [correction: with the] childcare organisations tomorrow. My team are already in dialogue with them, but I'm actually meeting them myself and we're going to talk about some of those issues. But it's a long-term plan. What I don't want to create is warehousing for children. It is a must that we have some quality behind that, and I don't know what that quality is yet. That's why we're talking with the sector, talking with parents—and grandparents, actually, because a lot of the grandparents are within the childcare setting already, looking after young people. We've got a lot to learn, and I'm not shy about saying that. I think it's a good thing that we're asking and learning from people about what the programme should be. This is the most generous childcare pledge in the UK for working parents—35 hours, 48 weeks of the year, including school holidays, that means. It's not been done before; it's a big challenge, but I'm confident we can do this. The

budget line is starting at £10 million, and the finance Minister recognises the challenges, long term.

[87] **John Griffiths:** Could I just ask further, just about the informal childcare aspect then, Chair? You mentioned grandparents there. So, you envisage, within this, as well as the people providing childcare for remuneration, that the informal aspect will be addressed as well, and you'll try and work with those providing informal childcare.

[88] **Carl Sargeant:** No, I didn't say that. I think there is a process where we have got to deliver an amount of hours over a period of time, which is already challenging. It would be much easier to do a different system of general childcare, but we're not doing that. We're very specific on the offer. What I did say is that we can learn a lot from grandparents, or other relatives who look after young people now. What is their experience in childcare? What do the young people enjoy? How do we manage their expectations too? It's a big deal, you know, taking children to nursery provision full time, or care full time. We need to make sure we're giving them the right and proper service, so we're learning from people and, as I said, we've got about 1,000 responses in already.

[89] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. You said 35 hours, Cabinet Secretary. Is it 30?

[90] **Carl Sargeant:** It's 30. The team were in panic mode—I did mean 30. The finance Minister's just phoned actually. [*Laughter.*] I said 'generous', didn't I? [*Laughter.*]

[91] **Lynne Neagle:** Michelle.

[92] **Michelle Brown:** Good morning, Cabinet Secretary.

[93] **Carl Sargeant:** Good morning.

[94] **Michelle Brown:** Could you give us your current best estimate of the annual cost of the childcare pledge?

[95] **Carl Sargeant:** There's lots of figures being bandied around. The Public Policy Institute for Wales did some work on the offer, and it said that it could cost between £125 million and £228 million, while an offer targeted at working parents could cost anything between—that was a general offer—£53

million and £97 million. The numbers I'm seeing are looking around £100 million. But that's not fixed. As I said, there are many unknowns.

[96] **Michelle Brown:** The thing is though that the Public Policy Institute for Wales produced a report that you commissioned, didn't you?

[97] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes.

[98] **Michelle Brown:** And they didn't find very much benefit in this childcare provision. So, what's the reasoning behind giving even more provision?

[99] **Carl Sargeant:** There are a couple of reasons. There's one that is a very political one: all parties, or most parties, in their manifestos committed to childcare and it was a very popular pledge. Whichever party you were in, people were saying that childcare was important to them. When you talk to people, 'Accessing childcare is difficult.' That's why we also committed to doing the childcare pledge—as I said, it's the most generous one, we believe—through school holidays as well. The PPIW report didn't look at that provision. What it looked at was school term time. We know that working parents, given the opportunity, generally when they go back to work, they plan their work cycle to go back into work at the time of their youngest child's full-time education. This programme will give working parents the ability to go back a year earlier. And, as I said earlier on, in our community resilience vision, giving people the opportunity to work and earn money gives them a much more solid base in the household. So, the childcare offer is just one element of a suite of tools that we're trying to create to give a community much more resilience—jobs and growth and well-being. So, the quality of the childcare will also be added into the overarching principle of why we're doing this. So, on the PPIW report, there were elements within that that don't cover our aspect of what our offer is.

[100] **Michelle Brown:** Right. So, you disagree with your own commissioned—

[101] **Carl Sargeant:** No, I don't disagree with it; it just doesn't cover all the aspects. We've added time to the principle of the school holiday time, and we've also made sure that we can attract working parents into the principle. We think that giving people a 12-month period when they can go into work earlier will give added value to communities. And, of course, I go back to my first response about this being a very popular provision with the electorate.

[102] **Michelle Brown:** How are you going to test this? You'll run pilots. How are you going to test the policy, and what's your response going to be to the results of those tests?

10:15

[103] **Carl Sargeant:** The purpose of the pilot is so that we learn from it. I will be announcing in a couple of weeks the intended areas where we wish to pilot. We were already in contact with local authorities that have expressed an interest in the delivery of this. We're looking at rural settings, urban settings and language-challenged areas as well. So, how do we try to maximise the learning experience from this? As we move through this term of Government, we will increase the budget line in order for us to learn from the pilot and then start delivering the childcare pledge as we move forward. Our teams run pilots on many aspects of the delivery of policy. This is not unusual, but it is challenging.

[104] **Michelle Brown:** Just one final question: do you actually monitor the number of women this childcare provision is actually getting back into work?

[105] **Carl Sargeant:** We will do. That will be part of the plan, but—. It may be men going back into work as well. It's non-gender-specific. The current proposal is around working 16 hours or more for one parent. And, it just doubles up, does it? For both parents, 32 hours.

[106] **Michelle Brown:** Thank you.

[107] **Lynne Neagle:** Llyr next.

[108] **Llyr Gruffydd:** I concur with the comments that the Cabinet Secretary has made about the importance of this because if we are moving to a preventative approach, then clearly the whole narrative around catching people early, and children early, is key really, but in order, of course, to get the best value for that investment, then we need the best practitioners. You mentioned, and I'll say it again, degree-level practitioners, which, I'm sure, is another challenge that's on your list that I'm sure you wish to achieve as best as we possibly can.

[109] So, I'm coming back to the workforce plan really and I'd just like to ask you a little bit about where the budget stands in relation to implementing

the plan because if it's a plan that we'd all like to see, then it'll probably need more resource than maybe is currently available.

[110] **Carl Sargeant:** I'm not going to commit to what the plan says or the budget line of that. I have asked, following your prompt actually—. I'm concerned about what that looks like, partly because of the childcare pledge, because I know that the capacity in the system is something that we need to know more about. We've asked to do some work with the future generations commissioner and the children's commissioner and with my team to look at what the future provision looks like. It's a bit of a deep-dive exercise, looking at that specifically. I'll come back to you with the results of that. I would rather do that than issue a plan that I'm not confident we can deliver. So, I think that the dynamics have changed and we need to learn about that and what that means. It's a long-term plan and how we finance that is a challenge.

[111] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Okay. If I could go on then, I read in your paper that

[112] 'Our enhanced childcare offer will work to ensure that there is adequate Welsh Language Provision, for those requesting it.'

[113] It may be unfair of me to pick out a solitary sentence, but I'll do it anyway. Clearly, we need to be more proactive than to sit back and wait for people to request it. The Welsh Government's ambitions in terms of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050 would demand as much, I would suspect, and clearly the consultation on the Government's new Welsh language strategy makes it clear that its first objective is to create a workforce with the appropriate skills to educate and provide services through the medium of Welsh. That links in, quite explicitly in the strategy, to increasing the number of Welsh-medium childcare places. You've touched on it as one of the areas that you're working on, but could you maybe expand a little bit with regard to the whole area really of developing Welsh-medium provision within the childcare setting?

[114] **Carl Sargeant:** Of course. I can't really give you too much of a detailed answer because I've been honest with you with regard to where we are. We're learning from this experience. The pilots will give us more evidence on what that means: access and capacity. I've already started discussions with Alun Davies, the Welsh language Minister, and he has raised issues with me about how the workforce should be enabled. We're taking that into consideration, but the pilots will give us some more information back in terms of how we

envisage this service being delivered. I can't give you any more than that really. We're aware of the situation. As with many others, take-up is another one. The balance between foundation phase and the offer, how does that work? The integration of those and single-site services, there are so many aspects to it, it is complex, but the Welsh language features in there. I can give you that assurance.

[115] **Llyr Gruffydd:** And you do accept that catching them early, if you like, within a Welsh-medium education setting makes it much more likely that they then will grow up to be bilingual and move through that continuum of Welsh-medium education.

[116] **Carl Sargeant:** I don't doubt that at all. I think young people are very influenced. You can influence young people at a very early age, and that's why it fits into the programme of all of the things that we're doing. As I said, the childcare is just one part of this. Making sure that our workforce is aware of the well-being of the individual is as equally important as the well-being of the Welsh language as well. So, there are lots of things that we have to think about here, and that goes back to the quality of the workforce and how they're trained and what that training is. I think that professionalising the sector is something that I—not that they're not professional, don't take it that I—but I'm trying to enhance that professional aspect of this, as with the care sector. I think these are two areas that can promote a real great advantage for Wales, but that's a long journey, that is.

[117] **Lynne Neagle:** Thanks. Oscar, then Andrew.

[118] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair. Minister, regarding childcare, the Public Policy Institute for Wales, last December, in their report said:

[119] 'The policy options of an additional 20 hours free childcare for three to four year old preschool children with or without a work requirement would not have substantial impacts on net income, poverty or work behaviour for families with children.'

[120] And furthermore, they also added,

[121] 'The impact is limited because the policies have extremely small impacts on the net financial return to working.'

[122] As such, why has the Welsh Government identified free childcare as a budgetary priority, given the limited impact this has in both reducing poverty and encouraging the uptake of employment in the family?

[123] **Carl Sargeant:** I thought I'd responded to that question to Michelle Brown, but I'm more than happy to go over that again, Chair, if you wish.

[124] **Lynne Neagle:** No.

[125] **Mohammad Asghar:** And furthermore, a little bit more, Chair. The second one: in your portfolio the children need definitely—. What we hear about forecasts and reforecasts, in the next 20 years more than 30 to 40 per cent of children will be obese. I don't know whether it's your department, I'm not sure, but childcare is definitely one. Where is the provision for putting an allocation in your budget to keep children fit, smart, young? A healthy body is a healthy mind and that is our future; how are you protecting that, Carl?

[126] **Carl Sargeant:** Indeed. We had this discussion funnily enough yesterday with the chief medical officer, about that whole proposal. I hope that you've got a flavour of what my department can do, working with the health department, in terms of the well-being of an individual. It's not a one trick fits all, and that's why Communities First is one programme. There are many other interventions that we need to think about the well-being of an individual. That's what I'm trying to shape in this department. Hopefully, also, the well-being and fitness of a young person, I suppose that does lend itself to play activities and we are committed to making sure that the rights of a child are recognised in terms of play and that continues within our department and we continue with our funding stream for that.

[127] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Andrew.

[128] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Minister, I can see why this might well keep you up at night. I think we all support the principle of childcare and the parties all had their various offers and, obviously, you are the governing party so your offer will be the one that's implemented. Just on the flavour of the figures that you've put to us this morning, the potential for overspend in this area—. I believe that the initial estimates were for a £90 million budget for this to be delivered. We've heard, obviously, that the PPIW report put it somewhere north of £200 million, if it was taken to its full subscription level. How realistic do you think that figure of somewhere between £125 million and £200 million is in the scheme of what you've seen developed so far? Whilst I

take the point that you've said that, politically, this is attractive, as we all know as politicians, very often what looks politically attractive can have massive implications for other policy areas and other more beneficial areas that could be implemented in the communities.

[129] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes. I said earlier on that I think our best guesstimate at the moment is around about £100 million, in terms of take-up. There are lots, still, of unknowns, and I won't be held to that £100 million figure as we move forward in the pilot, because we'll learn things from that, but our early indications are around that figure. I've had discussions with the finance Minister. He's confident that we can manage that in the process of this Government, which is encouraging. But, more importantly, we see this as a part of the jigsaw for the whole—

[130] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Can I just press you there, Minister?

[131] **Carl Sargeant:** Of course you can.

[132] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** If the costs do start to escalate significantly, and it's not beyond the realms of the real world that they could, at what level is the political will to implement this scheme, irrespective of cost?

[133] **Carl Sargeant:** Okay. This is no different to the starting provision when we introduced student fees. There was a principle of doing this, and there is an upfront cost, which we recognise, and then it's based on take-up. We have no control over that. Actually, we're encouraging parents to go back to work—that's a good thing. So, this is a bit of an odd one—actually, the more we encourage people to go to work, the more it costs me, but we're ready for that. Are we committed to delivering this? Absolutely, and the cost of this will be managed within the Welsh Government budget. The finance Minister has given his assurances and the First Minister is keen to do so.

[134] As I said, there are lots of unknowns. We are still working through that, but our best guesstimate—. I heard lots of other figures last week, and people saying, 'This is unaffordable', et cetera. We want to look at this in the round, about what does this—. It's not just about childcare—taking children and putting them in a setting for convenience. This is about the well-being of the individual, the operation of parents getting back to work and to earning, and creating a better community. It goes back to what I said earlier about ACEs. Working families with good finance—generally you can have a better upbringing. If we can secure families and secure communities, that is

long-term beneficial—it is fiscally beneficial long term for us. It's an investment for the future.

[135] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I get that, Minister, but the point I'm making is that the potential overspend in this area is huge. If the Government, as you indicated this morning, irrespective of cost, will deliver this, by 2020 or 2021, when I assume this will be rolled out in its entirety at the end of this Assembly term, you could be spending double what you initially estimated. That's going to have massive implications, not just for your budget but for the other budget areas. So, with that in mind, just so I'm clear in my own mind, because you've indicated that the political will's there, so therefore the money will be found, what is the setting that will warrant the pay for the individual to put the child into? You talk about grandparents and that type of setting. Is that a type of setting that you would envisage would get a payment, or is it actually someone who has a trained background, who's got qualification in childcare in a setting that is purposely designed to provide quality childcare?

[136] **Carl Sargeant:** I don't recognise the figure of £200 million, currently, but I do accept the comments made. The Public Policy Institute for Wales made those figures available to us. They aren't based on the scheme that we are currently offering—there's a different offer to what we asked that programme to look like to where we are today. We reckon there's about £100 million. As I said, the initial figures are looking to be around £100 million. That will be fully funded.

[137] The issue around who delivers the childcare: they will all have to be Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales inspected and registered, and therefore—. Generally, grandparents aren't, so take from that what you wish. It is about quality. I don't know what quality looks like yet. I think there's a setting of CSSIW—we understand the safety aspect of that and delivery. Is it what we want for the future? So, the pilots we'll learn more from.

10:30

[138] The bit that worries me isn't the finance bit, actually—it's capacity. It's about the ability to do this and are the sector ready. The sector are saying to us—and, for possibly the right reasons, in England, they're going gung-ho to deliver this. The sector are saying, 'We're not ready for this; we can't deliver it'. In Wales, we've said that we'll work with the sector to do that. We're a smaller nation and we can have the flexibility to do it, and it's really

important. That's why my team have been working with the sector. I meet them tomorrow to say, 'What can you do? How can you deliver this well?' So, it's a longer term proposal, but we are confident that, by 2021, we will have rolled this programme out fully.

[139] **Lynne Neagle:** Very briefly.

[140] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Sorry, you did say at the end, then, you are confident that, from what you understand at the moment, this scheme will be in place in its entirety by 2021.

[141] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes.

[142] **Lynne Neagle:** John, very briefly on this.

[143] **John Griffiths:** Yes, very briefly. On the extended school day and wraparound childcare, which I think meets the needs of children and parents very often, community-focused schools are patchy and variable. I just wonder if you've been talking to other Ministers in terms of whether there's a mechanism that can be arrived at that will produce community-focused schools where they're necessary for the delivery of the extended school day around childcare, but more generally as well.

[144] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes. That's part of the consideration of the pilots that we'll be taking forward. The really new thing about this Government is that this childcare pledge isn't my problem. It's our problem. Kirsty Williams and Alun Davies are all around the table with me, looking at how we deliver these programmes, as Ken Skates is helping me with the delivery of 20,000 homes. There is a very different feeling to the way that the Government operates. Because of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, we are looking at who delivers what, where and well, and where those budget lines would suit them. So, I actually see Kirsty Williams helping me in the delivery of this programme as well, and she is—it's very welcome.

[145] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Thank you. We're going to move on now then to the costs of legislation. Julie.

[146] **Julie Morgan:** Yes, we've talked a lot about the importance of early experiences and how that's one of the driving forces for your department and your activities. You've been allocated £0.4 million to spend on positive parenting. I wondered if you could tell us what that would be for and how we

would evaluate whether that money is being well spent.

[147] **Carl Sargeant:** Thank you, Julie. Of course I know that you're very keen on this particular issue. The positive parenting programme has started rolling out. We've increased some communications programmes, so, we've started a—as we are doing with the Communities First, the positive parenting, asking parents about proposals about what is good in terms of positive parenting and childcare settings. So, we have focused my policy delivery on real experiences, from domestic violence or other services. What's the real experience of people and how do we deliver better? So, we've started the 'Parenting: Give it Time' programme. We're doing some interventions on Facebook. I see this as a sequence of supporting parents to grow their ability to be a good parent, and, by the way, we'll be legislating as well in terms of tackling the issues around reasonable chastisement. So, this is a programme—a suite of tools—to get us to that point.

[148] **Julie Morgan:** How will we be able to measure what the Facebook campaign and the—that actually does help carers? How are we going to get that to—?

[149] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes, we'll be procuring an independent evaluation of the positive parenting campaign. Although I will have to be convinced by my team that it's the right thing to do in terms of the evaluation, I'm currently looking at—. If you search online about positive parenting, there is an array of information about how to be a positive parent. I don't think that that's the real issue, actually. It's the people who aren't looking at the positive parenting programmes on the internet who are the people that we're trying to interface with. So, as much as posters and leaflets can help, how do we get to real people that really need the support around positive parenting? This goes back to that whole-person approach. How do we intervene at child minding settings or at health visitor settings? How do we encourage that positive parenting mentality to start there? So, while this type of campaign is something that we will continue with—and it will be evaluated—I'm looking to see what our best intervention technique should be to get to the people that we really need to get to.

[150] **Julie Morgan:** At one point, certainly, the health visitors and book clubs at birth and that sort of discussion took place. I don't know if there are plans to continue that, whether that's been costed into the—.

[151] **Carl Sargeant:** There are, and that is one of the areas that we see as a

useful intervention programme.

[152] **Julie Morgan:** Yes. Because, going on the theme of the early incidents that cause great problems later on for children, which the public health department have highlighted, obviously, experiences in the womb as well are very important. So, I don't know whether that sort of calculation has been made as well, in terms of the money that's needed.

[153] **Carl Sargeant:** It has. Well, we're looking at the—. There's a programme called the First 1,000 Days programme, which is pre birth right the way through—and we're very aware of capturing that young person at that age in that age bracket; I think it's to the age of three—*[Interruption.]* To the age of two, sorry; pre birth to the age of two. It's a very critical time in that young person's development. That's why the positive parenting techniques, the interventions and support from community services for the people that need this, is something that I'm very proactive on, making sure we get the right intervention. I can't do this on my own, Government can't do this, but there are lots of agencies that can: bring them together, and let's get the right place. So, we've started that work already, but I'm confident that this budget is enough, in this space of the programme that we have currently planned, to deliver.

[154] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you. And just, finally, I'm very pleased to know you've reiterated your commitment to remove the defence of reasonable punishment. But, obviously, there will be money needed for that legislation. So, when do you anticipate that being part of the budget? Because it's not in this budget.

[155] **Carl Sargeant:** Of course. We expect that to be around year two of the programme for government legislation profile. That finance hasn't been allocated yet, but when there's the determination of when the Act should come forward, that's when finance will be arranged by the finance Minister.

[156] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you.

[157] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Llyr.

[158] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Do you not need any sort of preparatory work, or is that managed within the capacity that you have?

[159] **Carl Sargeant:** That's within the reasonable punishment programme.

That's why I said to you earlier on, this isn't about just legislating as an Act at the end. I think we've got to take the whole-parent approach, so, 'Look, we are helping you, supporting you to be better parents, and, by the way, we're legislating.'

[160] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. We'll move on now then to social services. Cabinet Secretary, you're responsible for adoption, fostering and looked-after children, but the funding for those areas remains in the health and social services MEG. What assurances are you able to give us that the areas that you're responsible for are adequately funded in this year's budget?

[161] **Carl Sargeant:** I'm confident that they are adequately funded. There is no problem with the money being in another MEG. I can assure you that I have full control over that.

[162] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Julie.

[163] **Julie Morgan:** In terms of looked-after children, there's been a big rise, I believe, in the numbers of looked-after children. Can you tell us how you will be able to financially cope with that big rise, without any more money written in?

[164] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes. I think, it's proportionate. A big rise is—. There's been a spike in the process. If you look at it over the years, there's not much difference in the overall number of looked after children. Of course, we've got to deal with the issues of that spike, and what was the cause of the spike. I've asked the teams to start looking at; is that area-based? Is it individuals who are—rightly—so—cautious, but sometimes over-cautious? But what's the training programme behind that? What's the principle behind referrals? I've also asked the team, because it really concerns me, about looking at the other end of the scope. It's too late when we've got children in care. We've got to make sure we get this on the other end. So I'm saying to the team, let's look at the feed stock here. What's causing people to get to this place? And that goes back to the conversations we had earlier on. I've got David Melding, who's chairing a looked after children advisory group for me, to start looking at some of these interventions. How do we support people better, the positive parenting, the adverse childhood experiences and tackling community resilience? I think if we can look at the prevention, we can start to move these figures down. There will always be the hard-to-reach; I accept that. I don't think we're there yet.

[165] **Julie Morgan:** Obviously, each child that is in care needs a lot of intervention and help, as we haven't been able to give it earlier on to stop this happening. Is the budget, as it is now, able to cope with all those children who are in care at the moment?

[166] **Carl Sargeant:** It is. Is it the best we can do? Probably not. I've asked the team some very challenging questions. I've got a meeting with the police and crime commissioners, representatives of the directors of social services and my directors heading up the department to look at looked-after children in particular, as well as the advisory group, to say: 'Are we really joined up on this?' I want confidence that we're doing the best we can for looked-after children. Why should they be treated any differently to any other child who is in a conventional setting? I don't see any difference.

[167] **Lynne Neagle:** Are you able to tell us what the actual allocation is for looked-after children apart from the PDG?

[168] **Carl Sargeant:** Sure. I'm sure we can.

[169] **Mr Heaney:** It's £922,000 in terms of within your budget, Cabinet Secretary, and then, of course, the revenue support grant goes directly to local authorities.

[170] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thanks.

[171] **Carl Sargeant:** Which is about £4 million—is it—the RSG. Was that put in the RSG?

[172] **Mr Heaney:** We put it into the RSG this year, in the draft budget. There's a proposal to put in another £2.8 million, which covers the transformation, so it's that work that's helping local authorities and their partners get ready in terms of implementing the actual legislation—the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act.

[173] In terms of numbers, committee, we're up for looked-after children, if we look at it year on year, at the end of March this year, by a total number of 47 children in the total Welsh system, which is still lower than where we were back in 2014. But a significant impact at the moment is coming through in proceedings, so there's an increase in the numbers of cases coming through the judicial system for children.

[174] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Had you finished, Julie?

[175] **Julie Morgan:** Yes, thank you.

[176] **Lynne Neagle:** Llyr.

[177] **Llyr Gruffydd:** That leads on to my question, really, because there was an intervention last week from judge Nicholas Crichton, I think, who suggested that we look at the model in England for family drug and alcohol courts. Clearly, there'd be budgetary implications, but is that something that you're open-minded to and maybe you might be able to consider in the coming year?

[178] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes, I am. I have said to the team that we shouldn't write anything off here; we should look at what our best intervention processes are. I'm convinced that if we get prevention as opposed to putting people in care, it's the most—. Sometimes, it's the safest thing to do, but it's probably the most damaging thing we can do, unless we get that right. I met with the family court judges, as well, and they said they don't do this lightly and I absolutely understand that. Our trick is to stop getting people into the system. So, we just take a step back. So, that's what I said: I've asked the team to look at the other end of the scope to see what the common things are that we're doing.

[179] I visited the youth justice board in Flintshire, actually, in my own constituency, where they've got four pilots across Wales operating at the moment, which are looking at the really hard-to-reach individuals who are reoffending at the high-level end. We've given a little bit of flexibility and some data management to look at these individuals in depth. It was really difficult to stop them reoffending, but they've done some—technically, it's called psychological analysing; I don't really like that term, but that's what it principally is—looking at their lifespans from the first 1,000 days and as much information as they can get. It was analysed by a psychiatrist and they said, 'At this point in that person's life, you should really have a look at this carefully'. This was a domestic violence setting or a family break up—all of those ACEs we were talking about, funnily enough—and they said, 'Let's support them through that process'. They did that and they've had I think over a 90 per cent success rate with these young people who stopped reoffending. Now, these were the highest offenders in north Wales and I think there was one they weren't able to help as well as they could have done, but the rest have stopped reoffending

10:45

[180] That's a tremendous achievement. And it wasn't about treating the issue at the end, about the reoffending—'You shouldn't reoffend'—well, we know that. Actually, look at some of the issues that they had growing up, and they fixed it, or they've helped them, and have changed that person. That's why I think there's something in what we're thinking here about early intervention. And it's exactly the same for looked-after children. If we've got families—that's a repetitive cycle. We know people who are suffering in domestic violence circumstances often become perpetrators themselves. We've got to break those cycles. So, we can do the same with looked-after children in many cases.

[181] **Lynne Neagle:** Albert.

[182] **Mr Heaney:** Can I just support the Cabinet Secretary? On the question you mentioned—and it's been responded to—about the family court drug and alcohol service, that, just to clarify, is a non-devolved matter where we have discussions across with our UK Government colleagues. What has been interesting is that, when we've looked at the evidence in Wales from the family justice network in Wales, the numbers coming through the system who would potentially benefit from that model weren't sufficient enough at that particular stage. We will, of course, look at it again, but, in Wales, Ministers have developed the integrated family support service, which intervenes with families much earlier than waiting until they get into that crisis situation.

[183] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Thank you.

[184] **Lynne Neagle:** Michelle.

[185] **Michelle Brown:** Thank you. I just wanted to ask about the budget for CAFCASS. There's been an increase in referrals, and yet the budget seems to have stayed the same. Can you explain the reason behind that? Is that going to impact on the quality of the reports being produced by CAFCASS?

[186] **Carl Sargeant:** I meet CAFCASS, and the executive is here with us this morning. But I meet them on a regular basis to look at their pressures. Of course, you're right to refer to the increase, as Albert mentioned, in referrals to public and private law work, but, overall, the CAFCASS programme is

delivering on what it's set out to do. There has been a significant restructure under Gillian Baranski, who was the previous chief executive. She turned the organisation round. Now, they continue to deliver on a 26-week statutory target for completion of cases. I think that's probably one of the best in the UK. I'm confident in the work that they do. It's a very hard job, but despite the increased workload for the organisation, they're managing it very well. You may want to add to that.

[187] **Mr Brown:** I think the key to this has been the modernisation programme over the past five years, which has strengthened the resilience of the organisation to manage peaks and troughs. So, one example of that is we've undertaken a review of all our administration systems and the way that we work, which means if there's a peak in one area, we can actually assign people in another part of Wales to deliver that service, because the way that we work is absolutely the same across the whole organisation. I think that you're right to identify there has been a significant increase this year, but, so far, to date, with those strategies that we've put in place, we have been able to respond to every referral that's come through to us, and we've ensured there's been no waiting list. No child has had to wait at all for a service in Wales.

[188] **Michelle Brown:** Okay, thank you.

[189] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. We'll move on now then to the issue of children's rights, participation and play. Can I ask, Cabinet Secretary, whether a child's rights impact assessment was undertaken on this budget, and if not, why not?

[190] **Carl Sargeant:** Not specifically. The CRIA, effectively, is taken into the statutory [correction: strategic] integrated impact assessment that we have in developing the budget. So, 'specifically, no' is the answer to your question, but it's integrated into a broader programme of assessment, which includes equalities, socioeconomic disadvantage, the Welsh language and children's rights.

[191] **Lynne Neagle:** Are you able to say a bit more about how that strategic assessment takes into account children, then, because, obviously, the CRIA process is quite formulaic, isn't it?

[192] **Carl Sargeant:** It's integrated, as I said, into the overarching decision making on budgets and how that is developed. There is an overarching piece

of legislation, the well-being of future generations Act, which includes children and all aspects of that. Also, the UN convention has to be considered as well, and all of these difficult aspects of assessment are considered by my team when they give me advice on the final financial settlement.

[193] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Thank you. Anyone else on this area? Julie.

[194] **Julie Morgan:** I wondered if you'd made a decision about funding Play Wales.

[195] **Carl Sargeant:** Play Wales. That's a very specific question. Can I write to the committee with that? I'm not sighted on the detail.

[196] **Julie Morgan:** That was part of the children's rights and the legislation we had for play, and Play Wales led on that.

[197] **Carl Sargeant:** Of course. I wouldn't want to get drawn into an organisational issue of finance at this level, but I'm more than happy to write to the Member. I think the principle of what you're asking in the question in terms of play and the rights of children is absolutely and fundamentally what we agree with. Delivery agents are a different thing, if I may say.

[198] **Lynne Neagle:** Oscar.

[199] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair. On page 23, Minister, you use the words 'resource budget' there.

[200] **Carl Sargeant:** Where?

[201] **Mohammad Asghar:** Page 23. I think there are nine areas and seven that actually have a reduced budget. The budget has been reduced in seven areas.

[202] **Lynne Neagle:** The Minister doesn't have this paper. This is the committee's paper.

[203] **Mohammad Asghar:** You don't have this one?

[204] **Carl Sargeant:** I don't have that paper.

[205] **Lynne Neagle:** That's our paper.

[206] **Mohammad Asghar:** Oh, sorry. I thought the department—. I just wanted to know whether the budgetary constraint—I can see it, whether you've got it or not—but there's only one area, the childcare and play strategies, where there has been an increase. In the rest of all the childcare areas, the budget has been reduced. So, I know you're doing some brave ideas and brave moves in childcare for the next four or five years, but how are you going to cope in the areas where there are budget constraints, and achieve your goals?

[207] **Carl Sargeant:** As I started this discussion an hour and a half ago—I'm not sighted on the figures the Member has, so I can't give a specific answer—but I think I'm encouraged by the budget offer we have. I'm confident we can deliver all the aspects of where we continue to make an intervention in our communities. The childcare offer is an additional £10 million within the budget. As I said, our reduction in-year for the main expenditure group is about £1.15 million. I will manage that within year, and that will predominantly come from the communities budget. There is some flexing within the other budgets, but generally they are all pretty stable, and I'm comfortable with that.

[208] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Can I ask about child poverty? There's no separate budget for child poverty, yet the Welsh Government is still committed to eradicating child poverty by 2020. How confident are you that that is going to be a possibility without a separate budget?

[209] **Carl Sargeant:** I think we have to think about this very carefully, and that's why I've kicked off this whole review. I said to you earlier on in committee, Chair, the principle of poverty is—our tackling poverty agenda is not going as it should do. I can't honestly answer your question in terms of whether I'm going to meet the 2020 ambition. I think we have to fundamentally think—and this is giving me a little bit of space in terms of what our programme intervention looks like over the next couple of months—because I think we have to have a new deal for people in our communities about what our ambitions are and what their expectations are and what we can do.

[210] Government can't tackle poverty on its own. We have to use all of our public sector, and the private sector to help us where they can. That's why I will make a statement in the next few months about poverty, about how we

see the child poverty aspect. I'm working with Ken Skates very closely about what that means globally, but I do think we have to do something fundamentally different to tackle the issues around child poverty in our communities as of today, and that's why we've kicked off this programme of change.

[211] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Are there any other questions from Members to the Cabinet Secretary? No. Okay, well can I thank the Cabinet Secretary for attending this morning, and for his detailed answers to our questions, and also to thank his officials for attending? As is normal practice, you will have a transcript of the meeting to check for accuracy. Thank you very much.

[212] **Carl Sargeant:** Thank you, Chair.

10:54

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[213] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, Members, we can move on, then, to item 3, which is papers to note. Paper 2 is the Welsh Government response to the Committee of Advertising Practice's consultation on introducing restrictions on the advertising of food and soft drinks. Noted. Paper 3 is a letter to me from NSPCC Cymru, highlighted concerns about mental health. Happy to note that? Paper 4 is a letter from me to the Cabinet Secretary for Education, seeking info on the education improvement grant inquiry. Paper 5: a letter from the Chair, from me, to the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children on our advocacy inquiry. Happy to note that? And paper 6, then, is a letter to me from the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services, highlighting concerns about the Welsh Government's mapping exercise for voluntary sector youth services. Is everybody happy to note those papers? Thank you.

10:55

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42(ix) i Benderfynu Gwahardd y
Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to Resolve to Exclude the
Public from the Meeting**

Cynnig:

Motion:

*bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu that the committee resolves to
gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y exclude the public from the
cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog remainder of the meeting in
17.42(ix).*

*accordance with Standing Order
17.42(ix).*

Cynigiwyd y cynnig.

Motion moved.

[214] **Lynne Neagle:** Item 4, then, is a motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public for the remainder of the meeting. Are Members content? Lovely. Thank you very much.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10:56.

The public part of the meeting ended at 10:56.