



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

[Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#)

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

30/11/2016

[Agenda'r Cyfarfod](#)

[Meeting Agenda](#)

[Trawsgrifiadau'r Pwyllgor](#)

[Committee Transcripts](#)

Cynnwys Contents

- 4 Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau
Introductions, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest
- 4 Ymchwiliad i'r Grant Gwella Addysg: Plant Sipsiwn, Roma a Theithwyr,
a Phlant o Leiafrifoedd Ethnig—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 1
Inquiry into Education Improvement Grant: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller,
and Minority Ethnic Children—Evidence Session 1
- 26 Ymchwiliad i'r Grant Gwella Addysg: Plant Sipsiwn, Roma a Theithwyr,
a Phlant o Leiafrifoedd Ethnig—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 2
Inquiry into Education Improvement Grant: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller,
and Minority Ethnic Children—Evidence Session 2
- 41 Ymchwiliad i Ddarpariaeth Eiriolaeth Statudol—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 3
Inquiry into Statutory Advocacy Provision—Evidence Session 3
- 57 Papurau i'w Nodi
Papers to Note
- 58 Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o
weddill y Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public
from the Remainder of 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. Lle y mae cyfranwyr wedi darparu cywiriadau i'w tystiolaeth, nodir y rheini yn y trawsgrifiad.

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. Where contributors have supplied corrections to their evidence, these are noted in the transcript.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

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

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Dr Jonathan Brentnall	Ymgynghorydd Addysg Education Consultant
Phil Evans	Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol, Bro Morgannwg Director of Social Services, Vale of Glamorgan
Tanya Evans	Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Plant ym Mlaenau Gwent a Chadeirydd Penaethiaid Cymru Gyfan o Wasanaethau Plant Head of Children's Services at Blaenau Gwent and Chair of the All Wales Heads of Children's Services
Farrukh Khan	Arolygydd EM, Estyn HM Inspector, Estyn
Claire Morgan	Cyfarwyddwr Strategol, Estyn Strategic Director, Estyn
Meilyr Rowlands	Prif Arolygydd EM, Estyn HM Chief Inspector, Estyn

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

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Clerc Deputy Clerk
Michael Dauncey	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Marc Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk
Gareth Rogers	Second Clerk Ail Clerc
Siân 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. Can I welcome everyone to this morning's meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Committee? We've received apologies for absence from John Griffiths, and I'm very pleased to welcome Mike Hedges who is substituting on his behalf. We've also received apologies from Michelle Brown. Can I ask whether any Members have any declarations of interest, please? No. Okay, lovely. Thank you.

Ymchwiliad i'r Grant Gwella Addysg: Plant Sipsiwn, Roma a Theithwyr, a Phlant o Leiafrifoedd Ethnig—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 1 Inquiry into Education Improvement Grant: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic Children—Evidence Session 1

[2] **Lynne Neagle:** Item 2 is the first evidence session in our inquiry into the impact of changes in the education improvement grant on Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and minority ethnic children. I'm delighted to welcome Meilyr Rowlands, HM chief inspector of Estyn, Claire Morgan, strategic director, and Farrukh Khan, HM inspector. Thank you very much for coming this morning, and thank you for providing evidence to us in advance. If you're happy, we'll go straight into questions.

[3] **Mr Rowlands:** Yes, no problem.

[4] **Lynne Neagle:** Julie Morgan.

[5] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you very much. The change in the way the grants were administered is obviously what the committee is looking at, and to see what effect that has had on the learners. Are you able to give any overall comments about what effect there's been?

[6] **Mr Rowlands:** Well, we haven't noticed any particular changes in the provision. As far as we can see, the provision has continued more or less the same as it was previously. Clearly, some of the people involved in this area are concerned about the fact that maybe the funding will change in the future because of the amalgamation, but we haven't seen any evidence that it actually has. And actually, the main concern that people have is that the amount of funding will decrease, not so much where the money comes from. But as I say, so far, we've seen that most of the provision continues more or less the same as it has in the past.

[7] **Julie Morgan:** So, the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller group I'm going to ask about now—you're confirming that the provision that was provided for them before the change in the grant hasn't changed. The same amount of resources is being put in.

[8] **Mr Rowlands:** It seems to us—. We've not done, as we've said, a detailed investigation into this since our 2011 thematic report, but from our grass-roots sort of information that we get from local government and visits and things, it doesn't seem as if there have been major changes.

[9] **Julie Morgan:** Right. And, obviously, the educational outcomes are not particularly good for this group.

[10] **Mr Rowlands:** No.

[11] **Julie Morgan:** No. What do you think can be done about that? You know, why is this happening?

[12] **Mr Rowlands:** In terms of minority ethnic groups generally, they're a very different group; they're not a homogeneous group. And most ethnic minority groups do relatively well. Over the last, sort of, five years or so, many of them have actually overtaken white British children by the end of key stage 4 in some of the major performance indicators. The main exceptions to that are black, particularly black Caribbean children from that background and, as you've said, Gypsy/Traveller children. It's very concerning that even

though there have been small increases over the last few years in the attainment and, indeed, the attendance of Gypsy/Traveller children, their attendance and attainment is far below what it should be. So, for example, at the main key stage 4 indicator, level 2 plus inclusive, the average for Wales is 56 per cent and for Gypsy/Traveller children it's only 15 per cent. So, you know, it is very, very concerning.

[13] There's a lot that can be done, and our thematic reports have reported a lot of best practice over the years, not only our 2011 report, but other relevant reports since then. We've done ones on attendance, on bullying, on apprenticeships, on poverty. All of those have had case studies of good practice that are actually relevant directly to Gypsy/Traveller children and we've also got specific case studies that are separate to that. So, there is discrete provision that can be done, you know, specialist teachers that can work with the community, with the children, in school by withdrawal or in class. There are those sorts of things, but there is also more generic good practice that all schools should be implementing and would have a good impact on Gypsy/Traveller children as well as other vulnerable children. So, you know, we're talking about establishing an inclusive ethos, respect for diversity and equality within the school, having an inclusive curriculum within schools. Since the publication of our 2011 report, there has been much more a Gypsy/Traveller-friendly curriculum—materials have been produced by Welsh Government. So, there's a long list I could go through with you of good practice generic strategies that schools should be implementing, plus my colleagues could give you specific examples of schools that have been quite successful in this respect.

[14] **Julie Morgan:** Yes, but obviously it's not working because of the low attainment results. So, are you saying that the examples of good practice are isolated examples and that the move has to be to ensure that all schools have the ethos you talked about?

[15] **Mr Rowlands:** Yes, I think that all schools should be doing these generic things. Although Gypsy/Traveller children are clustered in certain areas, one of the issues that is difficult is that Gypsy/Traveller families don't always declare their ethnicity, so it's quite difficult to track all, and that's why some of the figures we have don't seem to add up. So, there might well be many Gypsy/Traveller children in schools without the schools actually knowing it, even. So, it's important that all schools are implementing this kind of good practice. But also I think, even the best practice, they're probably not implementing all the good things. So, I think as a starting point

we should be focusing on making sure that the good practice is effectively shared.

[16] **Julie Morgan:** How do we do that?

[17] **Mr Rowlands:** Well, people could look at our publications for a start. The role that we're playing is trying to identify those and we're trying to make sure that people are aware of it. There's no doubt that, generally speaking, multi-ethnic minorities, the graph has been on the up. The exception, as I said, was black Caribbean children—there is certainly an issue there—but the other issue is Gypsy/Traveller children. The major outcome of our investigation into it in 2011 was that the areas that we needed to focus on were attendance and attitudes to attending school, because families, particularly in secondary, have cultural problems with attending school. So, I think tackling that is the main area.

[18] **Julie Morgan:** And perhaps the attitudes they beat as well.

[19] **Mr Rowlands:** Sorry?

[20] **Julie Morgan:** Perhaps the attitudes they beat as well.

[21] **Mr Rowlands:** Absolutely. Yes, indeed. That's what the good practice I was referring to is all about.

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

[23] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Can I just ask you—? You said that obviously Gypsy/Traveller children tend to be schooled in clusters, and I know that's the case from my own constituency. Have there been any examples, then, of where there has actually been improvement in attainment from that 15 per cent, because, obviously, that's what this grant is meant to be all about, isn't it—taking people forward? Is it just static or are there areas where improvement is going forward?

[24] **Mr Rowlands:** There are specific case studies where we've identified where there have been marginal improvements and maybe some of my colleagues can give you specific examples of schools that have done some good practice.

[25] **Mr Khan:** Certainly. On our website, and in our inspection reports, we

talk about these areas. Specifically, if we talk about West Monmouth School in Torfaen, in March 2016—. I'll just read the relevant bit from the inspection report. It says:

[26] 'In partnership with the Torfaen Equal Project, the school provides exceptional support for Gypsy/Traveller pupils and their parents. This is having a very positive impact on the attendance and outcomes for pupils from this community. This is a very strong feature of the work of the school.'

[27] And in Queens Ferry County Primary School in Flintshire, which we inspected in September 2015, many pupils for whom English is an additional language and those from the community of Gypsies/Travellers make very good progress from their starting points:

[28] 'Staff work closely with specialist services, such as the Gypsy Traveller service, speech and language support and the service for pupils with English as an additional language. This work has a positive impact on pupils' achievements.'

[29] And then another one from Greenway Primary School, Cardiff, which we inspected as recently as July 2016. We said that:

[30] 'The school's current performance is good because:

[31] 'Most pupils make expected or better progress as they move through the school, including those with English as an additional language.

[32] 'Pupils from Gypsy Traveller families who attend well make good progress...

[33] 'The school's partnership with Gypsy Traveller families is excellent and has a positive impact on their children's attendance and achievement.'

[34] And also, in our written submission, there are other examples, as well as examples from local authorities as well that we inspected between 2010 and 2014.

[35] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you.

[36] **Ms Morgan:** Coming back to the West Monmouth School example, I think one of the strengths of the school is the way that it has worked with

partners to address the needs of this group of learners and they've created a very inclusive ethos in the school that's had a positive effect. You asked about what the impact of that was. Between 2013 and 2015, for this group of Gypsy/Traveller pupils, they increased the attendance by 10 percentage points, so that's quite an achievement. Even though this is quite a small group of pupils—I think the year 11 cohort going through is about six or eight pupils—there's an increasing number achieving the level 2 and the level 2 inclusive threshold. So, you can see the impact in that particular school of that inclusive ethos.

[37] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Darren.

[38] **Darren Millar:** I just wanted to follow up on that, if I can, Chair. I've seen the appendix, which includes some of the references that you just read out there, Mr Khan, in relation to Gypsy/Traveller paragraphs, if you like, from Estyn inspections. I can't see any that are negative, saying there isn't a good job being done or criticising any of the practice in schools. Can you tell us why that is the case?

[39] **Mr Rowlands:** When putting the submission together, we try to identify mainly good practice and pull out the good practice in those particular areas.

[40] **Darren Millar:** We're looking for a true picture rather than just the good practice. We want to know what the bad practice is as well so that we can learn from that too. Could you supply a similar dossier with comments in relation to the Gypsy/Traveller community that might show schools not performing so well?

[41] **Mr Rowlands:** Yes, we could. I'm trying to look up—there are one or two, actually. If that's what you'd like, we can do that as well.

[42] **Lynne Neagle:** If we could have a note on that, that would be great. Thank you. Llyr.

[43] **Llyr Gruffydd:** A gaf fi ofyn **Llyr Gruffydd:** May I ask a question cwestiwn hefyd ynglŷn ag i ba raddau about the extent to which these y mae'r achosion yma—yr cases—these examples of good enghreifftiau yma o arfer dda—yn practice—can be linked back to the gallu cael eu cysylltu yn ôl i'r education improvement grant or the grantiau gwella addysg neu'r predecessor grants? Because that's grantiau blaenorol? Achos dyna'r hyn what we want to establish, that there

rŷm ni eisiau ei sefydlu, bod yna gysylltiad sydd yn mesur neu'n gallu adnabod cynnydd i gyfateb â'r buddsoddiad ariannol.

is a link that measures or can acknowledge progress according to investment.

09:45

[44] **Mr Rowlands:** Wel, mae hwnnw'n gwestiwn da, ac mae e yn anodd oherwydd nid yw rhywfaint o'r arferion yma yn golygu arian ychwanegol, neu arian o gwbl. Maen nhw'n arferion da y gall ysgol eu gwneud heb bod angen arian. Mae'r grant yn benodol yn aml yn cael ei wario ar y ddarpariaeth penodol: hynny yw, athrawon sydd yn gweithio'n benodol gyda'r grŵp yma o blant, naill ai yn cysylltu â'r cartref neu'n gweithio gyda nhw yn unigol yn yr ysgol neu yn y dosbarth. Felly, mae'r math yna o ddarpariaeth ar gael, ond, gan amlaf, mae'r ysgolion sy'n gwneud orau yn defnyddio hynny, ond maen nhw hefyd yn gwneud yr arfer dda gyffredinol arall yma. Nid yw hi'n hawdd, felly, cysylltu beth sy'n cael yr effaith, oherwydd maen nhw'n gwneud o leiaf dau beth: y gwaith benodol, a hefyd y gwaith mwy cyffredinol. Mae rhywfaint ohono fe yn cael ei ariannu, ac nid yw'r gweddill yn cael ei ariannu yn uniongyrchol o'r grant. Felly, mae'n anodd iawn didoli yn union beth sy'n cael yr effaith fwyaf.

Mr Rowlands: Well, that's a good question, and it is difficult because some of these practices don't necessarily mean additional funding, or even any funding. It's rather good practice that a school can carry out without the need for funding. The grant specifically is often spent on the specific provision: that is, teachers who work specifically with this group of children, either linking with the home or working with them individually in the school or in the classroom. So, that type of provision is available, but, usually, the schools that are doing best are using that, but they're also carrying out this other general good practice. It's not easy, therefore, to work out what's having the impact, because they are doing at least two things: the specific work, and also the more general work. Some of it is funded, whilst the rest isn't funded directly from the grant. So, it is very difficult for us to see precisely what is having the greatest impact.

[45] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Felly, ni allwn ni ddweud â hyder bod y dystiolaeth yna yn dangos bod yr ariannu yna wedi gwneud gwahaniaeth, mewn

Llyr Gruffydd: So, we can't say with confidence that the evidence is there to show that that funding has made a difference.

gwirionedd.

[46] **Mr Rowlands:** Na, am ddau rheswm: un yw ei fod yn reit anodd i wneud beth bynnag, ac, yn ail, un o'r pethau rŷm ni wedi ei ddweud—ac mae hwn efallai yn ateb cwestiwn Darren—un beirniadaeth rŷm ni wedi ei wneud yn rheolaidd ydy'r diffyg arfarnu sydd wedi bod ar effeithlonrwydd gwariant yn y maes yma. Er enghraifft, yn y pedwar adroddiad y gwnaethom ni ar y consortia, roedd yn feirniadaeth am bob un o rheini nad oedd digon o sylw yn cael ei roi i ddadansoddi pa mor effeithiol oedd y gwahanol waith roeddynt yn ei wneud o ran y allbwn, yn enwedig gyda plant dan anfantais, gan gynnwys, wrth gwrs, y plant rŷm ni'n sôn amdanynt. Felly, rŷm ni wedi bod yn beirniadu faint o werthuso sy'n cael ei wneud ar bob lefel—ar lefel ysgol, ar lefel awdurdod lleol a hefyd ar lefel consortia—yn rheolaidd. Mae hynny yn ei wneud e'n anodd iawn wedyn i weld beth sydd yn llwyddo, ac mae hynny yn rhannol yn ateb cwestiwn Julie hefyd, o ran rhannu arfer dda. Os nad ym ni'n gallu adnabod beth yw'r pethau sydd yn gweithio orau, mae'n anodd wedyn i wneud yn siŵr bod pawb arall yn ei wneud e. Achos mae lot o'r arfer dda rŷm ni yn sôn amdani yn arfer dda, ond, wrth gwrs, beth sydd ar goll, o bosib, oherwydd y diffyg yma yn yr arfarnu, ydy: a ydynt yn werth am arian?

Mr Rowlands: No, and there are two reasons for that: first, it's quite difficult to do in any case, and, secondly, one of the things that we have said—and this perhaps is an answer to Darren's question—one criticism that we have regularly made is about the lack of assessment that has been made of the efficiency of the spend in this area. For example, in the four reports that we undertook on the consortia, it was a criticism in each of those reports that not enough attention was being given to analysing how efficient the various work streams that they were carrying out were in terms of output, particularly for disadvantaged children, including, of course, the children we are talking about. So, we have been critical of how much evaluation is being done regularly on all levels—the school level, the local authority level and also the consortium level. That makes it quite difficult to see what is succeeding, and that is partly an answer to Julie's question as well, in terms of sharing good practice. If we can't identify what things are working best, it's difficult for us to ensure that everyone else is doing it. Because a lot of the good practice that we're taking about is good practice, but, of course, what may be missing because of this lack in assessment is whether they provide value for money.

[47] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Oscar.

[48] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you very much, Mr Rowlands. I think we are, here, the third or fourth generation—ethnic minorities here are the third or fourth generation, 40 or 50 years. Our great grandfathers were here, and our children haven't attained—attainment is still low, you just mentioned, among ethnic minorities, especially the Afro-Caribbeans and blacks; they are still a foot behind the others. So, certainly, there is something wrong in the system. You can't say that children can't do it because of a cultural problem or some other reasons. I think there is something wrong in the system, which you've got to do it. Ethnic minorities that I know—. I come from Newport, and south-east Wales is the cluster where the ethnic minority majority is. My question to you is—a couple of questions—what is the current progress in local authorities supporting ethnic minority learners, in terms of supporting specific educational outcomes? Is there a degree of variation in the approach taken across different regions in Wales in this regard? To all of you, thank you.

[49] **Mr Rowlands:** I'm sure there is variation. We know that not all authorities actually took up the previous grant, so there would be variation because of the nature of the communities as well. I'm sure Farrukh can answer that question.

[50] **Mr Khan:** We found—again, I'd refer you back to the written submission—in the different local authority inspections that we undertook, yes, there is variation across Wales in terms of numbers of pupils from the different ethnic communities. Certainly, what we find is that there are certain local authorities perhaps where they've had long-established staff, long-established procedures, and in those authorities, good practice tends to be more used rather than those authorities that perhaps haven't had large numbers historically.

[51] **Mohammad Ashgar:** One of the areas I think you have to look at are the teachers. I know it's something different. There are not very many, I think, from minorities, so that is one of the reasons. And my question is: are the local authorities and regional consortia doing enough to support the educational outcomes of minority ethnic learners, particularly Afro-Caribbean—the blacks?

[52] **Mr Rowlands:** Well, I think, as you say, the evidence is that they're not particularly doing enough for Afro-Caribbean children. It's not an area that we've done a specific thematic on. I think there is a lot of evidence on the

Gypsy/Traveller children. We did a report in 2005, and the 2011 report showed that there had been relatively little progress. We made, I think, five recommendations. Only one of them had been addressed between 2005 and 2011. So, there's quite a lot of information that we have on the Gypsy/Traveller community. I'm afraid I've got less information about Afro-Caribbean children. And the data are very worrying about that particular community, because for most ethnic minority children, the group data, in terms of attainment and attendance, has been improving, and the worrying thing about the Afro-Caribbean group is that it has actually decreased over the last three or four years. So, that is particularly worrying.

[53] Going back to your point about the teachers, I think that's a very good point as well. I think the point you were making was that there aren't enough role models within teaching, and that is certainly true. I know that the Education Workforce Council keeps detailed records of this, and recently, they had the result that only 0.5 per cent of teachers, I think, were from an ethnic minority background in Wales. That clearly doesn't reflect the nature of the community. So, that is an issue, and clearly, initial teacher training is going through a large change programme at the moment, and I think an area that they will need to look at quite carefully is their recruitment policies.

[54] **Mohammad Ashgar:** I'm glad to hear from you that you're concerned about this ethnic minority attainment in the education system. But, if you're concerned, what steps are you going to take, and what's your advice to the local authorities and the system to improve?

[55] **Mr Rowlands:** I think what we're doing is we are trying to make sure that the good practice is spread. There is good practice. I think it is important that we do focus on that and make sure that people are aware of it. A lot of it doesn't involve a lot of money being spent. It is to do with attitudes and culture, and, so, I think that's what we're doing. The kinds of things we're talking about—establishing an inclusive culture and ethos within a school—are applicable for helping ethnic minorities to do well, but also other vulnerable groups in terms of poverty, for example. So, the kind of conclusions and recommendations we have in many of these reports have been similar—the bullying ones, the attendance ones, the ones on poverty. There are similar sorts of things that schools can do to have that inclusive ethos. I don't know if colleagues have more to add to what I've been saying.

[56] **Mr Khan:** Certainly, in terms of performance of different ethnic groups and improvement in performance of different ethnic groups, there are some

ethnic groups that have improved their performance so much that they now actually perform better than white British groups. So, for example, you have the Pakistani community, which is performing at around the same level as white British pupils. You've got the Bangladeshi pupils, who have overtaken white British pupils. You've got Indian pupils and Chinese pupils, who have always performed better than white British pupils, but they have increased even more. So, there are a number of minority ethnic groups who have improved in their performance over the years, and some are better than or around the same as white British pupils.

[57] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. You said in response to Oscar that, when you did the thematic review in 2011, only one of the recommendations from the previous review in 2005 had been implemented. Are you able to say whether all the recommendations that were made in 2011 have been implemented, as far as you're aware?

[58] **Mr Rowlands:** We haven't done a follow-up report to establish to what extent those other recommendations have been addressed. The question, quite rightly, from most of you has been, 'What can be done and what is your advice?' I think the strongest thing that's coming out of our evidence and our reports that needs to be done is better evaluation of initiatives. It has been a constant theme—at school level, at local authority level and at regional consortia level—that the focus has been very much on the high-level performance indicators, level 2 inclusive. The evaluations are not digging underneath that in terms of the differential performance of different groups of children, including ethnic minority children. So, at that local authority and regional consortium level, we think that much more attention needs to go into tracking, monitoring and evaluating the progress of those groups and the impact of specific initiatives and support programmes.

[59] **Lynne Neagle:** Darren, on this.

[60] **Darren Millar:** Many people would be astonished at the fact that you published two reports and, after the first report, only one recommendation was implemented and that you had no idea whether any of the other recommendations in your second report have been implemented, in spite of the fact that we're now five years on. Aren't you supposed to take some responsibility for checking up and following up on the reports that you publish? You certainly do that where schools are concerned. What about these? I mean, these are important reports, aren't they, for those children who might be impacted as a result of your recommendations not being taken

forward, whether that's by schools, local authorities or the Welsh Government.

[61] **Mr Rowlands:** I can go through each of the recommendations one by one—

[62] **Darren Millar:** I just want to know what systems you have in place to follow up on reports like this.

[63] **Mr Rowlands:** Well, the system we have is that the remit letter comes from the Minister and we have discussions on what needs to be followed up on. So, there hasn't been a follow-up report on this particular area.

[64] **Darren Millar:** I'm sorry, you're an independent inspectorate, aren't you? So, I appreciate that you get a remit letter from the Minister every year, which outlines your role and your financial envelope, et cetera. But it's your responsibility, surely, to hold these organisations—all of them, including the Minister—to account for the delivery against the report recommendations that you publish.

10:00

[65] **Mr Rowlands:** Well, we would not have the funding to do that for all our reports. We simply would not have the budget to do that. If you look, we were in the Public Accounts Committee recently on this, and we have statutory duties to carry out inspections. The vast bulk of our work is statutory inspections, and nearly all the other work is taken up by the remit letter. We have virtually no money left over to do additional work. But we do have intelligence. What I'm saying is that I haven't got a detailed, thematic report to tell you to what extent these things have been addressed in detail, but I can give you our general information. All the answers that we've been giving you today and during this meeting have been about that.

[66] **Darren Millar:** But simple annual letters to those to whom you've made the recommendations—wouldn't that be a start? It's not labour intensive, is it, or expensive to do?

[67] **Mr Rowlands:** Well, what I'm saying is, and what we have picked up, is that local authorities and regional consortia are not doing this, so that is exactly what we have highlighted, and that's what we've said that they ought to be doing. Unless they're doing it, they won't have any information to give

us, anyway.

[68] **Darren Millar:** But they'll only do what they're told to do, and what people like you focus your attention on, won't they?

[69] **Mr Rowlands:** Well yes, that's why we've made those recommendations to them.

[70] **Darren Millar:** Well, you made the recommendations five years ago, but you've done nothing since, have you, with respect.

[71] **Mr Rowlands:** We've made recommendations this year to regional consortia that they should be doing this. This year.

[72] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. I've got Mike on this.

[73] **Mike Hedges:** My question just follows on from this. On regional consortia, surely the role of regional consortia should be to collect the information and ensure good practice is passed on to local authorities and on to schools in terms of how this grant is being spent. Are you happy that that is actually happening? If not, at which stage is it breaking down?

[74] **Mr Rowlands:** I think regional consortia are fairly new bodies. Their focus has mainly been on the global issues. As I said, there has been maybe an overemphasis in their work on the main performance indicators—things like level 2 inclusive and average points scores—and they haven't done enough digging underneath at this level on the performance of individual groups. So if they haven't been doing that, they haven't been identifying the good practice and spreading it effectively.

[75] **Mike Hedges:** Just back on that point, surely though, if they can improve the attainment of these individual groups, that will improve overall attainment.

[76] **Mr Rowlands:** Absolutely.

[77] **Mike Hedges:** So surely it is part of their core work rather than—surely that's something they should be doing, and that's something that, when you inspect them, you should be picking them up on.

[78] **Mr Rowlands:** Well, absolutely, and that's exactly what we did. That's

what we did, and we mentioned that specific point in all four regional consortium inspections that we published earlier this year.

[79] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. We're going to move on now to generally look at the issue of the amalgamation of the grants. I've got Llyr and then Hefin.

[80] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Diolch, Gadeirydd. A oedd gan Estyn farn ynglŷn â'r newid ar y pryd o 11 ffynhonnell ariannu wreiddiol i greu'r grant gwella addysg?

Llyr Gruffydd: Thank you, Chair. Did Estyn have a view on this change at the time, from the 11 funding sources to the creation of the education improvement grant?

[81] **Mr Rowlands:** Wel, yn fras, mae rhywun yn deall pam bod angen dod â'r gwahanol grantiau yna at ei gilydd, ac roedd yna lot o deimlad ar y pryd gan bobl y byddai hynny yn gwneud lot o synnwyr o ran lleihau biwrocratiaeth ac yn y blaen. Felly, mae rhywun yn deall pam bod hynny wedi cael ei wneud. Nid ydw i'n credu bod yna gwestiwn wedi cael ei roi yn benodol i Estyn ynglŷn â chyfuno'r grant penodol yma. Roeddwn ni'n ymwybodol bod y Llywodraeth yn bwriadu gwneud hynny.

Mr Rowlands: Well, broadly speaking, one does understand why there is a need to amalgamate those various grants. There was a great deal of feeling at the time from people that that would make a great deal of sense. In terms of reducing bureaucracy and so forth, therefore, one does understand why that was undertaken. Now, I don't think that there was a specific question addressed to Estyn about the amalgamation of the grants into this specific grant. We were aware that the Government intended to do so.

[82] **Llyr Gruffydd:** A ydych chi wedi cael unrhyw awgrym, neu a ydy'n fwriad gennych felly yn benodol i edrych ar yr effaith mae'r grant newydd yn ei gael? A oes yna gais wedi dod o'r Llywodraeth i chi wneud hynny mewn unrhyw ffordd?

Llyr Gruffydd: Have you received any suggestion, or do you intend specifically to look at the impact that the new grant is having? Has there been a request from the Government for you to do that?

[83] **Mr Rowlands:** Nac oes, ond oherwydd y feirniadaeth rŷm ni wedi'i gwneud o awdurdodau a chonsortia ynglŷn â pheidio edrych ar werthuso'r

Mr Rowlands: No, but because of the criticism that we have made of local authorities and consortia about not looking at and evaluating the work

gwaith sy'n benodol i grwpiau o blant, mae hynny'n rhywbeth, rwy'n credu, y dylem ni fod yn edrych arno yn y dyfodol.

[84] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Iawn. Felly mae hynny'n rhywbeth rŷch chi'n bwriadu ei wneud.

[85] **Mr Rowlands:** Wel, rŷm ni mewn trafodaethau ar hyn o bryd gyda'r Llywodraeth, ac mae hynny'n un posibilrwydd am lythyron *remit* y dyfodol.

[86] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Roeddech chi'n dweud yn eich ateb cyntaf gynnu eich bod chi'n deall pam y byddai'r Llywodraeth eisiau symud o'r model blaenorol i'r trefniant presennol. A oedd yna, yn eich barn chi, unrhyw broblemau penodol neu unrhyw wendidau sylweddol yn y gyfundrefn flaenorol? Hynny yw, mae rhywun yn deall efallai bod yna elfen o fiwrocratiaeth ychwanegol o bosibl, ond a oedd yna unrhyw broblemau eraill y gallwch chi feddwl amdany'n nhw?

[87] **Mr Rowlands:** Wel, nid oedd problem benodol gyda'r grant MEAG hyd y gwn i, ond roedd rhywun yn gallu gweld bod yna broblem o orfiwrocratiaeth gyda'r system i gyd. Fel cyfanwaith, roedd yna ormod o fiwrocratiaeth. Ond nid oedd problem benodol gyda'r grant neilltuol MEAG, na'r un ar gyfer y Sipsiwn a'r Teithwyr.

that is specifically in relation to groups of children, we do think that is something we should look at in the future.

Llyr Gruffydd: Right. So, that is something that you do intend to do.

Mr Rowlands: Well, we're in discussions at present with the Government, and that is one possibility for the remit letters in the future.

Llyr Gruffydd: You said in your first response earlier that you understand why the Government would perhaps want to move from the previous model to the current arrangement. In your opinion, were there any specific problems or significant weaknesses in the previous regime? That is, one might understand that there would be an element of additional bureaucracy potentially, but were any other problems that you can identify?

Mr Rowlands: Well, there was no specific problem with the minority ethnic achievement grant as far as I know, but one could see that there was a problem as a result of the bureaucracy of the entire system. Holistically speaking, there was too much bureaucracy. But, no, there was no specific problem with that MEAG grant or the Gypsy/Traveller grant.

[88] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Ond, a ydych chi'n rhannu'r consyrn rŷm ni'n ei gael neu rŷm ni'n ei glywed efallai o gyfeiriadau eraill fod uno, fel sydd wedi digwydd, yn mynd i olygu efallai y bydd rhai agweddau yn colli'r ffocws penodol yna yr oedd 'ring-ffens-io' arian yn rhoi iddyn nhw? Neu eto, efallai nad oes tystiolaeth hyd yma i brofi hynny.

Llyr Gruffydd: But, do you share the concerns that we have or that we've heard from other directions that amalgamating, as has happened, will mean that some aspects will lose that specific focus that ring-fencing did give them? Or perhaps there's no evidence hitherto to prove that.

[89] **Mr Rowlands:** Rwy'n credu—i fynd yn ôl at yr un peth—mai'r hyn sy'n ein poeni ni yw nad yw awdurdodau a chonsortia'n gwerthuso'r hyn maen nhw'n ei wneud. Dyna'r peth mwyaf pwysig; nid cymaint beth yw ffynhonnell yr arian, ond bod yna—pa arian bynnag sy'n cael ei wario—werthuso trwyadl yn cael ei wneud i wneud yn siŵr ei fod yn cael ei wario yn y ffordd fwyaf cost-ffeithiol. A'r diffyg strwythurol yw nad oes digon o hynny yn digwydd.

Mr Rowlands: I believe that, if we go back to the same point, what does concern us is that authorities and consortia are not evaluating what they are doing. That's the most important thing; it's not so much about the source of the funding, but whatever money is spent, that there should be a thorough evaluation in order to ensure that that is being spent in the most cost-effective manner. And the structural deficiency is that not enough of that is taking place.

[90] **Llyr Gruffydd:** A oes gennych awgrym penodol ynglŷn a sut y dylai hynny fod yn digwydd? Rwy'n cymryd y dylai ddigwydd i ryw griteria neu fformat cenedlaethol, oherwydd efallai bod hefyd eisiau edrych ar sut y mae'r pedwar consortiwm yn gweithredu mewn ffyrdd gwahanol hefyd.

Llyr Gruffydd: Do you have a specific suggestion about how that would happen? I take it that should happen according to some national criteria or formula, because perhaps we also need to look at how the four consortia operate in different ways too.

[91] **Mr Rowlands:** Ie, ond mae gan yr holl awdurdodau a chonsortia ffyrdd i dracio ar lefel unigolion beth yw eu cyrhaeddiad nhw a beth yw eu presenoldeb nhw ac yn y blaen. Mae'r

Mr Rowlands: Yes, but all the authorities and the consortia do have means of tracking on an individual level what their attainment is and what their attendance rates are and

gallu ganddyn nhw i wneud hyn. so forth. So, they do have the ability
Mater o fynd ati i'w wneud e yw e. to do this. It's just a matter of going
ahead and doing it.

[92] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Hefin.

[93] **Hefin David:** Not withstanding your argument about the need to be better at tracking, monitoring and evaluating. Would you though, regardless of whether you think it's a worthwhile thing to do, would you say that the amalgamation has led to more or less, or the same consistency of allocation of funding?

[94] **Mr Rowlands:** I think, maybe, that my colleagues can help on that, but the impression we've got is that the funding is continuing—that the kind of activities that happened in the past are continuing currently under the new arrangements.

[95] **Hefin David:** Just before your colleagues come in, you've talked about consistency—in fact, I think it was in answer to Julie Morgan that you said there's consistency. So, there's consistency in that form of allocation of funding across consortia, you would say.

[96] **Mr Rowlands:** I don't remember saying that there was consistency.

[97] **Hefin David:** Sorry, I may have misunderstood, but you did use the word 'consistency'.

[98] **Mr Rowlands:** I don't think there's consistency, actually, because not all authorities actually claimed the MEAG grant. So, there are certainly differences in the way that different authorities did operate in the past. We know that all the Gwent authorities work together, for example, so there are differences in the ways that the grant is used, and particular areas will use it in different ways.

[99] **Hefin David:** And that's regarding the variation in the numbers of those pupils across Wales.

[100] **Mr Rowlands:** Yes.

[101] **Hefin David:** Some of the evidence we've received, and Dr Jonathan Brentnall is coming in after this session, and I'm just trying to reconcile

that—what you said—with some of the evidence he’s given, in which he says there are very different choices being made by consortia across areas of provision, with some maintaining levels of funding support, and others making considerable cuts and changes. The question I’ve got is: are those cuts and changes related simply to numbers, or are they because of perhaps other different financial reasons?

[102] **Mr Rowlands:** Yes, I’m not entirely sure, but as I say, the impression we’re getting is that there are clearly funding pressures on all these services, and there might be small reductions here and there, but generally speaking, the broad shape of the provision seems to continue in a similar way to what it was previously. I don’t know if colleagues have got anything else to add.

[103] **Ms Morgan:** From our school inspection work, we’re continuing to pick up best practice across Wales, so that’s why we’ve made the point that we believe that the provision continues. So, the Traveller support workers and the multidisciplinary work is continuing. So, we haven’t picked up evidence from our school inspections of any adverse effect.

[104] **Mr Khan:** I’d just echo that; we haven’t noticed any deterioration in provision, despite there being no ring-fencing of the grant funding. Most of the provision that was there before seems to still be in place: for example, the Gypsy/Traveller liaison officers in south-east Wales and you’ve got the Gwent education minority ethnic service provision in place. So, we haven’t seen a noticeable deterioration in provision.

[105] **Hefin David:** So, you’re driven still by numbers and patterns of demographics, rather than financial constraints—the grant is, sorry.

[106] **Mr Morgan:** Our evidence is coming from our inspection work of schools and, obviously, of the four consortia inspections that we’ve carried out.

[107] **Hefin David:** Okay, thank you.

[108] **Lynne Neagle:** Llyr, then Julie.

[109] **Llyr Gruffydd:** I was just wondering whether you’re confident, actually, that there won’t be a deterioration in provision, given the projected reduction in the EIG level of funding over the next years—I think, potentially, a £19 million drop over three years. Is that of concern?

[110] **Mr Rowlands:** The concern that I think most people have expressed to us is not so much the fact that there's no ring-fencing, but that the total quantum has reduced.

[111] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, what do you think the impact of that level of reduction would be?

[112] **Mr Rowlands:** As I say, we haven't seen a particular impact as yet, and only time can tell, really, what will happen.

[113] **Llyr Gruffydd:** And in relation to your suggestion earlier that this is an area you'd look at, I would expect that this is certainly one of the areas that would be something that you would reflect upon in any future piece of work.

[114] **Mr Rowlands:** Yes. I think the most useful thing for Estyn to do in future is to look at how effectively local authorities and regional consortia are actually monitoring, tracking and evaluating what they're doing. It's not so much how much money goes where, but how effectively that money is being spent, and that they have mechanisms to evaluate that. Those mechanisms would be useful in this specific area, but would be more generally applicable to all kinds of work that they're doing with other groups of children as well. So, I think the most useful thing that we can do is to look at that, rather than following up specifically maybe on this group, looking at the structures and the strategies that the middle tier has for evaluation.

[115] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Although if you conclude that there is a clear correlation between deterioration in provision, potentially, and a reduction in funding, then you would say that, I'd imagine.

10:15

[116] **Mr Rowlands:** Yes. It is complex, though, because unless you know that the money currently spent is spent most effectively, then you can't really say that a reduction is going to make a difference. Because you could reduce and also make the systems more effective, and have the same outcome for less money. So, I think it is absolutely crucial that we have a good evaluation system in place.

[117] **Llyr Gruffydd:** And we don't have that baseline at the moment.

[118] **Mr Rowlands:** No, we haven't got that baseline, no.

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

[120] **Julie Morgan:** Just to go back to the numbers, for a moment, you say that the provision is still there. Are the numbers of people in the provision still there? Because I think, Mr Khan, you said that, didn't you?

[121] **Mr Rowlands:** Maybe Farrukh can help me out on this, but I think the numbers are increasing.

[122] **Julie Morgan:** Yes. Of support staff.

[123] **Mr Rowlands:** Oh, sorry—

[124] **Julie Morgan:** No, no, I'm talking about—

[125] **Mr Rowlands:** The support staff.

[126] **Julie Morgan:** Yes. I think Farrukh said that the provision is still there of the Traveller support services, so, nothing has been abolished, but are the numbers the same in terms of—?

[127] **Mr Rowlands:** The impression we get is that the numbers are—

[128] **Julie Morgan:** That's an impression.

[129] **Mr Rowlands:** Yes.

[130] **Julie Morgan:** Do you know?

[131] **Mr Rowlands:** No, we haven't done a detailed look at this, but we haven't picked up any major reductions.

[132] **Lynne Neagle:** You're saying there's no reduction, but we know that the numbers in this cohort of children are going up.

[133] **Mr Rowlands:** Yes.

[134] **Lynne Neagle:** So, I'm assuming that you're also telling us that, actually, the support isn't going up; it's staying static.

[135] **Mr Rowlands:** I think that's correct.

[136] **Llyr Gruffydd:** But we've just heard that you don't know exactly what it is like in terms of current provision.

[137] **Mr Rowlands:** No, what I was saying was there's no baseline for the effectiveness of that baseline.

[138] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Okay. Yes. And how it's used.

[139] **Mr Rowlands:** Yes. It will be fairly easy for the Welsh Government to find out, and presumably they do know exactly how many staff are involved in this.

[140] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Okay.

[141] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Darren.

[142] **Darren Millar:** Yes, I just want to look at post-16 education, if I can. Obviously, these grants are targeted at schools, specifically, but do you think that there needs to be some support for Gypsy/Traveller young people and ethnic minority young people going into further education institutions and higher education institutions that is more targeted or specific to them, or even perhaps staying on in a college-based sixth form somewhere. I assume that if they stay in a school-based sixth form, they're still able to benefit somewhat from the provision that's there.

[143] **Mr Rowlands:** I think that's a good point, and I think you are correct: there should be more attention to that particular issue. What we did do recently were two reports on apprenticeships, and we certainly did find there that there was an issue in terms of ethnic minorities generally not taking up apprenticeships. So, that's a good example, I think, of an area that has been neglected.

[144] **Darren Millar:** And in terms of the way that that support might be delivered to the FE sector, for example, or the HE sector if they're doing sort of degree apprenticeships in the future, do you think that that should be a grant to institutions, or do you think it should be—I don't know—cash that follows the individual students or learners?

[145] **Mr Rowlands:** I don't have a particular opinion on that, but you're right: it is difficult to decide what should be done. Should you have a grant at all and, if you do, is that going to be implemented on a national level, on a local level, or should it be devolved to individual institutions? So, these are quite difficult things, and that's why—to go back to the same thing—when there are grants, you do need to evaluate them quite carefully.

[146] **Darren Millar:** Obviously, the student support system is being looked at at the moment, and looked-after children are in a special category within that system, where they'll get full support. Do you think there's potentially an arrangement that needs to be made specifically for these groups of young people that we're talking about?

[147] **Mr Rowlands:** It is a possibility. These are quite complex things. As we were talking about earlier with Gypsy/Traveller children, but it's also true about apprenticeships, these are wide cultural things. So, it's not necessarily a grant to an individual institution. You might need to do more community work or something like that. So, there might be more general national awareness-raising-type activities that might be just as effective.

[148] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. We are out of time, Darren—very quickly.

[149] **Darren Millar:** Just one final question. In the inspection reports that you do on HE and FE institutions, I'm just wondering to what extent you are required to look specifically at ethnic minorities and the Gypsy/Traveller community as part of that inspection process.

[150] **Mr Rowlands:** We don't inspect HE, but we do inspect FE. And we do look at the performance of individual ethnic minorities as part of institutional inspections. But, if we want to do more detailed work, then we'd need to do a thematic work, and we felt that this was an area that we hadn't looked at, particularly the apprenticeships. And that's why we decided, in negotiation with Welsh Government, that we did need to do that. We identified some issues there, in the first report, but then went on to give some good examples of good practice as well, in the second report.

[151] **Darren Millar:** Thank you.

[152] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you very much. Well, we're out of time. Can I thank you very much for attending this morning, and for your answers to the committee? As is usual practice, you will be sent a transcript of the meeting,

to check for accuracy. But thank you very much for your time this morning.

10:22

**Ymchwiliad i'r Grant Gwella Addysg: Plant Sipsiwn, Roma a Theithwyr,
a Phlant o Leiafrifoedd Ethnig—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 2**
**Inquiry into Education Improvement Grant: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller,
and Minority Ethnic Children—Evidence Session 2**

[153] **Lynne Neagle:** Our second session this morning on this is with Dr Jonathan Brentnall. Can I welcome you to our meeting, and also thank you for providing the paper that you sent us in advance of the meeting? I wondered whether you'd just like to start by saying a little bit about what your role is at the moment, and whether you want to make some opening remarks more generally.

[154] **Dr Brentnall:** Okay, thank you very much. First of all, can I just say a massive thank you to you as a committee for agreeing to look at this in the first place? I've spent the last two years feeling like I've been banging my head against a brick wall, trying to get some responses out of the Welsh Government, to have a second look at this, and got very little ground out of them at all. So, I'm really pleased that you're doing this. So, a massive thank you.

[155] I'm an independent consultant. I used to work within this field as an additional language support teacher, and then as a race equality project leader in Newport, in Gwent. Then I was a researcher and a lecturer at Aberystwyth University. More recently, I've just been working as an independent consultant, doing research into these areas, and advising various bodies on practice.

[156] This whole issue came to my attention a couple of years ago, when some of my old colleagues from local authorities said, 'Things are happening, funding's being cut, we're being told we have to lose a substantial proportion of our service', and so on. And I said, 'Well, what can you do about it?', and they said, 'We're being told we can't do anything at all; we're just being told we have to submit plans for the reduction of our services, and there's very little else that we can do'. They felt largely powerless. So, as somebody who was independent, I thought, well, nobody else seems to be doing anything here, I'll see if I can step in and collect some evidence, and see if I can try and represent the issues that were being

discussed. Is that okay?

[157] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you very much. Can you just tell us a little bit more, then? You've obviously got some concerns about the decision to amalgamate these various grants. Can you just elaborate for us what you think the main weaknesses have been? Because, in the previous session with Estyn, they told us that things haven't really changed in terms of service provision.

[158] **Dr Brentnall:** I didn't see all of their session, but I'm afraid I do not recognise the situation that was presented to you by the previous witness. I think the evidence that I've presented in my paper, about statistics that I've gathered through freedom of information shows that the situation has changed quite considerably. There's been a reduction in service provision, there's been a reduction in funding and there's been a reduction in specialist staff. There have been quite severe impacts right across the board. So, I don't recognise that situation at all. My concerns are two, basically—what was done and how it was done. I had to ask the question whether or not this decision to amalgamate the minority ethnic achievement grant and the Gypsy/Traveller grant into this more general, more diffuse education improvement grant was done in the best interests of the children concerned, or whether it was done for some other reasons. And having looked at the situation, I don't feel that it was done in the best interests of the children. They didn't seem to be a priority there. There may have been other political reasons.

[159] For me, this MEAG and GT grant amalgamation is a perfect example of why equality impact assessments were put in place, and why the procedures and protocols for equality impact assessment were put in place. When Welsh Government, or any decision-making body, makes a decision to change a policy or, indeed, to do away with the grant funding stream, the idea with an EIA is that you evaluate the impact on pupils. And, if you find that there is likely to be an impact, then you reflect on that and you review it and you possibly enter into a consultation, and you say, 'Well, is there anything that we can do to minimise this impact, or do we need to change the decision?' And it seems to me that the equality impact assessment protocols that the Welsh Government themselves have written down in quite extensive detail were not followed in this case at all. And looking at the evidence of what has changed since, what the impact actually has been, I think it's pretty clear that had a thorough equality impact assessment been done, they couldn't really have progressed with this, not in the way that they have.

[160] **Lynne Neagle:** Are you able to give us some specific examples of where you feel provision has deteriorated, then?

[161] **Dr Brentnall:** I'll give you some anecdotes, and then I'll go back to the hard stuff, which I've gathered from the FOI reports, if I may, which is already in your report. I've spoken to a number of service providers, service leads and the heads of minority ethnic and Gypsy/Traveller services in recent weeks and months, and they have just bemoaned the dire situation and feel that their services have been put under a great deal of pressure, and they're having to be spread much more thinly. They have fewer staff. The pupil numbers have increased, and the needs are still increasing, but they are less able to meet those capacities. I was speaking to a teacher from south Wales last week, and a teacher from north Wales about three weeks ago, who are specialists in this field, and they said that they and their colleagues were utterly demoralised—utterly demoralised—and they felt that they had no future in this work. They felt that the Welsh Government had deprioritised these fields of work to the extent that they saw no future, and some of them are leaving. I think some of the evidence that was provided by others actually indicates that some of the specialist staff that we've built up over the last 15 or 20 years are leaving the profession because they see no future. Some are being made redundant, and some are having contracts not renewed as well. So, there's a drain of expertise and wealth of knowledge there, which is being lost, and just a sense of demoralisation within the profession.

[162] If you want to have a look at some of the key points that I included in my paper—the funding cuts, for example—the Welsh Government's funding was, as I think I've indicated, if we take the two grants together, reduced by about 23 per cent altogether. The local authorities stepped in following the reductions in the money available, and took more money from the revenue support grant and from other sources that they could to try and bolster that. So, the actual impact in terms of cuts after the first year was about 11.1 per cent. So, it wasn't as much as it could have been by any means—the local authorities saved what would have been the decimation of the services within the first year. But, it looks as though that's been further reduced again this year. As it's now standing, although the figures haven't been verified for my latest FOI request, it's looking at about a 14.9 per cent reduction in those services.

[163] When you couple that with the increase in numbers, I think—. Did you have the graphs? Did you see the charts that I included? If you look at that as

a per-pupil amount of funding, it actually amounts to a 45 per cent reduction in funding over a period of five or six years, and something like a 20 to 25 per cent reduction over the last 18 months to two years. The staff have been reduced by 17 per cent [correction: 17.7 per cent]—I think that's my figure I've got down there. Worse than that—and I think this is the thing that really needs to be addressed, because I think this is a potential issue of illegality—there could be a case for racial discrimination here, in that the impact on black and minority ethnic staff members has been disproportionate. You mentioned earlier, Oscar, that only 0.5 per cent of the teaching profession is from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. A lot of those are employed, or have been employed, within this service area, because that's where their skills lie. They know the languages of the children, they understand the cultural and religious backgrounds of the children who they're working with, and so many of them have been employed within these specialist services. I think the figure was a 21.8 per cent reduction by the end of 2015–16, and that might have increased again by now. That was larger than the proportion of white British staff.

10:30

[164] Now, if you look at it proportional to the population, there are about 5 per cent ethnic minorities amongst the adult population. So, for every 20 white British teachers you would lose, you'd expect to lose one teacher of minority ethnic background within the workforce. Here, we're losing 21.8 per cent—actually more than the white Welsh [correction: British]. There has been a significant disproportionate impact on black and minority ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller teachers and workers within the education workforce, as well as what I see as a disproportionate impact on the pupils. Whilst the Welsh Government has very proudly maintained its front-line funding for schools—and I do commend them on that; in the face of very difficult financial decisions, I recognise there have been some tough calls they have had to make—they've maintained front-line funding for schools, but they have attacked front-line funding for these areas. And it just all looks like a picture of deprioritisation by the Welsh Government—they've shifted priorities.

[165] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Llyr.

[166] **Llyr Gruffydd:** In the evidence we had from Estyn, they were telling us that they don't have, really, a baseline on the quality and the effectiveness of provision, but they can come up with numbers in terms of people working in

the sector, et cetera. Is that something that you recognise? And, if it is, then how would you suggest that we address that?

[167] **Dr Brentnall:** The minority ethnic achievement grant, as I think I explained in my notes, has been in various forms since 1966. It's been in place to address the very precise and specific needs of these groups of learners, and it's become one of the most tightly audited and tracked and monitored grants that there has been, because, every year, the local authority services had to submit for those funds. They had to bid to the Welsh Government for funding, and they had to do so by accounting for every single pupil, by assessing all of those pupils according to their stage of language acquisition, identifying asylum seekers, identifying their ethnic backgrounds, and then monitoring them and setting targets to try to raise their attainment, which, actually, over the period of the last 15, 20 years has been very successful, as I think others of you mentioned earlier. So, under the old system—and I'm not saying it was perfect, and I think there could have been improvements to the tracking and monitoring, and there's certainly room for a tighter evaluation—but under the new arrangements, under the education improvement grant, I know of nothing that's been done, actually. I have asked about what was supposed to be the outcomes framework, but I had no reply from my colleagues in the Welsh Government who I contacted as to what's replaced the outcomes framework that didn't materialise. So, I don't know how it's being monitored now.

[168] As far as the data collection is concerned, the issue about bureaucracy that's been mentioned is a red herring. The actual reduction in bureaucracy, in terms of financial savings—the branch that used to administer the grants is still in place. I think the officials are still in post; they've moved or changed personnel, but I think the posts are still extant. The reduction in admin staff amongst local authorities has gone down by, I think, about 1.7 per cent—1.7 full-time equivalent, sorry.¹ So that's how much has been saved. And there are only about 11 and a half admin FTE staff working on the bureaucratic aspect, anyway. So, the vast majority of the funding under the GT grant and the MEAG was directed towards paying for teachers and teaching assistants who worked in schools, working with schools, trying to build capacity or working directly with children and front-line forces.

[169] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, you would challenge the assertion, then, that the

¹ Eglurhad/Clarification: The correct figure from my FOI data is 1.37 FTE not 1.7FTE: a reduction from 11.48 FTE in 2013/14 to 10.11 FTE in 2015/16 across all 22 LAs.

baseline isn't there, although you would recognise that there's always more that you could do.

[170] **Dr Brentnall:** You're getting to the point, now, Llyr. The point is that this has never been taken on board as a mainstream issue. The Welsh Government hasn't given a strong lead in these fields; we've never had a really strong top-down lead. These issues haven't been integrated seamlessly within Welsh Government policies and strategies. They've never been made explicit. I think the most that we got to was a couple of lines in the old national curriculum, which said, 'If you have additional language learners in your schools, make sure you take account of their needs and differentiate accordingly.'² But there's never been a coherent strategy; it's just been a case of administering funding, giving the money to the local authorities. And the services have had to battle with local authorities and with schools to take this on board as their ownership—to take ownership of it, and say, 'Actually, these children who are in our schools are our children. They are our responsibility and everything we do within literacy, within numeracy, within assessment, within raising attainment, needs to be done for them and we need to take account of their individual needs, and specific needs and target our support.' They've tended to say, 'That's the responsibility of the specialists. There's MEAG money that will deal with that', and it hasn't really been taken on board. So, in terms of the tracking and monitoring and collecting data on these pupils, most of it has been done by specialists in the specialist services. It needs to be done much better by staff in schools.

[171] **Llyr Gruffydd:** And you've identified at least three different sources of data, or at least three different forms of data in arriving at the numbers of learners that you're talking about.

[172] **Dr Brentnall:** Yes, we know—. I used to work in this field, but my

² Eglurhad/Clarification: On reflection, this was an oversimplification. There have been some high level vision statements affirming Wales as a diverse, multi-ethnic nation and brief references to ethnic minorities, Gypsy Roma Travellers and EAL/WAL learners in other, recent strategic documents. There was a good practice DVD, produced several years ago, the non-statutory 2014 Policy Statement, and a 2015 evaluation report on capacity-building, but these largely illustrate what service providers have already been doing rather than giving a strategic lead to all schools on School Improvement to meet needs. They have not been complemented by explicit and rigorous integration of how to address the particular needs of minorities throughout policy areas across education.

colleagues have continued to inform me over the years that the figures that are collected through the pupil level annual school census are not accurate; they don't have accurate figures for ethnic background, or those who are English as an additional language, or Welsh additional language learners. And so they're understated, and some of them get filtered out as well through the PLASC system because the data have to be validated and so the numbers get reduced. So, the PLASC number has always understated the figures. The local authority figures are always a bit larger, and they claim that they're more accurate.

[173] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, how do you respond then to the Welsh Government when they tell us that it's too early to assess the impact of the new arrangements under the EIG, and that a formal evaluation of the EIG would not be cost-effective, because it is early days?

[174] **Dr Brentnall:** It is early days, but I find it ironic that at a time when the new education Minister, and the Welsh Government as a whole, is working towards more precise targeted funding of specific issues and groupings of learners who are under-attaining and trying to hold local authorities to account and saying: 'You've got to track and monitor these pupils', that they should do away with grants that have been specifically designed to do that, and instead put the money into a more general grant and do away with that form of monitoring. I find that it's like a double standard actually—it's quite ironic.

[175] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. I've got a few members on this. I've got Julie, then Hefin, then Mike.

[176] **Julie Morgan:** The previous witnesses told us that the services on the whole were still in place. You've told us that there have been redundancies, people leaving—have you got actual evidence of that?

[177] **Dr Brentnall:** Well, it's only what I've asked through freedom of information. I'm assuming that what's been provided for me through freedom of information is accurate, and that's come from the local authorities themselves and the information that they have there.³ Let me just

³ Eglurhad/Clarification: My FOI request did not ask whether staff members had been made redundant, only for the actual numbers of staff and FTE staff time in 2013/14, in and up to the end of the academic year 2014/15. These figures showed significant reductions. I have heard from personal accounts that some staff members were

see if I can find the staffing reductions. I think I mentioned them earlier—17.7 per cent of staff reductions, and that was by the end of August 2015. I've been told that, since then, there's been a few more staff, and the FOI requests—they haven't been verified yet—that I made in October indicate there's a few more staff who have gone since then as well.

[178] **Julie Morgan:** And that is for the pupils involved in both grants.

[179] **Dr Brentnall:** Yes.

[180] **Julie Morgan:** It's an overall picture.

[181] **Dr Brentnall:** Yes, that's an amalgamation of both.

[182] **Lynne Neagle:** And is that national, or are there areas that are worse than others in Wales?

[183] **Dr Brentnall:** Yes, it's different. Different authorities are approaching this differently. I don't want to be too damning, in the sense that some local authorities, I have to say after some reaction and intervention by the Welsh Local Government Association, the Association of Directors of Education in Wales and the services themselves, did recognise the value of their services, and said, 'Look, we're not going to get rid of you all together', although, initially, one or two were told that they would have to disassemble the services completely. That's been reined back on. So, there is some retention of those services, but they don't really fit within this new system. It's not being accommodated within the strategy that the Welsh Government initially set out, which was to delegate 85 per cent of this to schools, and the responsibility to schools. The way that the Welsh Government approached that wasn't to say, 'Oh, yes, hold on to it in the local authorities.' So, for example, there is one authority I can mention where the remainder of the EIG that hasn't been delegated to schools—almost all of it has now been dedicated to maintaining this central service. So, there's no freedom to do anything else with the rest of that money. So, it's a far from ideal situation, really.

served with redundancy notices, some have taken voluntary redundancy, others 'have been let go', some short-term contracts have not been renewed and others have left to seek employment elsewhere. Specific information about compulsory redundancies would have to be obtained directly from Local Authorities.

[184] **Julie Morgan:** You said that the Welsh Government haven't done the equality impact assessment properly. Was there any discussion, as far as you know, with the service users—the groups that support Gypsies and Travellers, for example?

[185] **Dr Brentnall:** Certainly not beforehand—not before the decision had been made. The EIA's were carried out retrospectively several months afterwards, after a lot of requests for them. I'm not aware of any formal consultation processes being gone through at all.

[186] **Julie Morgan:** Not at all.

[187] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Hefin.

[188] **Hefin David:** Just at the outset, you said that you'd spoken to local government officers who'd said, 'We're facing cuts, we've got no choice.' Doesn't removing hypothecation actually increase their opportunities to make these choices?

[189] **Dr Brentnall:** Yes, potentially, but it depends who's prioritising what and what the priorities for the spends are. So, your reduction in hypothecation is led by national priorities, isn't it? The Welsh Government sets those priorities and the feeling I've been getting from my colleagues in the field is that Welsh Government priorities have been interpreted as saying, 'Direct this money towards poverty or towards other education initiatives and away from these fields of work.'

[190] **Hefin David:** Evidence we've received, for example from the Minister for lifelong learning said, 'Well, it's not my job to tell local authorities how to spend their money.' That's the kind of direction of travel that the Welsh Government seems to be going in.

[191] **Dr Brentnall:** It depends what you want. If you want consistency of good practice across the country, then there has to be some kind of lead; you can't just give out the money and give no direction and no lead, and I don't think the Welsh Government has been doing that either, particularly in relation to the poverty agenda or the raising attainment agenda. I think the evidence that I've gathered suggests that different authorities are responding increasingly differently in the way that they set their priorities and some set higher priorities on this field.

[192] **Hefin David:** Estyn suggested that that was because of the variation in demographics more than anything else. You dispute that.

[193] **Dr Brentnall:** I wouldn't agree. I can give you some figures for pupil per head allocations that range from £150 to—let me see if I can just find those, actually—£1,500 per head per Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupil. So, that's the variation in local authority allocation per head for the numbers that they've got on roll. And per minority ethnic pupil, it ranges from £88 to £300-plus per head. That's not to do with how many pupils are there, it's not necessarily to do with demographic difference, it's about how they're prioritising the amount of funding that they're allocated per head.

[194] **Hefin David:** Per head, yes. Okay. I'm not going to push that any further.

[195] **Dr Brentnall:** Is that all right?

[196] **Hefin David:** Yes, you've given an answer. The other thing that the inspectorate said was that the broad shape of provision, in their view—and to quote them; I've written down the quotes—'The broad shape of provision is the same as previously and there's no evidence from school inspections that there's any change, and it's not so much about how much money goes in, but where it's spent.' These were the records. How do you reconcile the differences in opinions between yourself and Estyn?

[197] **Dr Brentnall:** I can't really speak for the gentleman from Estyn or what evidence base he was using for those statements, I'm sorry.

[198] **Hefin David:** Okay.

[199] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Mike.

[200] **Mike Hedges:** Yes. Can I return to regional consortia, or, in your case, bring them up for the first time? What are regional consortia doing to ensure that there's consistency across the region and also to monitor what is actually being done on a school-by-school level, and, dare I say, even going as far as trying to spread best practice?

10:45

[201] **Dr Brentnall:** I wish I could answer that question in detail. I'm not party

to any of the consortia discussions; I haven't been involved in those. To my knowledge, many of the colleagues who work in this field haven't been involved at the highest level either—specialists in this area haven't been involved at the highest level in their consortium discussions about how money should be spent and prioritised. I don't know how they're accounting for it. So, I'm not really able to answer that question in specific detail. I know that there has been an increase in school-to-school sharing, and that emphasis on sharing good practice is increasing, and there have been examples of that being done within this field but not as much, perhaps, as it needs to be. There's also an ambiguity about what good practice is. Who knows what the best practice in this field is if it's not coming from the specialists? If it's just a school that says, 'We've got some minority ethnic pupils and this is what we do with them and we'll share that with you', who's validating that as best practice? There are questions about that and I don't know the answer to how the consortia are doing that.

[202] **Mike Hedges:** I'd validate it against outcomes. You did say about delegating money to schools—now that's not necessarily a problem if they can join together under service level agreements and do it either on current county and county boroughs, or more specifically on the older county and county borough boundary where you have the volume and the amount of money coming in so that you can actually get benefits from that. Does anybody actually do that?

[203] **Dr Brentnall:** In the kind of—. Are you talking about a buy-back relationship?

[204] **Mike Hedges:** Buy-back, yes. Schools, for example, have service level agreements for a whole range of things like payroll, where a school doesn't do its own pay, it's done by service level agreements, and the school library service, so they get access to a much bigger library facility than they would if they had it themselves.

[205] **Dr Brentnall:** As far as I'm aware, there are service level agreements between a number of services and schools. The exact nature of those I can't give you the details of, but there are. Some of the services work better than others and some of the relationships work better than others. I don't want to paint a terrible picture. There are some schools in Wales that have got very good practice, who've established very good partnerships with their specialists, who have had good priorities and there is good practice being shared and built up over time, which has led to an increase in the

percentages. It just seems odd to me that, at this point, when there has been an increase in the percentage of minority ethnic learners who seem to be doing well, that should be done away with. A programme that seems to be working well, rather than being improved and worked on—‘How can we expand the practice?’, as you’re suggesting, perhaps through modifying the service level agreements, ‘How can we build capacity better in schools?’—it’s being changed.

[206] The key thing—the Welsh Government commissioned, or I think seconded somebody to produce a policy back in 2014, which was ‘Minority Ethnic Achievement in Education in Wales’, and that recommended that the funding, the MEAG funding at the time, should be used more for capacity building. There was a recognition that the numbers were so much greater than the staff could cope with in terms of individual pupil support—the ratios I think I’ve given are 1:59⁴ or 1:161, or something like that, for minority ethnic learners. There’s no way that your teachers working peripatetically can cover all those learners. It’s just not possible. So, there’s a recognition that capacity needs to be built within schools, and that was the recommendation of this policy, that the MEAG funding and the services with a specialism should do that. And then two months later, the MEAG was cut and then two months after that it was announced that the MEAG and the specialist services were going to be—the MEAG was going to be done away with and the specialist services, as a consequence, would have reduced capacity to deliver that policy that had been outlined four or five months earlier.

[207] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Darren.

[208] **Darren Millar:** Thank you, Chair. Can I just ask you about the inspectorate and its role in measuring the impact of these grants? We’ve heard very contrasting evidence from you versus the inspectorate. The impression that you’re giving us is, really, that the inspectorate doesn’t know what’s going on on the ground at the coalface, or the chalkboard as it were. Do you think that Estyn’s focus might need to shift a little bit? Do you think that there’s sufficient regard within their framework for inspection to pay attention to this particular area?

[209] **Dr Brentnall:** I think the problem with Estyn is the same as the problem with just about every other area of the education provision within Wales—that there is a lack of knowledge, a lack of understanding, a lack of expertise

⁴ Eglurhad/Clarification: for GRT pupils.

across the board. What that means is that some people either don't act on the issues or they don't have the level of understanding to ask the right questions or to interrogate the evidence in the right way, and to draw the right conclusions or even draw the best recommendations, and I think that might be the case with Estyn. I know, anecdotally—and I can only give you anecdotal evidence here—that, over the years, when Estyn inspectors have gone in to schools, where colleagues have been working, the evaluation of the minority ethnic performance and the ways of working has been, not as thorough, let's say, as they felt it could be. My colleagues have said, 'Well, they just asked me a couple of questions and they looked at the stats and then what came out in the report was, "You're doing a good job".'

[210] **Darren Millar:** They've done some more detailed pieces of work, haven't they—these thematic reviews that they've conducted? Are you satisfied that they've got to the heart of the issues?

[211] **Dr Brentnall:** In fairness, the more thorough reviews that they have done—. There was one done back in, I think, 2000; there was another done in 2003 and there was one done a couple of years ago, which was on the performance of English as an additional language learners from 16 to 19. That concluded that there wasn't a strong lead from national Government, that there was inconsistent practice and there was a lack of continuity between schools and further education. They pointed out several weaknesses within that report, but I don't know what's happened in response to the observations and recommendations that they made there either. So, there are times when they do make pertinent observations, and, in fairness, some of the schools that they inspect have got good practice, which should be recognised, but I don't think the expertise is really widespread.

[212] **Darren Millar:** Do you think they follow up sufficiently on their recommendations?

[213] **Dr Brentnall:** Not in this field.

[214] **Darren Millar:** One of the reasons they said that they didn't feel that they were able to follow up in the way that they would like to is the fact that they're subject to an annual negotiation, if you like, with the Minister in respect of their budget and remit.

[215] **Dr Brentnall:** Exactly.

[216] **Darren Millar:** Is that a problem that you think needs sorting out?

[217] **Dr Brentnall:** It all comes back to the same thing: has this area of work ever been prioritised and written explicitly into the work plans and the strategies and the policies of Welsh Government education and consortia and local authority education? I don't think it has. It's been marginalised—it's been seen as the little sister that sits on the side. It's not been built into the mainstream. I think if it were, then it would be up there as a priority. If it were explicitly referred to and mentioned, and if the names of the groupings were there in black and white, then it would become a priority and Welsh Government would say to Estyn—.

[218] One of the other things that the previous witness neglected to mention was the 'white other' group, which is now numbered in thousands because of eastern European migration. Their percentages used to be very high. That grouping, as a whole, covers a great deal of different backgrounds and nationalities. It's now dropped to the 40s for key stage 4 performance. So, it's really dropped. Most of those are additional language learners and most of them are from families who are working. So, they are above the poverty line and so they're not entitled to free school meals. So, you have thousands of learners now in schools who are not achieving to their potential, who were being targeted under the MEAG, but who are now—. That was a group that the previous witness didn't refer to.

[219] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Darren, quickly, because I want to bring Oscar in.

[220] **Darren Millar:** Just one final question. One of the other questions that I raised with the previous witnesses was post-16 education, particularly outside the school setting, in FE colleges, for example. Do you think that this grant should reach into those places? It doesn't at the moment.

[221] **Dr Brentnall:** There was a time a few years ago when the Welsh Government said they were doing a zero to 25, I think it was, or three to 25—right across the board, they wanted to see continuity of education provision. I don't think that that has materialised to the extent that it could and I think it might be something that you would want to build into any future review of provision for these groupings of learners.

[222] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Oscar.

[223] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much indeed, Chair, and thank

you very much Dr Jonathan Brentnall. Your honest, clear and bold statement this morning, I am very, very thrilled and very shocked about a few things regarding the educational attainment of Gypsy/Romany/Travellers and ethnic minorities. My question to you, sir, is: what improvement could the Welsh Government make with regard to further supporting ethnic minority education, particularly in light of emphasis placed on the pupil deprivation grant to support this?

[224] **Dr Brentnall:** I think, as I said before, that it just needs to be made explicit. It's not made explicit. The Welsh Government has moved to a way of talking about everything for all learners, which I believe is this misinformed idea of inclusion. My understanding of inclusion is that you recognise that people are different from one another and that pupils have different needs. You have to identify what those issues and those needs are, and then you target them. By simply saying, 'We're doing everything for all learners', I think you lose the detail. I think the PDG has suffered a little bit from that, partly because of the example I gave for the 'white other' group—that many of the learners from minority ethnic backgrounds who need additional support are not going to benefit from the PDG because they're not entitled.

[225] This is a particular issue for Gypsy/Travellers because the money goes to schools, and they move schools. There are two bits of evidence that were submitted by other people. One school had said, 'Give us the money because we know how best to work with our learners', and there was another school that said, 'We have a child on roll and they've only been here for 15 sessions and they've spent the rest of the year at another school or not in school'. So, the money has to follow the children.

[226] In the previous model, at least the central services had the flexibility to be able to say, 'Look, the children have moved. We've had a bunch of new arrivals come into a school over there. You've had support for two or three years. I'm afraid we're going to have to move you to that school to support those learners now', or 'You've got a Gypsy/Traveller family that has moved from one school to another school, or from a local authority to another local authority. The money and the support need to follow them'. That can't happen if it's delegated directly to schools in the way that the PDG is.

[227] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much.

[228] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. The final question from Julie, then.

[229] **Julie Morgan:** I was very struck when I visited a school in my constituency that was mainly white, with not many immigrant children there, and certainly, as far as we know, no Gypsy/Traveller children. But some Gypsy/Travellers had stopped temporarily near the school and the children were talking quite openly in a very negative way about this group, no doubt picked up from what their parents had been saying. Would you agree—although I support the targeted intervention—that there is the wider issue as well in terms of education for Gypsy/Traveller/Roma children in those sorts of attitudes that you meet?

[230] **Dr Brentnall:** Yes. It comes back again to the same point about mainstreaming these issues—that it has to be holistic. We have to have an education system that caters for the diverse population of Wales. There's no other way of looking at it. We have a diverse population and we must address all of those issues. A narrow focus on educational outcomes in terms of exam results doesn't actually cover some of the issues that you raised there, and the kind of exclusion and rejection that many Gypsy/Traveller pupils in particular, but also other migrant workers' children, are experiencing. Particularly recently, there's been such an increase in hate crime and a rise in antagonism that there are other issues. There are pastoral issues, there are care issues, as well as achievement issues. So, yes, I recognise that picture.

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

[232] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Well, that concludes our session. Can I thank you very much for your time this morning and for answering committee members' questions? You will be sent a transcript of the meeting for you to check for accuracy. Thank you very much for coming; we do appreciate it.

[233] **Dr Brentnall:** Okay. Thank you very much as well. Thank you for listening and for looking at this area at all. I really appreciate it.

[234] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. The committee will now break until 11:10. Thank you.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:58 a 11:10.
The meeting adjourned between 10:58 and 11:10.*

Ymchwiliad i Ddarpariaeth Eiriolaeth Statudol—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 3 Inquiry into Statutory Advocacy Provision—Evidence Session 3

[235] **Lynne Neagle:** Can I welcome everybody back to the children's committee for a further evidence session on statutory advocacy provision? I'm very pleased to welcome Phil Evans, who is the director of social services in the Vale of Glamorgan, and Tanya Evans, who is the head of children's services at Blaenau Gwent and chair of the All-Wales Heads of Children's Services. Thank you both for coming, and also for the papers that you've submitted and the implementation plan. If you're happy, we'll go straight into questions. Okay, if I can just start, and ask about the implementation plan. We're grateful that we've received it and pleased that there seems to be finally some progress. Can you just tell us now then what the status of this plan is, and how that is going to be taken forward?

[236] **Mr Evans:** On behalf of Tanya and myself, can we just thank the committee for this opportunity to assist your inquiry? It's an important event for us, and a milestone, really. I think you are right to start off by prefacing any remarks you make with an understanding that there are concerns that have been expressed by a number of our key partners about how quickly this enterprise is moving, and I think we should acknowledge those concerns. I think we, obviously, understand that from the consultation responses that you've received, in terms of your inquiry, and, obviously, we've also been involved in recent discussions with the Cabinet Secretary and the Children's Commissioner for Wales, and so on. So, I think we are well aware that there's a degree of impatience that this is a national and local priority, and, therefore, we should be making as much progress as we can. So, this is a matter of urgency. I think the views of the stakeholders are quite understandable in many respects. There have been a number of false starts, over a significant number of years as well, so I can understand why people are impatient.

[237] We want to provide you with realistic reassurance today, in relation to the plan that's in place, and, hopefully, an opportunity to others who've got a keen interest in seeing progress made—we want to be able to reassure them. I think one of the reasons we can say that with confidence, to me, is that the leadership role that has been undertaken by the Welsh Government [correction: the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru] in terms of putting together the business case, and I know you've had an opportunity to see the business case. It is a very robust document and sets out all the key components of a national approach to this area of advocacy. And it was very

much a production, I think, of a change coalition, which did involve the children's commissioner, providers, local government, young people themselves. So, the business case, which sets out things like a national specification, outcomes framework, the issue around how the active offer will be made, and so on, it took a lot of debate, I think, to reach conclusions and a consensus amongst all the parties that that was the case. So, I think that's now in place.

[238] And, since then, we've been working with the regions to develop the implementation plan, which, as you say, you've had an opportunity to see now—it's in your papers. And the plan does identify how each of the regions will come forward to deliver all those components that are set out in the business case. So, there's not any intention of deviating from what was agreed at that time, so nobody is retracting from promises that were made or saying that this is not the way in which we all should proceed.

[239] I think it would be right just to say that progress is still predicated on the basis of Welsh Government coming forward with some additional finance, in terms of the active offer, and some contribution to additional services, additional quality of services, but we know that that commitment has been made. So, I think we can now confidently come to you, Chair, and say that this implementation plan is realistic, it's robust, and that it will be delivered.

11:15

[240] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Did you want to add anything?

[241] **Ms Evans:** No, thank you.

[242] **Lynne Neagle:** You said in your opening remarks that there are concerns amongst stakeholders, but obviously this hasn't been a quick journey, has it? It's been years in the making, which is why everybody's impatient. So, are those concerns now resolved, then, or, if there are still concerns, what are they and who has them?

[243] **Mr Evans:** Obviously, we're aware that the children's commissioner has already given an account to this committee in terms of the discussions that we've held—tripartite discussions involving the Welsh Local Government Association, so local government as a whole, plus the Cabinet Secretary and the children's commissioner. I believe she came away with substantial assurance that the implementation plan had been developed. I think, with

hindsight, we might have, perhaps, involved others in validating the implementation plan, but we wanted to meet with the children's commissioner and the Cabinet Secretary, because they form the strategic leadership group for this enterprise. It was important that they saw the implementation plan first. So, there are some tasks for us to do in terms of going out to other key partners and making sure that they have an awareness of the implementation plan and that all the milestones are in there, and therefore they would be in a position to hold us to account. I've been involved in discussions with individual providers of advocacy services as well, and I think my summary of those discussions are that people are reassured, but still there is some apprehension, because these are radical changes that are being introduced and will require quite a degree of momentum and proper governance and accountability.

[244] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Julie, then Llyr.

[245] **Julie Morgan:** You said that some money was needed to implement it—additional money. So, how much is that additional money? I don't know whether you've got that information.

[246] **Mr Evans:** Shall I just start on that?

[247] On this specific issue, I think it would be right to say that the implications for each local authority vary considerably, depending on the current expenditure on advocacy services, but also on the degree of need within their authority: so, the size of their looked-after children population, how many children they have on the child protection register or children with complex needs because of disability. The national approach sets out a range and level tool, which helps us to understand, I think, the capacity that's needed in each local authority and also the costs. At the moment, we only have 2014–15 figures, but, if I could give you an example, one local authority, their current spend is £52,000; the additional improvements would cost another £192,000; the active offer would cost them £33,000. Another example: current spend, £77,000; additional improvements, £26,000; active offer, £12,000. So, you can already see the variation between local authorities—

[248] **Julie Morgan:** So, each local authority is likely to have a different amount needed in addition to what is there at the moment.

[249] **Mr Evans:** Absolutely. Exactly. And I think the spend per child at that

time ranged from £222 in one local authority to £1,132 in another. So, there are marked differences between each local authority. The total expenditure across Wales at that time was £1.2 million by local authorities; it's anticipated that the national approach would cost another £1 million to implement across Wales.

[250] **Julie Morgan:** So, you have been reassured that you're going to get this money, that this money is going to be forthcoming.

[251] **Lynne Neagle:** Isn't it the case that the money has been given to local government and is actually there? Can we just clarify that, because I think it's important to bottom that out?

[252] **Mr Evans:** Yes, absolutely; that's a really helpful point. We're currently just looking at the tool again to look at 2015–16 data so we can demonstrate to local authorities the cost. I don't need to talk to this committee, I'm sure, about the current position of social services in terms of their finances and the budget pressures, shortfalls and overspends across Wales at present. We've been in discussion with the Cabinet Secretary, and he's saying that he is willing to provide for the cost of the active offer in full.

[253] **Julie Morgan:** The extra £1 million.

[254] **Mr Evans:** The extra money required for the active offer. Because the active offer is a new component of independent advocacy for children—. Independent professional advocacy for children was already an entitlement that they had under the Children Act.

[255] **Julie Morgan:** And that money is not in the local government budget at the moment?

[256] **Mr Evans:** The active offer was never part of that entitlement. So, it's a new addition for local authorities and the expectation usually is that Welsh Government will provide funding to meet new responsibilities. So, he's committed to doing that. I understand that he's also committed to making some contribution to the improvement of services in terms of quality. So, Welsh Government are talking in the region of £500,000 to £550,000 per annum as a contribution to implementing the national approach.

[257] **Julie Morgan:** And that will be enough.

[258] **Mr Evans:** That will be, we think, about half the amount of money that's required. So, this is a budget pressure for local authorities as well of another £0.5 million plus.

[259] **Julie Morgan:** So, there's £0.5 million astray somewhere.

[260] **Mr Evans:** I think all local authorities have gone forward to express this as a budget pressure for next year. Inevitably, there is competition for any resources that may be available, but we do have a commitment from local government that the national approach will be implemented in full.

[261] **Julie Morgan:** So, you don't think this finance is going to stop or hinder the implementation of this?

[262] **Mr Evans:** I think it will cause a lot of anxiety to people like myself who have to manage the budget. But the commitment has been made by directors of social services, by cabinet members, and lastly by the leaders of all the local authorities in Wales in the WLGA meeting. So, I think there is that level of commitment to finding the additional cost.

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

[264] **Llyr Gruffydd:** There's a lot of 'but's there, isn't there, really? I think that's been the situation, hasn't it, for many years, really, in terms of people perceiving, or at least believing, that one of the key barriers is a financial one, and there's still a suggestion that it is a big issue, and it doesn't fill me with confidence that this is going to happen if you're still expressing serious concerns about the budget pressures, et cetera. But the point I wanted to make on the back of that was that the children's commissioner told us last week that there was a commitment to what she described as active sign-up to this. Now, that didn't sound very promising in terms of the financial concerns that you've expressed, but is there, over and above what was discussed last week, some sort of process to ensure that that is expressed in the positive, upbeat manner that we all want it to be?

[265] **Ms Evans:** Certainly, I can confirm that there is active sign-up and there is an absolute commitment from the heads of children's services across Wales to adopt this national approach. I'd just echo the frustration that our partners have had in the delay in getting this off the ground, but, certainly, as I said with heads of service, we are very committed to making sure that this national approach goes ahead. In the implementation plan, you'll see

quite clear timelines around the stages that are needed to get these in place. We are quite sure that this national approach will be in place by June 2017, and clearly we've got to tackle things around existing contracts, and getting out of those existing contracts to bring those regional advocacy services together, because that's part of the national approach. Because it's something that we can deliver collectively as a region quite effectively. In fact, there are examples of that already across Wales, and that is working. But, certainly, as far as the implementation plan is concerned, that is something that's been developed and discussed at a technical group with heads of service from each of those regions. So, there's a nominated head represented on that technical group and they're going to be the drivers in taking this forward to make sure that there's been discussion within the region, and that we do meet the timescales that are set out in the implementation plan.

[266] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you.

[267] **Mr Evans:** Could I just perhaps expand on that, only a little? I think you're right, it's still a difficult task, but we're fairly used to accomplishing difficult tasks. I remember we had the same sort of reservations expressed—questions about good faith and whether things were achievable—in terms of the national adoption service. These changes take time. The reassurance I would want to give is that I think the implementation plan addresses those barriers, and demonstrates when they will be overcome. And even now, over the last week, I would say that some additional barriers have been overcome. Leaders will now write out [correction: On behalf of leaders, the WLGA will now write out] to all local authorities saying that they would expect this to be implemented in full, and have endorsed the implementation plan. So, I think it feels to me as though there is a real commitment behind this. And I think we must accept the children's commissioner's view, which is, actually, if it's not done in every local authority and every region, and every child doesn't have their entitlement, we've no right to describe it as a national approach.

[268] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, as far as you're concerned, it is going to happen, barring any unforeseen set of circumstances, but, as far as you can see, there's no reason at all why the outlined timeline now will not be achieved.

[269] **Mr Evans:** Tanya is a good example of that. Each region now has a lead authority that will undertake the commissioning exercise for the national approach. In Gwent, Tanya has already described local authorities working together to commission an advocacy service. The other two directors in the

region have indicated that they're quite happy to join within that consortium to commission by June 2017 a service for Gwent. So, I think we're already over some of those hurdles in a number of regions, but we have to ensure that every region is fully on board.

[270] **Lynne Neagle:** Darren.

[271] **Darren Millar:** Can I just ask about the capacity of service providers to deliver a new national approach? Obviously, some local authorities use very localised services that are just based in those local authority areas. So, a switch to a regional focus might be trickier for them to achieve. Is that an issue that has come up in discussion at all?

[272] **Ms Evans:** It's quite interesting, actually, to see the map of providers across Wales, because obviously we discuss this at our heads of service meetings. It seems that some of the providers do provide the service regionally, so it might be quite easy for a provider to do so. So, I'll give you the example for Gwent. Three out of—in fact, four out of the five authorities have the same provider currently. So, from a provider's point of view, there wouldn't be a huge jump to provide that service to another local authority. However, in other areas of Wales, there are regions with different providers. So, I think, you know—. You certainly wouldn't have the same provider across Wales, and I wouldn't advocate that that was necessarily the right road to go down anyway, but it is going to be a bit of a challenge, because, obviously, we have to get out of the contracts and there are timelines in that. But, from a capacity point of view for providers, I'm not sure, unless Phil wants to add anything that he's aware of in relation to the Valleys.

[273] **Mr Evans:** I could describe what happened in mid and west Wales, where they've gone out to commission on the basis of the national approach. They started off with a dialogue with, I think, 16 providers who expressed an interest, but actually only two providers came forward in terms of wanting to actually make a tender. So, I think you're right. But I think the national approach will also in some areas encourage small providers to come together in a consortium, on a collaborative basis, I think. And our duty is to promote that—to try to ensure that social enterprises and collaboratives have an opportunity to be involved in these sorts of commissioning exercises. So, I think it's both an opportunity, but clearly also it is dependent on providers coming forward and wanting to undertake this work. But I think our conversations with Tros Gynnal and other providers would say that they would want to do this. They have a commitment to it.

[274] **Darren Millar:** And, just in terms of commissioning the work, obviously it can't be commissioned until the national independent advocacy standards and framework have been agreed with the Welsh Government, and, as I understand it, those haven't been settled or finalised as yet. There's no date alongside that commitment in the implementation plan. It's the only one where there is no date at all. It's not flagged as red, amber or green. It's just white and it says 'to be confirmed'. So, to what extent is that a potential hold-up in the system?

11:30

[275] **Ms Evans:** Effectively, that framework has already been—there's a lot of work that's already happened. So, it is simply—I say 'simply', but these things are never simple—that there is a consultation exercise that needs to happen and that's the main focus of that piece of work.

[276] **Mr Evans:** There is a draft already within the national approach that was the result of considerable consultation and engagement. So, it feels to me as though the consultation should be very quick.

[277] **Darren Millar:** The evidence from the children's commissioner was pretty thin in respect of how this service would operate because nothing had been formally agreed at that time.

[278] **Mr Evans:** I think it's probably the code of practice that will need more work and updating, to ensure that this new approach is assimilated within the code of practice. What's also happened over the past week is we've been given money by Welsh Government to second a senior manager from one of the providers. We've pulled out all the stops and actually got that secondment in place, starting tomorrow.

[279] **Darren Millar:** So, that appointment's been made—the implementation manager.

[280] **Mr Evans:** It's only for the next—. The implementation manager will be in post for the next six months to assist Welsh Government and local authorities with implementing the plan, but also undertaking these sorts of exercises. So, we have created capacity to enable us to move quickly.

[281] **Darren Millar:** You've made reference to the meeting of local authority

leaders and the subscription of cabinet members to the implementation plan. Are there any votes that need to take place in local authorities in order to authorise the progress?

[282] **Mr Evans:** It will be a different approach in different regions.

[283] **Darren Millar:** The problem we've got is that we've got local authority elections coming up in May, haven't we?

[284] **Mr Evans:** And we have 22 local authorities.

[285] **Darren Millar:** Exactly. It's like trying to get an EU treaty ratified, to some extent, because if one pulls out and says, 'We're not making any commitment', does that impede progress of the national approach? Of course it does. You seem to have a high degree of confidence that that buy-in is there, but to what extent are you confident that it will always be there, particularly beyond the elections?

[286] **Mr Evans:** In many respects, this work is already being undertaken now. We've said—haven't we—that a number of regions have already adopted this national approach and are moving forward with it at pace. There are a few authorities that are just starting on that journey now. I don't anticipate that it's a political issue, partly because—it's interesting, isn't it—some of the reassurance, for me, comes from the fact that I think the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 makes a fundamental difference to the way in which people are now beginning to engage in these exercises. The regional partnership boards are beginning to find their feet. So, most of these exercises will be overseen by the regional partnerships boards. They are places where decisions can be made without necessarily needing cabinet endorsement or to go through scrutiny committees. From our point of view, it's a commissioning exercise. If the money is there and everybody is signed up to the approach without dissent, then there's no reason why they can't proceed.

[287] **Darren Millar:** And just one final question on the finance, as you've made mention of this additional £500,000 to £550,000 that will be required from the Government in order to make this happen and that that commitment has been given. But, did I hear you earlier, Mr Evans, refer to the actual cost being much greater than that? So, it's local taxpayers who are going to pick up the gap in terms of the cost, is it, from local authority budgets elsewhere?

[288] **Mr Evans:** I think it's a reflection of the fact that local authorities recognise that this is a priority. It's something where they have been intent on making sure that we comply with legislation as quickly as possible. So, it's one of those first steps that we have to take in terms of making sure that we are compliant and that we also improve the service that's available.

[289] **Darren Millar:** So, the actual cost is around that £1 million mark. That's the estimate, yes?

[290] **Mr Evans:** In terms of the local authorities' contribution, at the moment, we're currently updating the figures on 2015–16 information, but we would anticipate it's in the region of £0.5 million plus. The impact of that won't be felt immediately because the active offer will come into effect first and only gradually will the use of advocacy services increase as a result of the active offer. So, it will be timed over three years probably. I think there are good arguments to say that effective advocacy can actually save costs to local authorities. If we have more placement stability and if we have children who are more engaged in their plans and, therefore, feel that their voices are being heard, I think there are good opportunities in areas such as less school exclusion. It feels, from our point of view, that this is a reasonable invest-to-save from a local authority perspective.

[291] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Oscar.

[292] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you very much Phil and Tanya. The Children and Young People Committee in 2008, 2009 and 2010—our predecessor—made nearly 30 recommendations in three reports. Was there a roll-out of some recommendations in the system or are there still some missing? That's one part. And, secondly, do you agree that further engagement with local authorities across Wales is needed to help ensure that consent is secured, given that each local authority is responsible for ensuring compliance?

[293] **Ms Evans:** I think we mustn't come away from the fact that local authorities are already delivering advocacy services. I think it's more about the approach and making sure that we've got this national approach and this common offer to children across Wales. So, the foundations are already there. I think that Phil mentioned the discussions that have occurred with the directors and with the Welsh Local Government Association and, of course, the leaders of the council, and I'm not sure that there is a need for that.

[294] I think we've had agreement and the consent to take this forward and I really do believe that those around the table see the benefit of it and the need to have this national approach—not just for the reasons that Phil has outlined, but also because it's a fundamental part of safeguarding children as well. So, I think that probably we already have that. We will continue, obviously, because you're right: we're not naïve in our thinking because trying to get 22 local authorities on the same boat, going in the same direction, can be a bit of a challenge. So, by sitting down with my heads of children colleagues, we are absolutely committed to making sure that this national approach is adopted.

[295] **Lynne Neagle:** Given how important advocacy is and that we're talking about the most vulnerable children in our society and that the reports we've had, like Waterhouse, have highlighted the contribution that advocacy can play in actually keeping children safe, do you think it should have taken this long to get to this point?

[296] **Ms Evans:** I think it has been a challenge and I think there's been changes of personnel that have been driving this issue forward—these task and finish groups forward—which hasn't helped. I think we've also had other conflicting imperatives, so we've had to do a lot of work this year, and prior to April of this year, on implementing the whole of the social services and well-being Act. So, it's not that there is an unwillingness to take this forward; it's just that we've been trying to juggle so many large balls over the last couple of years that it has been particularly challenging. But I just wanted to re-emphasise that there is an absolute commitment. There is a technical group that Phil is chairing, which, as I said, each head of service from each of the regions is sitting on now, and I'm really hopeful that that's going to be the driving force to make sure that this goes ahead and that the implementation plan is actioned.

[297] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay.

[298] **Mr Evans:** It feels to me as though, I think, that it's one of the Acts that does make such a substantial difference, in terms of the fact that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is embedded in the Act and we must have due regard to these rights. It feels to me as though the profile of statutory independent advocacy has risen substantially since the Act was put in place. There is a code of practice. The Act enhances the accountability of people like the statutory director of social services and the

regional partnership boards, which have to provide annual accounts of how they're introducing these changes. It just feels to me that there is a far more substantial profile for this work now, but also some substantial mechanisms in place to ensure accountability and good governance. And I think that's what this committee, I'm sure, will depend upon.

[299] But, underpinning that—and I think this is where our experience of the national adoption service is important—what's driven change, in many respects, is having a performance framework. It's actually knowing what happens in each local authority and within each region, and having information published on a quarterly basis, and on an annual basis, that actually allows comparisons to be made, so, therefore, there isn't any hiding place in terms of the quality of the services that are being provided. I'm certain that the same thing will apply in terms of the national approach to advocacy—that the more we embed the performance framework in place, then the more there will be evidence for our committees and your committee to say if it's working or not.

[300] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, I've got quite a few Members on this now. I've got Mike, then Llyr.

[301] **Llyr Gruffydd:** I just wanted to pick up, really, on the concerns about the lack of strategic leadership from Welsh Government on this. Because, as the Chair said, we can trace it back to Waterhouse and we've had a number of reports from our predecessor committees and children's commissioners in the past—we've had four, at least, reports. You've described this as, I think, a fundamental part of safeguarding children. Well, surely then, there's a criticism that has to be levied against the Welsh Government for its lack of strategic leadership here.

[302] **Mr Evans:** In many respects, and having been involved in these debates over a long period of time, I think it has taken a considerable period for people to understand what's needed in terms of change. I think people knew change was necessary, but actually to set that out in a business case, and then put it within an implementation plan, I think has taken a considerable time. And local government has to accept a responsibility for that as well—I wouldn't want to offload it onto anybody else.

[303] I think this has been a priority for successive administrations within Welsh Government. So, they've maintained that dialogue, they've maintained pressure on ADSS Cymru, to make sure that we will deliver. They helped us

to design the national approach, and we're fully involved in that process. They want to see good practice in relation to commissioning and delivery, making sure that we have proper standards, and that people are adhering to those. There is a very substantial commitment of additional funds—£0.5 million, in our terms, is an important contribution in terms of getting this over the line. And, obviously, they've been very keen to embed the active offer within any national approach and they've committed to that. They are funding the implementation manager for a period of six months.

[304] I think it has been a collective enterprise. We had to have a coalition for change, which is local government, central Government, the children's commissioner, providers and children and young people themselves. I think it's the only way in which a radical change of this nature ever actually gets taken forward. So, I think the Welsh Government have made efforts to ensure that the momentum has been maintained over the last two years.

[305] **Llyr Gruffydd:** But, would you accept that we could have got to this point much sooner?

[306] **Mr Evans:** We wanted to get to this point much sooner. I think Tanya's right: there was the little matter of the social services and well-being Act, which probably preoccupied Welsh Government, as it did us, for a significant period of time, and it still isn't done, of course.

[307] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Mike.

[308] **Mike Hedges:** Earlier, you talked about costs, and you talked about a three-year programme. Were the costs you're talking about the cost at the end of the three years, or the implementation cost within the first year?

[309] **Mr Evans:** They are what is anticipated using the level and range tool, to say, 'This is the sort of capacity that you will need when the system is fully operative.' So, we anticipate it will grow year by year.

[310] **Mike Hedges:** So, it's year 3 cost, not year 1 cost.

[311] **Mr Evans:** It's year 3 cost.

[312] **Mike Hedges:** Do you know what the year 1 costs are likely to be?

[313] **Mr Evans:** That is an excellent question, and, of course, I don't have

the answer to it.

[314] **Lynne Neagle:** Maybe we could have a note on it.

[315] **Mr Evans:** As I say, we're looking again at the 2015–16 figures, so it's probably more useful to committee to have those, when they're available, and that should be over the next couple of months.

11:45

[316] **Mike Hedges:** I'm not on this committee—I'm just a visitor—but I think probably it might be useful for this committee as a cost profile over the three years until it reaches full cost. The other question I've got: you've used the word 'region', and I live in Swansea, which is always interesting—is it a different region, is it a health region, is it a city region, is it an education consortium region, or has somebody created a new distinctively different region for this?

[317] **Mr Evans:** In social care terms, to some extent, we know that mandatory collaboration is around the health board boundaries. So, that's been our presumption, because then that means you can use the regional partnership boards to have oversight. The only exceptions that I'm aware of is Mid and West Wales. Because Powys was finding it difficult to act on its own as a region in its own right, they saw merit in joining up with the three west Wales authorities in terms of commissioning for this purpose. But primarily it's down to the health board boundaries.

[318] **Mike Hedges:** It's the health board boundaries. Okay, thank you.

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

[320] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair. I think the question has been answered to the question Mike asked, but I will still ask one little—. In the latest atmosphere in the country, children, when they grow older, tell the world what happened to them at a young age. That area is pretty serious these days and very well documented everywhere. So, what is advocacy doing in that field so that children at a young age are not used and abused, and that you are there to help them?

[321] **Ms Evans:** Sorry, I didn't quite catch the—

[322] **Mr Evans:** It's the influence that advocacy can have in terms of safeguarding children from abuse.

[323] **Ms Evans:** Yes, absolutely. I think it is a vehicle, and a very important vehicle, but it isn't the only vehicle. I think we need to bear that in mind. But we can't underestimate how important it is because, obviously, particularly with the independent advocacy offer, it's somebody outside of that child's circle that they may be able to have the trust in disclosing if there is abuse going on. Conversely, it might be that they don't disclose because they haven't got a formed relationship with that child. So, I think we need to be careful. It absolutely has its place, and it absolutely will serve us in helping to expand the areas and the opportunities for children to be safeguarded. So, I absolutely see the national approach to advocacy helping in that way because, as I said previously, the national approach will develop a system whereby, regardless of where a child lives in Wales, it won't be a postcode lottery then. They'll all have the same offer and the same input from independent advocacy.

[324] **Mohammad Asghar:** My point is not the Welsh perspective; I'm talking about the other side of the border and how you co-operate with them. Because Esther Rantzen—she's with Save the Children. And there was Jimmy Savile and other couple of events. This certainly has triggered seriousness in all children affairs. So, we need to make sure that Wales is safe and secure for our young children and young people.

[325] **Mr Evans:** I think the point that Tanya is making is that there's a raft of mechanisms that need to be in place to ensure that that's the case. You can't depend upon any one institution, not even advocacy, to safeguard all children. You have to have helplines; you have to ensure that the collaboration between the police and social services is as robust as possible; you have to disrupt predatory behaviour. I think what advocacy does is provide an opportunity for additional safeguards in making the active offer. One of the things we would expect somebody to explain to children is their rights and, if they feel that their rights are being infringed in some way, then there are people that they can turn to outside the system. So, not necessarily those who are caring for them, but somebody outside who can actually ensure that that issue is taken up and brought to a proper resolution. I think that is a very important additional safeguard, but it is only one of many that need to be in place, I agree.

[326] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. The implementation plan you provided us

with is colour coded. Can you just clarify for the record what the colour coding means? Is it simply a staging process of the timescales? Can I just ask as well: it's my understanding that all local authorities should have made an active sign-up to the national approach by January? Can you confirm that that will happen as far as you're concerned and that the national approach will be fully implemented by June 2017?

[327] **Mr Evans:** You're going to hold our feet to the fire now, aren't you, to make sure that we're absolutely sure that this will take place? I think you're right to do so. After so many false starts, I'm sure that a degree of scepticism is almost inevitable. I think the point I made earlier that the Welsh Local Government Association, on behalf of leaders, will be writing out to all local authorities now, following the meeting last Friday, to say, 'This is the expectation; we want you to demonstrate that the commitment is there' and I'm sure the deadline for that will be before the end of this financial year.

[328] The status of the plan, by and large, is red. Green means it's on track, amber means that there are some concerns and risks that are in place and need to be addressed. But, for each of those concerns, there is strong mitigation to make sure that we are able to overcome those barriers. Am I confident that this will happen? Are we confident that this will happen? It feels to me as though there is sufficient momentum behind this now—sufficient oversight. And I think this inquiry will very much contribute to maintaining that profile over the next six months, and, by June, there is every intention that this national approach will be in place across all the regions.

[329] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Llyr.

[330] **Llyr Gruffydd:** On the commitment from the Cabinet Secretary in terms of the additional funding, is that for a specified length of time, or is that an ongoing commitment?

[331] **Mr Evans:** We anticipate that it will be in the form of a grant initially, and that money is available this year for those who want to proceed with the active offer from January, and some regions are in the position where they could do that. I think it will probably be a grant for next year, but, thereafter, it will go into the settlement for local authorities. So, it is a long-term commitment.

[332] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. We've got the Cabinet Secretary coming in in two weeks' time to discuss this with him in detail. So, I suppose

this is your opportunity, really—if you feel there’s anything that you want the committee to say to him that you need in order to make this happen by the timescale set, now is your chance to tell us.

[333] **Mr Evans:** I think the implementation plan does set out some tasks that Welsh Government themselves will have to undertake. You’ll note that there’s no colour status for those and there are no time constraints. I think it would be entirely proper for you to ask whether those gaps can be filled in by the time the Cabinet Secretary appears. I’m sure that he will be able to do that, but I think it would maybe give you some additional reassurance as well.

[334] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Are there any other questions from Members? No? Okay, well, can I thank you both for attending and for answering our questions? You will receive a transcript of the session for you to check for accuracy, but thank you very much for coming.

[335] **Mr Evans:** Again, thank you for the attention that you’ve paid to this really important issue. I’m sure it will be a help to us in terms of ensuring full implementation.

[336] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you very much.

11:53

Papurau i’w Nodi Papers to Note

[337] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. We will move on now then to item 5—papers to note. It’s just one today, which is the letter that we sent to the Business Committee on the timetable for the ALN Bill. Are Members happy to note that? Okay.

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o weddill y Cyfarfod

Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Remainder of 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 accordance with Standing Order 17.42(ix).

*Cynigiwyd y cynnig.
Motion moved.*

[338] **Lynne Neagle:** Item 6, then, is the motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public for the remainder of the meeting. Are Members content? Okay, thank you.

[339] **Mike Hedges:** This probably isn't ideal, but I need to leave.

[340] **Lynne Neagle:** If you like. Thank you, Mike, for coming.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11:54.
The public part of the meeting ended at 11:54.*