



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

## **Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg** **The Children, Young People and Education Committee**

**Dydd Mercher, 12 Chwefror 2014**  
**Wednesday, 12 February 2014**

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Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting

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

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

### **Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol** **Committee members in attendance**

Keith Davies

Llafur

Labour

Suzy Davies

Ceidwadwyr Cymreig

Welsh Conservatives

Rebecca Evans	Llafur Labour
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Chair of the Committee)
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
David Rees	Llafur Labour
Aled Roberts	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats

**Eraill yn bresennol  
Others in attendance**

Kate Cassidy	Cyfarwyddwr yr Adran Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi, Llywodraeth Cymru Director, Communities and Tackling Poverty, Welsh Government
Vaughan Gething	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (y Dirprwy Weinidog Trechu Tlodi) Assembly Member, Labour (the Deputy Minister for Tackling Poverty)
Martin Swain	Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr, Plant, Pobl Ifanc a Theuluoedd, Llywodraeth Cymru Deputy Director, Children, Young People and Families, Welsh Government

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

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

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

**Cyflwyniadau, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon  
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Children, Young People and Education Committee. I will just go through the usual housekeeping rules, regulations or whatever else we want to call them. I ask you to switch off your mobile phones, if you please, as they affect the translation and the broadcasting equipment. If you need to have translation from Welsh to English, it is available on channel 1. Channel 0 provides an amplification of the discussion on the floor, should you need it. We are not expecting the fire alarm to operate, so, if it does, we will take our directions from the ushers, or you can follow me, because at this point I always say that I will be one of the first out of the building. We have had apologies from Lynne Neagle this morning, and Angela will join us a little late as she has another meeting prior to this committee meeting. Do Members need to declare anything that they have not already declared on the Members' register of interests? No? Okay. That is fine.

## **Sesiwn i Graffu ar Waith y Gweinidog: Y Dirprwy Weinidog Trechu Tlodi**

### **Ministerial Scrutiny Session: The Deputy Minister for Tackling Poverty**

[2] **Ann Jones:** Our session this morning is the ministerial scrutiny session with the Deputy Minister for Tackling Poverty. I am very pleased to welcome Vaughan Gething as the Deputy Minister for Tackling Poverty to the committee. You are welcome. You have with you Martin Swain, who is the deputy director of the children, young people and families division, and Kate Cassidy, who is the director of the communities and tackling poverty division. Good. It is always a good start that we have that right. Thank you very much for your paper. We have a substantial amount of questions. I know that we have around an hour and a half, but past experience shows that we do not really get to the end of the questions. So, if it is all right with you, could we start with questions?

[3] **The Deputy Minister for Tackling Poverty (Vaughan Gething):** Of course.

[4] **Ann Jones:** Thank you very much. That is great. We are looking at three areas: we will look at Flying Start, the child poverty strategy, and then we have some other issues around Communities First, Families First and play. Those are the areas that we are looking at, and then, if there is time at the end, anything else that people may want to ask you. Those are basically the main things that we want to look at. Perhaps we could start with Flying Start. I know that it is all very much integrated, but perhaps we could start with Flying Start. Rebecca has the first set of questions around the impact report.

[5] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes. Thank you, Chair. Before I move into some specific questions on the impact report, I would like to ask you for your general response to the report and whether you have any plans to review the roll-out of the programme in the light of what the report finds.

[6] **Vaughan Gething:** Good morning to the whole committee. I am very pleased to be here. The impact report, and the suite of evaluation reports that we have had so far on Flying Start, I think are very useful for us in having an objective view on the impact of Flying Start so far and in helping us to flag up areas for improvement. I think that Flying Start is already making a difference that is positive and one that we can be proud of, but I certainly do not take the position that that means that there is nothing that we could or should improve upon. I have been very clear with staff in the Welsh Government, account managers and the Flying Start teams themselves that the impact and evaluation reports rather give us plenty of thought for consideration about what we could and should do better, because it does reveal for me elements of excellence, but also elements of unevenness, where we want to see an improvement across each of the four aspects of Flying Start provision. I think that there are good grounds to look at what we have done that we want to see more of, and that should definitely affect what we do with the roll-out. My primary obsession with Flying Start is improving the consistency and the quality because, otherwise, it will not make the decisive difference that we all think it could and should.

[7] **Rebecca Evans:** In terms of areas for improvement, the report found that there was no statistically significant difference between Flying Start areas and the non-Flying Start comparison areas in terms of outcomes for children in areas such as child cognitive and language skills, their social and emotional development, and their independence and self-regulation. Why do you think this is, how do you intend to address it, and when do you think that we will start seeing statistically significant differences in that area?

[8] **Vaughan Gething:** I think that some of this is the challenge that we have in evaluation, because, looking at the comparator group and the Flying Start group, they are not similar groups. The comparator group is not as disadvantaged as the Flying Start cohort of

parents and children. Perhaps I could explain that, given where we started, when the evaluation was commissioned, Flying Start had already been rolled out. So, there had not been a baseline conducted before Flying Start actually rolled out itself. So, within those Flying Start areas, you could not conduct a baseline in that way.

[9] Even with the roll-out areas, we are not going to ask the health visitor service to undertake a population-based survey. I will talk about going forward with evaluating in a moment. The evaluation that was undertaken looked at the next cohort upward, as it were. Given what we understand about child development and educational achievement and the relationship between income poverty and achievement, it is entirely reasonable to assume that those children would be achieving at a higher level than the Flying Start cohort. That is why, if you look at the evaluation evidence, you will see that it says that it is reasonable to conclude that Flying Start is the intervention that has made the difference—it has lifted up the achievement of those families. The problem is that that is entirely reasonable and logical to assume, but you cannot categorically say that that is the intervention. No other interventions have taken place. We cannot categorically state that Flying Start families start at a lower base, but I would say that there is no other reasonable or logical conclusion to draw. So, Flying Start has achieved, but the problem is where we started from with the evaluation.

[10] Moving forward with the roll out, there is one thing that we will be able to do, because of the foundation phase assessment coming in. The Minister for Education and Skills and I have had a number of conversations around child development assessment. The foundation phase is going to have an assessment tool that is consistent with the schedule of growing skills used in Flying Start. We will have consistency across Flying Start and the foundation phase. That means that, in roll-out areas, we will have an assessment in the foundation phase, before the Flying Start intervention, and we will then be able to compare that to post-Flying Start intervention. So, moving forward, we will have a much clearer base line.

[11] The other point that I would make about the Flying Start baseline is that within the tackling poverty action plan we have a baseline for Flying Start—some 55% of children to achieve or over achieve their child developmental goals, as expected. That was in the statistical bulletin released in autumn last year. That gives us a baseline so that, year on year, we will be able to look at Flying Start achievement as we move forward. I accept that there is a flaw—well, I would not say a flaw, but there is a challenge in the Flying Start evaluation and the evaluation reports we have done properly highlight that. I have no difficulty with that. There is still a reasonable base to conclude that Flying Start has had an impact and will have an impact and, as we move forward, we will have a much more robust way to compare and interrogate the impact Flying Start will continue to have.

[12] **Rebecca Evans:** Do you think that it is more than a challenge in terms of the quality of the evidence you have in this report? It seems to me, from what you have said, that the report is fundamentally flawed if you are not comparing like with like.

[13] **Vaughan Gething:** I do not think that it is fundamentally flawed. The evaluation tells us a number of things about the variation in the quality of what we do and the response of Flying Start parents. For example, the Flying Start parent cohort has a very high satisfaction and awareness rate of support for parenting. We know that parental involvement and engagement is hugely important to childhood achievement. That highlights one of the things that I want to see happen in the roll-out. Almost all of the assessment and interrogation of Flying Start at the outset was about child development. We have never really properly looked at the impact on parents, as parents and as just being adults, and their perception, self-worth and views. We know that Flying Start engagement has helped a number of parents address issues around their own basic skills. We know that getting parents to read to children and listen to children read is a big factor. However, if the parents have had a poor educational

experience, for example in terms of literacy, then that is unlikely to happen. I am keen that, as we move forward with Flying Start, we look not just at what happens with the children but also what happens with the parent and carer group, and try to assess what the impact of Flying Start is there.

[14] I would not say that it is fundamentally flawed. It provides challenges for us, but it also provides really useful and helpful objective messages about where we need to see improvement. I was very upfront about that when I previously came to committee and I will be today. I have also been very upfront about that when talking to Flying Start teams. In terms of the confidence and positivity around the prospect for improvement, a lot of that is about the fact that you have an incredibly committed team of Flying Start professionals, right across different disciplines. In many ways, Flying Start is what we want to see more of. We want to see more professionals going across organisational boundaries and being much more committed to helping the group of citizens at the centre that should benefit from the service and being a bit less worried about what organisation they work for and trying to make the service work.

[15] **Rebecca Evans:** You mentioned quite a list there of the positive outcomes for parents as a result of Flying Start. Some of the areas that would need improvement in terms of the impact report are parenting self-confidence, mental health and home environment measures. How do you intend to address those?

[16] **Vaughan Gething:** This is the challenge that we have with our Flying Start staff and people engaging in the programme. It is about looking at what works and works best. This goes back to the point about unevenness. In some parts of the programme, there is better engagement within the home, and it also goes back to the key starting point of Flying Start, which is the health visiting service. Without the capped numbers, without having greater capacity for health visitors to interact with those families, you are unlikely to see a successful outcome in engagement in other parts of the programme. So, it is still about how we address that unevenness, how we look at the best performing Flying Start settings and how we challenge and support other Flying Start settings to have a similar impact.

[17] So, I accept and acknowledge that there are still challenges, but you would expect there to be challenges because the families we are dealing with are the most disadvantaged and, at the most complex end, as the initial report on the impact on high-needs families set out, these are families with the highest set of complex needs and challenges—a whole range of challenges. So, you would expect there to be challenges around addressing those issues around the family context. You would expect that, even with this intervention, you will not have a hugely successful outcome with every single family. However, we know from that report that the impact on those families is significant; it has made a huge difference to their perception of themselves and the area they live in and to their engagement in their child's learning. So, again, I accept that there are challenges, there is unevenness, there is a need to improve, but I do not think that we would accept that we are in a position where Flying Start has not done what we want it to or that we do not have the prospect of it doing better in future—that is certainly my expectation.

[18] **Ann Jones:** Simon is next and then Keith.

[19] **Simon Thomas:** I just have a couple of questions to follow that up. Why was evaluation not built in at the start?

[20] **Vaughan Gething:** My understanding is that there was always the prospect that evaluation would take place, but the Flying Start programme was implemented and then the evaluation was commissioned. Now, obviously, I was not even an Assembly Member when Flying Start started—

- [21] **Simon Thomas:** Neither was I. [*Laughter.*]
- [22] **Ann Jones:** No, but you are the Deputy Minister responsible for it now, so there. That is an excuse. [*Laughter.*]
- [23] **Vaughan Gething:** Yes. So, I am not going to pretend—
- [24] **Simon Thomas:** I was not in a position to ask this question then either.
- [25] **Vaughan Gething:** I am not going to pretend that I was there at the start, but either Martin or Kate might be able to help on what happened at the outset of the programme.
- [26] **Mr Swain:** There are different stages to the evaluation. There are four parts to Flying Start. The process evaluation did start very quickly after the programme was instigated—
- [27] **Simon Thomas:** Yes, but I am talking about impact evaluation—
- [28] **Mr Swain:** Yes, but—
- [29] **Simon Thomas:** The process is fine. That is box-ticking, is it not?
- [30] **Vaughan Gething:** I do not think it is quite just box-ticking—
- [31] **Simon Thomas:** It is making sure that the money is not being fraudulently used. That is fine, but we are talking about impact here, are we not?
- [32] **Vaughan Gething:** To be fair, I think that it is about a fair bit more than that. The process of evaluating—
- [33] **Simon Thomas:** [*Inaudible.*]—the outcomes of this.
- [34] **Vaughan Gething:** To say that it is just box-ticking is not fair. There is a fair point to be made about impact.
- [35] **Mr Swain:** It is definitely about more than just making sure that the money is spent because, actually, that is programme monitoring. There are a few stages to Flying Start evaluation. There is process evaluation, implementation evaluation and outcome evaluation. The three stages happen at different times. We did have significant delays in terms of the impact side of it because we needed to get postcode data from DWP and it took an awful long time to get it. So, although we had an area-based programme, in order to identify the families at postcode level who were going to receive Flying Start because of their income levels and their eligibility for benefits—. We did not hold those data, so there were some delays on that. However, it is actually not unusual for evaluation to start afterwards. We have learnt lessons from that. That is why, with Families First, the evaluation team was in situ when we started the programme. It is important that there are three stages to that and that is why there is a suite of evaluation reports.
- [36] **Simon Thomas:** That is why this report, the one before us today, is very clear that evaluation was commissioned after the roll-out of the programme had begun. I understand what you are saying about the availability of evidence, but, reading through the report, the availability of the baseline is one of the reasons why the best conclusion in this report is that it is possible that Flying Start has had a positive impact. If you have spent £180 million, I would hope to have a report that said something better than that it is possible that it has had a positive impact. I would want a report that said, ‘It has had a positive impact’. Are you not

disappointed?

09:45

[37] **Vaughan Gething:** In terms of where we are with the evaluation, I would obviously prefer it if we had a much more robust baseline at the outset. That is not where we are. Looking at what the programme has done, the money that we have committed and what we understand about early intervention and the value of it, I still think that Flying Start is well worth while. I still think that we can look at the outcomes. I do not think that it is logical or reasonable to conclude otherwise than that it is the Flying Start intervention that has made a difference.

[38] As we go forward, as I was explaining in answer to questions from Rebecca Evans, I expect that we will have even more evidence about the impact of Flying Start. The year-on-year statistical release that we will do will certainly tell us about the progress of Flying Start and the impact that it is having, but if you look at the evidence nationally and internationally, if you look at Sure Start and what it did when it was well funded and well supported and if you look at other international evidence about early intervention with children and families, you will see that there is a really significant base of evidence for why we have these programmes. On the individual evaluation that we are doing here, yes, it would be preferable if we had a different form of baseline evaluation, but that is not where we are, and I am not going to pretend otherwise.

[39] **Simon Thomas:** That is a fair point, and I do not think that anyone is questioning early intervention. There is plenty of international evidence for it. What we are saying is that this evaluation of this particular scheme has not yet come to the conclusion that I would have hoped that it would come to after spending significant sums of money.

[40] **Vaughan Gething:** In terms of the evaluation that we have, it is what it is, and as I explained earlier in answer to questions, we are left in a position to think that it is logical and reasonable to conclude that Flying Start has had an impact. I would like to be able to give you something even more robust than that. I think that we will be able to give you that as we move forward. Also, in terms of what we are doing for our own reassurance, we had a small piece of work done by Professor Edward Melhuish to look at this, and I am happy to make that available to the committee. That looks at what we have done, why we have done it and how we have done it. It has given us some really useful points about being obsessed with the quality of the intervention in Flying Start to make the biggest difference.

[41] **Simon Thomas:** Is that a more qualitative type of approach, that work that you just mentioned?

[42] **Vaughan Gething:** Yes, he has done a short review of what has happened and of the evidence that we have had come in so far, and I am happy to make that available to the committee.

[43] **Simon Thomas:** That would be useful.

[44] **Ann Jones:** That would be useful to look at. I have got a number of Members who wish to come in on this very first set of questions, so we are going to have to make some progress. I have Keith, Aled and then Suzy, just on this, and then we will see if we can make some progress.

[45] **Keith Davies:** Bore da. Gofynnaf fy nghwestiynau yn Gymraeg. Rwyf am ddilyn, fwy neu lai, yr hyn roedd Simon yn ei **Keith Davies:** Good morning. I will ask my questions in Welsh. I want to follow what Simon was saying about evaluation, really. I

ddweud am werthuso. Rwy'n cofio i rywun a oedd yn gadeirydd cyngor ysgol ofyn i fi, rai blynyddoedd yn ôl, i fynd ag ef i ardal weddol anodd yn y Cymoedd. Rwy'n cofio mynd i'r ardal hon a mynd i mewn i ysgol feithrin fach gyda 25 o blant—21 ohonynt yn dod o gartrefi lle'r oedd y rhieni wedi ysgaru ac yn y blaen—ac wedyn mynd i mewn i ddsbarth derbyn a gofyn i'r athrawes, 'Beth yw'r peth anoddaf yr ydych yn ei wynebu pan fyddwch yn cael dosbarth fel hyn am y tro cyntaf?' Ateb yr athrawes oedd, 'Cael y plant i wrando.' Pan oeddwn i'n edrych ar yr adroddiad hwn, sylwais nad ydych wedi gofyn i athrawon dosbarth derbyn mewn ysgolion a yw *Flying Start* wedi gwella pethau. Dechreuoch yn 2006 neu 2007, felly mae wedi bod yn mynd am chwe blynedd, felly mae tair blynedd o blant wedi symud o'r teulu neu ysgol feithrin i mewn i ddsbarth derbyn. A yw'r ysgolion yn gweld bod pethau wedi gwella yn yr ardaloedd yr ydych chi wedi bod yn eu cefnogi?

remember, some years ago, somebody who was a chair of a schools council asking me to take him to quite a difficult area in the Valleys. I remember going to this area and going into a small nursery school with 25 children—21 of whom came from broken homes and so on—and then going into a reception class and asking the teacher, 'What is the most difficult thing that faces you when you get a class like this for the first time?' The answer from the teacher was, 'Getting the children to listen.' When I was looking at this report, I noticed that you have not asked the teachers of reception classes in schools whether Flying Start has improved things. You started in 2006 or 2007, so it has been going for six years, so three years of children have moved from the family or a nursery into a reception class. Are schools seeing that things have improved in the areas that you have been supporting?

[46] **Vaughan Gething:** It is a fair point. We get lots of anecdotal evidence. At every Flying Start visit that I do, reception teachers, when you go to talk to them, say, 'You can tell who the Flying Start children are in terms of their readiness to learn, their confidence and their social skills.' There are simple things like the fact that Flying Start children are toilet trained and a number of children are not. So, you do see that difference.

[47] In terms of being able to give you objective evidence about that, that is one of the points that I was trying to make about looking backwards, because we are going to have people who were at the start of the programme and are now reaching the end of the foundation phase, so we will be looking back at what has happened with that whole cohort of children. We will be looking backwards to see what has been the difference that we have made, and we are looking at the available evidence in terms of the data from health and education about those children. In terms of future evaluation, we will be doing that backward look as well as looking forwards in terms of a baseline for new roll-out areas, and that will definitely mean contact with schools. It is part of the reason why I and the Minister for education have had conversations about making sure that we get an assessment tool for foundation phase that is consistent with Flying Start.

[48] That should also be consistent with the assessment tool that the generic health visitor service uses as well. Again, there is a comparison across between Flying Start communities and non-Flying Start communities using the same form of assessment. It has not always been the case. We know that, previously, health visitor services have used slightly different tools in different areas. That is an issue to challenge. It is also about making sure that the schools have a consistent assessment. In virtually every visit that I have made, the school has been positive about Flying Start. We need to go from the anecdotal to a more objective evaluation that says, 'What is the impact? How have you seen the impact?' There will be a number of people within those schools who, we know, will have worked there from the start of the programme, wherever it is, and will be able to give an objective view on what has happened. It will not just be their impression—they will undoubtedly have school records about what they have done, and where they have got with those children. I want to see that provided in a way that is objective, valuable and useful—not just for me, but for this committee and the wider public.

The point that Simon made is right: there is significant investment in Flying Start that we are continuing. I think that it is one of the things that we can be proud of. There is continuing investment in Flying Start at a time of budget shrinkage overall. In contrast, we know that Sure Starts are being closed in England in significant numbers. We need to further reassure ourselves that it is having a real, valuable and important impact. I take on board the points that you raise, and they are very much in my thinking as we go forward.

[49] **Ann Jones:** Aled is next, and then I do want to make some progress. We have spent 20 minutes and we have not got past the first two or three questions.

[50] **Aled Roberts:** Mae yna fannau yn yr adroddiad gwerthuso lle mae'r *ratio* o ymwelwyr iechyd i blant yn 1:100, ac mae yna baragraffau eraill yn sôn am 1:110. Pa un sy'n gywir? Hefyd, beth mae Llywodraeth Cymru wedi bod yn ei wneud i fonitro'r rhaglen hon? Roedd Keith yn sôn ei bod wedi bod ar waith ers 2006-07. Mae'r adroddiad gwerthuso yn dweud ei bod wedi bod yn gweithredu yn gyflawn ers 2009, felly mae pedair blynedd ers iddi fod ar gael ar draws Cymru. Er hynny, mae'r adroddiad gwerthuso yn dweud bod nifer yr ymwelwyr iechyd yn y 22 ardal yn anghyson. Beth ydych chi wedi bod yn ei wneud fel Llywodraeth—nid chi yn bersonol, ond fel Llywodraeth—yn ystod y pedair blynedd? Hefyd, mae arian yn mynd i mewn i ardaloedd lle nad yw'r rhaglen o ran dysgu a chwarae yn wahanol o fewn yr ardaloedd Dechrau'n Deg i'r ardaloedd eraill. Felly, mae awdurdodau lleol wedi bod yn derbyn arian ond, er hynny, nid oes gwahaniaeth yn y rhaglen o fewn eu hardaloedd.

**Aled Roberts:** There are areas in the evaluation report where the ratio of health visitors to children is 1:100. There are other paragraphs that mention a ratio of 1:110. Which is the correct figure? Also, what has the Welsh Government been doing to monitor this programme? Keith mentioned that it had been in place since 2006-07. The evaluation report states that it has been fully operational since 2009, so there are four years since it has been rolled out across Wales. Despite that, the evaluation report states that the number of health visitors within the 22 areas is inconsistent. So, what have you been doing as a Government—not you personally, but your Government—during that four-year period? Also, there is funding going into areas where the programme in terms of learning and play is no different within the Flying Start areas than in other areas. Therefore, there are local authorities receiving funds and despite that there is no difference in the programme within their own areas.

[51] **Vaughan Gething:** If I deal with the point about health visitors first and the ratios, Flying Start is supposed to deliver a capped ratio of 1:110. That is a capped case load. It is significantly lower than the normal case load in the generic service. That provides the extra room to have more intense and regular communication with Flying Start families. There is a debate around whether it is the number of visits or the length of each visit that makes a difference, but we know that having more space makes a difference. Some of this is about getting to the point where we have enough health visitors to have those case loads capped to that number. There has been a challenge around recruitment. There is no point saying that there has not. If you look at the paper that I have provided—I am on pages 2 and 3—it sets out what we are doing in terms of recruitment. We are now on track to deliver the health visitor recruitment that should allow us to meet the ratios that we require for the Flying Start expansion within this term.

[52] Part of the challenge, of course, is that, even though we fund additional places for health visitor training and we try to back-fill posts within the generic service when they go into Flying Start, you cannot guarantee that new health visitors going to training will definitely go in to work in either Flying Start or the generic service, or will stay within the service in Wales. You do not get to cuff them in that way, so there are challenges around that. It is the same with recruitment around the rest of the programme as well, because one of the challenges is to get the number of staff that we require and another is to ensure that they are

of the quality that we require. It is the same with health visiting, the additional help around speech and language therapy, and, for example, challenges around childcare, in whatever language it is provided. So, there has been a challenge around getting recruitment to where it is, and I think we are now on track, and we have more confidence that we will maintain the appropriate numbers in the case load.

[53] In terms of how it is being managed, again within the paper we have tried to point out the system of account managers that we have. You have account managers within Welsh Government who work with Flying Start teams, and they report directly to Martin. Those teams of people talk to, challenge and support Flying Start teams on what they are doing and why, and they have drawn up with them a number of quality improvement plans. These are based on the data that come back from Flying Start teams about achievement. They now have a quality improvement plan drawn up by the account manager with those teams to try to drive forward improvement within that setting. It is a managed programme in that sense. There is very definitely a series of regular communications taking place between Welsh Government and those settings where we think there are areas of improvement for each setting. The challenges that Rebecca was talking about earlier—how and why you think that this is going to improve—are a part of the role of the account manager.

[54] **Aled Roberts:** Dim ond ers mis Hydref 2013 y mae'r rheolwyr cyfrif wedi bod yn eu lle. A oedd monitro cyn hynny? **Aled Roberts:** The account managers have only been in position since October 2013. Was there monitoring prior to that?

[55] **Vaughan Gething:** The account managers were in place before that. If you like, Martin can come back to you about the process on account managers and tell you since when they have been in place. I want to deal with the point about learning and play. This is important because—

[56] **Aled Roberts:** There were no improvement plans then before October 2013, according to your evidence?

[57] **Vaughan Gething:** The improvement plans were drawn up following the statistical release, so we have used the evidence from the statistical release that came out in September to help draw up the improvement plans. That has given us a much more solid base to understand achievement, quality and outcomes for children and families. It is on that basis that we have drawn up the improvement plans—using the evidence available. I think that that is the right thing to do.

[58] On the point about learning and play, this is important because the impact report highlights that this is probably the least well used of the four core entitlements of Flying Start. It is really important because learning and play is partly about reinforcing points around parental engagement—in particular about language delay. The high-quality nature of the childcare that we want is partly about helping to address some of those issues around language development. I would want to see greater engagement in the language and play element. That is part of what we want to see in the quality improvement plans. I am looking for that improvement and I recognise that it is an area that we should be doing better at. If we do that, we can expect to see better outcomes for the children and their families.

[59] On your specific point on account managers, it would probably help if Martin sets out when the account managers were in place and their process in terms of helping to manage Flying Start achievement.

[60] **Mr Swain:** We had monitoring systems in place before, but account managers are a

relatively new part of my team, partly in response to the evaluation reports that highlight inconsistency of delivery. When Flying Start was established, funding was allocated to local authorities and we issued guidance for them on what the programme should contain. It was down to local authorities to commission and deliver the programme. The evaluations were telling us that you had inconsistency of delivery. On health visiting, for example, some local authorities were not able to manage their cap at 1:110. At that time local authorities were directly commissioning health visiting provision with health boards. One of the things that we have done is to say that we are no longer going to do that; we are going to run that process centrally. We determine centrally how many are needed, we provide enough funding for the health service to train these people in higher education institutions and we deploy the training where we need it so that local authorities have enough health visitors coming through the system. We are trying to iron that out. The account managers are relatively new and they are a response to the evaluation. Basically, as the Deputy Minister has highlighted, it is to iron out inconsistency in the programme.

[61] **Aled Roberts:** Were the local authorities sending in annual reports regarding the provision? If so, were they acknowledging that, in some counties, there was no learning and play provision? If that was stated in the annual reports, what action did the Welsh Government take to challenge those authorities?

[62] **Mr Swain:** It is worth saying that there was always a separate programme for language and play, funded for local authorities. Some local authorities topped that up and had a much more extensive language and play programme. Rhondda Cynon Taf, for example, had an authority-wide language and play programme. It was not just Flying Start. Flying Start does not happen in isolation, as you have other local authority programmes running alongside it. You will get more provision in some areas. It is the same with parenting. Places like Gwynedd and Powys had a big investment in parenting support before Flying Start even came along and started to invest in those areas.

[63] **Ann Jones:** Was that additional money that you put in for play and language ring-fenced?

[64] **Mr Swain:** It is a ring-fenced grant. It is not a huge amount of money, I have to say.

[65] **Ann Jones:** If it was ring-fenced, why could you not have monitored how those plans worked?

[66] **Mr Swain:** Are we talking about the Flying Start element or the separate grant?

10:00

[67] **Ann Jones:** I took it, from my understanding of what you have just said, that there was always a separate element on play and language. So, if there was a separate element to Flying Start on play and language and it was a ring-fenced grant, why can you not monitor it?

[68] **Mr Swain:** We do monitor it.

[69] **Vaughan Gething:** I think that it is the difference between the four core elements of Flying Start, and there is also a separate grant outside Flying Start. With the core element of language and play, if you like, the gateway is the health service, and then everything else is offered. Part of the challenge is about getting parents to engage in the language and play element of Flying Start. It is not the case that it is not on offer; the challenge for us is getting parents and families to engage in that element of the programme. That is our big challenge. It is the same if you look at Flying Start childcare, for example; we know that there is a big variation in authorities. It does not mean that childcare is not provided and is not made

available; it is actually about the level of engagement that you get in the childcare provision that is available. Honestly, that is a challenge for us, and it is one in which we are definitely interested and expect to examine and do more on.

[70] **Ann Jones:** I am going to make some progress; it is my fault for jumping in and out as well. I want to go on to the value for money element of this. We then need to look at expanding the programme. David, do you want to take the question on value for money?

[71] **David Rees:** I think that most of the questions have already been asked in one sense, including by the Chair.

[72] **Ann Jones:** Sorry. [*Laughter.*]

[73] **David Rees:** In one sense, I think that what you highlighted in the last answer is critical to me: that the language and play element can be combined with other specific grants. Similarly, parental development can be combined with Communities First projects. How do you differentiate the actual outcomes that you are getting for money that you are putting into the scheme and that that is actually achieving compared to, perhaps, the whole picture?

[74] **Vaughan Gething:** In terms of value for money, some of this comes back to the evidence that we have. The evidence that we have about early intervention to justify putting the money in in the first place and creating the programme is one thing, and then we look at what you get from the programme in terms of outcomes to look back at that value for money. We are doing some work around the impact of the intervention and what that then means in terms of, for example, the number of children we would expect to otherwise be NEETs or not achieve a level of education at the end of it, and then the value that you get in terms of looking at the money that you spent. So, some of this is still about how we evaluate Flying Start going forward, because none of those children, right at the start of the programme, have left school.

[75] However, we do think that we can do some useful work around parental engagement—not engagement as parents of children in Flying Start, but around how some of those parents are closer to and more motivated to go into the labour market. You have a number of parents who are engaged in that and then want to volunteer and take part in childcare-related provision, but actually, a number of those go on to other things. It is not just about channelling parents into working with young children. I accept that there is still a challenge for us about how we continue, going forward, to look at the impact of Flying Start and its value for money. I want to see the different programmes work together more closely. That then does produce bigger challenges in terms of value for money for each individual programme. For example, if you have Flying Start in an area, and you have Communities First, they will not have an exact match, because there will be parts of Communities First, certainly, that will not also be part of Flying Start. When you then have parental engagement, I expect those programmes and those different people to talk to each other and to co-operate with each other about working with the same families.

[76] However, you do then know that there will be a parenting intervention that should be in the rest of the Communities First area. So, I accept that there are challenges around how we then go to ask, ‘What is the individual value of Flying Start and the individual value of Communities First interventions?’. I accept that, but I still think that we introduce something that is useful in terms of how we spend the money and what the outcomes are. The statistical bulletins that we produce year on year will be very much a part of it in terms of looking at what the actual achievement of this programme is, what is the difference that we are making, and then going back to the money that we are spending. You will not have an exact and completely sterilised view saying, ‘This is just Flying Start on its own’. I do not think that that is possible because there are other interventions and other services that families are able

to undertake.

[77] **David Rees:** You said that you expect this to happen. How do you monitor that, and can you be confident that that will take place on the ground?

[78] **Vaughan Gething:** Is that in terms of Flying Start on its own?

[79] **David Rees:** In terms of the programmes working together.

[80] **Vaughan Gething:** I have made very clear since not long after being appointed that I wanted to see the different programmes—Communities First, Families First and Flying Start—work more closely together. Then, when I was given day to day responsibility for Communities First, it made that easier. So, I have been very clear with Communities First staff and with Families First and Flying Start staff that I want it to happen, but also about their engagement in, if you like, the mainstream services. I have met each of the health boards and I have had the same conversation with them. I have met local authority anti-poverty champions and I have had the same conversation with them. So, there is consistency in what I am doing and there is consistency in the message that I am giving. When I have been to meet a number of WLGA spokespeople at events I have given exactly the same message and had exactly the same conversation. I am also now running and convening a series of regional meetings, which should involve people from local government, local authority champions and the directors of public health from local health boards. We will also have members of the community health team there as well as members of Flying Start, Families First and Communities First.

[81] So, the engagement we are having there is about reinforcing that message that all of those people are working with the same groups of people and they are all in the same area. The level of challenge that I understood at the start of the process was that, for example, some local health boards were not properly aware of what was happening with Communities First in their area and parts of the health service were not aware of what was happening with Flying Start. So you did not always get the midwifery team having a proper understanding of what the health visitor team were doing in Flying Start. Part of the challenge of consistency is that that cannot happen, and if it does continue to happen you would expect to have a conversation with me and/or the Minister for Health and Social Services.

[82] What we definitely have is buy-in from different Ministers about this agenda, and part of my job is making sure that what I expect to happen and what I have been clear I want to happen is actually going to happen. So far, the response has been pretty good, actually. No-one has said, 'I don't do that and I won't do that' and we have good buy-in from the people who are going to attend those different events. I will obviously be following it up and making sure that it is happening on the ground going forward because I will make sure that I talk to people individually and together about what is now happening. The voice of the citizen at the centre of the service is a central part of that as well. If they are saying, 'I have different people from different programmes coming to me at different times of the day with different messages', that is exactly what I do not want to hear. So, this is a consistent message and it is now about finding out whether there is the response that we want to see on the ground.

[83] **Ann Jones:** Suzy has a question—

[84] **David Rees:** I have just one final point.

[85] **Ann Jones:** One final point and then I will bring Suzy in.

[86] **David Rees:** Some of this information may not be at your fingertips but, clearly, we have numbers and we can all play with statistics. Some of us know how to play with them

better than others. However, the question, I suppose, is: what percentage of children, of the 25,500 you have identified as benefiting from Families First, actually benefit from all four elements of the programme? In future evaluations, will you be able to ensure that double counting is not going to take place—in other words, that a family in one programme does not appear in another programme as another successful outcome?

[87] **Vaughan Gething:** On the four elements of Flying Start, we count the health visitor numbers because that is the gateway into the service and there are options off that—the other four elements. There are percentages given for take-up, so you could do figures around the take-up of each individual element, but it is difficult then to say who is undertaking all four elements. However, that is something I am interested in, so it is a consideration. I can try to come back to the committee with some work on that, if you would like. I would be happy to do that. On the different programmes of intervention, yes, it is a challenge. I appreciate that when the programmes report back on who they have intervened with, there could be concern about that. However, for example, a Flying Start parent group will have interventions that take place with it, and those will often be in a Communities First area. I would not expect those parents to then readily engage in a Communities First activity in exactly the same sphere.

[88] However, from my point of view, I am most interested in ensuring that there are outcomes taking place in those communities. I would worry about double counting afterwards. I would worry first about whether there is engagement in the programmes and what they are supposed to do. That is my first and primary obsession because, thus far, when you look at the reporting back from Communities First and Flying Start, you will see that, at the moment, they are pretty robust, certainly on the Flying Start engagement. When we look at Communities First and the outcomes we have got, I think that it will give us more shape and more certainty about what is happening there as well.

[89] If we want to encourage the different programmes to work together and to have the same families being dealt with consistently, you are going to have an element of overlap and I think that we need to be honest about that and the element of that as we present it rather than saying, ‘It doesn’t happen’. Otherwise, I am just concerned that we will get people on the ground who spend a lot of time data cleansing rather than delivering a service.

[90] **Ann Jones:** I think that you said that you would provide a note on that. That would be helpful.

[91] **Vaughan Gething:** Yes.

[92] **Ann Jones:** Suzy, you have a supplementary question and then we are definitely going to have to move on with some shorter questions and some shorter answers. [*Laughter.*]

[93] **Suzy Davies:** I am more than happy to take a short answer on this. Very much on this theme, Deputy Minister, you began in your answers to questions in this session today talking about Flying Start using very much the ‘the thing speaks for itself’ sort of argument. There have been improvements and they can only have been down to Flying Start. Yet, in response to questions from David Rees, you have acknowledged that there are other forms of intervention. You have explained that, in those forms of intervention, sometimes there is good join-up with Flying Start, and sometimes what I think you called ‘overlap’, although you could easily call it duplication. Can you explain why, of all these different elements, it is Flying Start that you decided needed to be doubled—the expenditure and the roll-out of Flying Start were doubled—as opposed to some of these other interventions? It is fairly clear to me that nobody really knows which of these interventions is the thing that is really working.

[94] **Vaughan Gething:** I do not think that that is fair. If you look at the different elements that Flying Start has, it is a much more tightly managed programme than Communities First. In the area of, for example, parenting in Communities First, there is not the same level of intensity or engagement, especially when you look at the interaction with the health visitor service. If you look at the evaluation report, the value that the health visitor service provides in terms of engagement with other services is significant. That happens because there is a capped case load. That is not the case with the generic service for health visitors that could be operating in the rest of the Communities First area. So, I do not think that it would be fair to say, 'You don't know what's happening, and you can't tell at all'.

[95] My point about integration and work between the different programmes—Communities First, Families First and Flying Start—is that we should have a greater result from those programmes working together than those programmes working apart. There is much greater risk of duplication if we do not expect those programmes to talk to each other on an operational level. For example, when I was in Swansea recently, I had a meeting with the local authority and people from all those teams in the same room. That authority, I think, is further ahead than others in getting those people to talk together and work together with and for the same families, and to understand who is doing which bit. That is what I would like to see more often, and on a much more regular basis. At the moment it happens in some parts of Wales. When I took up office, it was clear that that was happening in some parts of Wales, but that was often about personal relationships and not about a clear expectation that it should happen and is what is to be expected. That is where I want to get to: to have that much more consistent expectation that the programmes work together. Then I think we will get more consistency in terms of outcome, and we will have a much easier picture to evaluate the impact of each of those programmes individually and together.

[96] **Suzy Davies:** I will test your Swansea observation in my own meeting with them next week. Thank you.

[97] **Ann Jones:** On expanding the programme, can we spend just a few minutes on this? I know it is important. Simon, and then Aled.

[98] **Simon Thomas:** Weinidog, a fedrwch chi ddweud ym mha ffordd y byddwch yn newid y rhaglen wrth iddi gael ei ehangu yn sgîl y gwerthusiad sydd wedi cael ei wneud hyd yma? **Simon Thomas:** Minister, can you tell us how you will change the programme as it is expanded in light of the evaluation made to date?

[99] **Vaughan Gething:** I will not be making fundamental changes to the offer of the programme. To me, again, it is about the quality of delivery, and understanding what best practice is—what it looks like and where it is. For example, the national Flying Start event that I called, which took place in December, was deliberately undertaken because we had had these evaluation reports. It was an opportunity to highlight our best areas of practice and to share examples from that, and to look at why and where we have other challenges. For me, it is about raising the quality and consistency of performance. That is definitely what I want to see in the roll-out areas. I expect them to take advantage of learning from the past six or seven years of the programme in operation.

[100] **Simon Thomas:** Rydych yn sôn am arfer da, ac mae hynny'n bositif iawn. Mae enghreifftiau o arfer da yn y gwerthusiad—rwy'n derbyn hynny—ond hefyd, os oes arfer da, mae arfer drwg neu aneffeithlon nad yw'n cyrraedd nac yn cyflawni amcanion y cynllun. Beth wnewch chi gyda'r arfer **Simon Thomas:** You mentioned good practice, and that is very positive. There are examples of good practice in the evaluation—I accept that—but also, if there is good practice, there is bad practice or ineffective practice that does not meet or achieve the objectives of the scheme. What

hwynnw wrth fynd ymlaen, felly? A oes gennyh unrhyw ffordd o sicrhau nad yw hynny'n digwydd gan fod gennyh yn awr rym mwy uniongyrchol dros y rhaglen hon? will you do in those cases as you move forward? Do you have any way of ensuring that that does not happen now that you have more direct control over this programme?

[101] **Vaughan Gething:** That is part of the performance management of the programme. Our account managers have a key role in that. On the point about the quality improvement plans, there are clear objectives that we are setting for improvement. That is why that process is taking place. Flying Start teams know that there is a real interest and focus on what Flying Start is doing. They know it has a profile and that, unlike other parts of public spending, there will be continued investment and expansion of this, so they can expect some challenge along the way.

10:15

[102] I want to see it done in a positive way that is about saying, 'We know you're all committed to the job that you are doing, but you have to make sure that you're taking on board good practice as it exists and where it exists'. Your point around where Flying Start is less effective is exactly my point as well. That inconsistency in practice is what I want to see ironed out because I think that if you do that, you are going to get better outcomes for the children and families we have the greatest interest in.

[103] **Simon Thomas:** Mae'n amlwg bod yr ymwelwyr iechyd yn ganolbwynt i hyn i gyd. Nhw yw'r porth ar gyfer mynediad i'r cynllun. Mae gennyf ddau gwestiwn, felly. A ydych yn hyderus y byddwch yn gallu penodi'r ymwelwyr iechyd newydd yr ydych eu hangen? Rwy'n meddwl bod angen rhywbeth fel 94 o ymwelwyr iechyd ychwanegol er mwyn cyflawni'r rhaglen newydd. A oes ganddynt rôl i'w chwarae drwy hyrwyddo arfer da yn y maes hwn hefyd? Nhw yw'r cysondeb, onid e? Nhw yw'r llinyn sy'n cysylltu pob rhan. **Simon Thomas:** It is clear that health visitors are at the heart of all of this. They are the gateway for access into the scheme. I have two questions, therefore. Are you confident that you will be able to appoint the new health visitors that you need? I think you need something like 94 additional health visitors to achieve the new programme. Do they have a role to play in promoting good practice in this area too? They provide the consistency, do they not? They are the thread linking all parts.

[104] **Vaughan Gething:** On health visitor appointments, referring to my answers to the questions that Aled Roberts asked and to pages 2 and 3 of my paper, I think that we can be positive and confident that with the roll-out and the expansion we should achieve the required number of new health visitors coming into the programme. There are always risks, which is why I am not going to say, 'Yes, we definitely will do this'. I am going to be positive about it, but I think there has to be an element of necessary caution about that because there are always risks around recruitment and there are risks around, for example, capital expansion. It depends whether the programme takes place. Health visitors are very much part of the quality improvement of the programme. They are a key part of gaining trust and engagement of parents with the programme in the first place. So, in terms of what they understand about the best ways to engage families in the programme, then, yes, I very much expect them to be part of that improvement and they expect that as well. That is the point I made in earlier answers. You have teams who work for different employers, but they have all got and have bought into a common objective about improving outcomes for the family. That is what I think we should want to see more of right across the public service.

[105] **Simon Thomas:** Byddwn ni fel pwyllgor yn ymweld â chynlluniau wythnos nesaf yn Abertawe a Wrecsam. Os yw'r un **Simon Thomas:** We, as a committee, will be visiting schemes next week in Swansea and Wrexham. If the same thing happens as has

peth yn digwydd ag sydd wedi digwydd i mi yn bersonol pan wyf wedi ymweld â chynlluniau fel hyn yn y gorffennol, un peth a fydd ar goll fydd wynebtau tadau. Mae hynny wedi'i amlinellu yn y gwerthusiad hefyd. A oes rhywbeth penodol yr ydych yn ei deimlo ynglŷn â'r ffaith nad yw tadau yn ymwneud â'r cynllun yn llwyr? A ydyw hyn a dweud y gwir yn broblem, yn gyntaf oll? Os yw hyn yn broblem, a oes enghreifftiau o arfer da gennych chi eisoes sy'n dangos bod modd gwneud hyn yn y rhaglen a fydd wedi'i ehangu?

happened to me personally when I have visited schemes such as this in the past then one thing that will be missing will be the faces of fathers. That is highlighted in the evaluation too. Is there anything specifically regarding the fact that fathers do not become fully engaged with the scheme? Is this truly a problem, first of all? If this is a problem, are there examples of good practice that you already have that demonstrate that there is means of achieving that in the expanded programme?

[106] **Vaughan Gething:** The engagement of fathers is a challenge. There is a broader challenge about fathers engaging in and with young children full stop. However, within these communities we know that there is a challenge as well. Some of it is about family structure and make-up. When I have been out and about I know that some Flying Start schemes are deliberately running programmes for dads because there is this idea that dads see a lot of this as being for mums and as provision that is put on for mothers rather than for them as dads. So, there are a number of fathers clubs that exist. Again, in terms of looking at good examples, I have seen an example on a visit to Flint where the scheme had a dads group run by a male member of staff. The activities they had differed from other activities that they had run. So, yes, it is a challenge. Yes, we know that this is an area where there is not consistent practice. We know that there is a wider problem about fathers engaging within this programme and, for example, Families First. It is something that is very much in our mind as we move forward, trying to spread—it is that awful phrase, but we need to make sure that best practice travels. However, my view is that we should be a bit more demanding about best practice and we should be much clearer about what we think works. We should be much clearer that we expect people to adopt best practice and if they do not, they need to explain why. Perhaps, the point about fathers is just one example; I think that it goes across a whole range of issues, not just within Flying Start. Again, it is a broader point in the public service.

[107] **Simon Thomas:** Dyma'r cwestiwn olaf, os caf ei ofyn, ac y mae ynglŷn ag iaith. Byddwch yn gwybod am y feirniadaeth bod darpariaeth yn yr iaith Gymraeg ond nad yw'r *take-up* wedi bod yn ddigonol ac nad yw wedi adlewyrchu'r hyn sy'n digwydd yn sgîl hynny yn yr ysgolion meithrin ac ati. Nid wyf wedi clywed yr un feirniadaeth neu gwestiynu ynglŷn â'r ieithoedd eraill sy'n cael eu siarad yng Nghymru—mae angen paratoi ar gyfer ieithoedd lleiafrifol, er enghraifft. A ydych yn awr yn hyderus yn sgîl y gwerthusiad hwn bod y ddarpariaeth a'r cyfleoedd ar gyfer y Gymraeg a Saesneg, a hefyd ar gyfer ieithoedd lleiafrifol, i gyd yn eu lle a bod hynny'n fwy cadarn yn y rhaglen newydd? Rwy'n cofio gohebiaeth gan eich swyddogion yn gofyn i Dechrau'n Deg i fod yn llawer mwy parod i wneud hyn yn y gorffennol.

**Simon Thomas:** A final question, if I may, on the language. You will know that there has been some criticism that there is Welsh-medium provision, but the take-up has not been adequate and has not reflected what happens in nursery schools and so on. I have not heard the same criticism or questioning in terms of the other languages spoken in Wales—we need to make provision for minority languages, for example. Are you now confident in light of this evaluation that the provision and opportunities for English and Welsh, as well as minority languages, are in place and that that is more robust in the new programme? I recall correspondence from your officials asking Flying Start to be far more ready to do this in the past.

[108] **Vaughan Gething:** I have taken a specific interest in the correspondence that has

come in and the questions that have been raised about the provision, especially Welsh-medium provision in childcare where there is a parental request. We were running at about 95% in terms of meeting those requests. Normally, even if we cannot meet a request in the first term in which it is made, we can meet it in the next term. For example, in Newport, which was mentioned in Leanne Wood's short debate, there is now Welsh-medium provision available, as it has managed to recruit. Part of the challenge was that it initially had a previous provider who was prepared to do that, but it did not meet the quality threshold that we had set. We now have someone who is able to do that, so there will be Welsh-medium childcare provision in Newport.

[109] Newport and Cardiff are good examples of looking at other languages too. Part of what Flying Start does is work with parents who do not speak either English or Welsh—where they are not the languages of their homes. That is a challenge for us, because a big part of what we want to do is to deal with language delay. We know that there are a number of schemes in place with interpreters to try to make sure that the provision is real and meaningful for those families too. It goes back to the point about getting parents to engage for themselves. While a number of those children are engaged in the childcare, a number of those parents, in a number of settings, also engage in provision of English for speakers of other languages. So, we are trying to make sure that that is joined up and that the provision is there, to make sure that it is not just an offer of health visiting, but that it is a real offer that people can take up.

[110] We have had challenges around recruitment for different parts of the programme, but it has been a particular feature with some of the Welsh-medium provision. Even in Anglesey, for example, I know that we had challenges recruiting the right number of Welsh-medium health visitors, because all of the childcare provision in Anglesey and Gwynedd is through the medium of Welsh, which is not going to be a surprise. It is all through that particular language. That is the community language that exists, so, the provision is geared up to do that. We are doing what we can to meet parental preference and we have a high success rate in meeting parental preference. We have been very clear that settings should be proactive about the offer of Welsh-medium provision, especially in the more English-speaking parts of Wales. We also have in our sights the issue of other community languages and how Flying Start does what it can and should to meet the needs of those parents and families.

[111] **Aled Roberts:** Mae gwahaniaeth rhwng ymateb i geisiadau unigol ar gyfer gofal plant drwy gyfrwng yr iaith Gymraeg a'i hyrwyddo fel rhan o raglen y Llywodraeth. Mae esiamplau yn y gogledd-ddwyrain, yn arbennig yn sir y Fflint. Es i i Garden City, lle mae partneriaeth rhwng y cyngor sir, Dechrau'n Deg a Mudiad Meithrin. Roedd gan y cyngor sir broblemau recriwtio, ond roedd Mudiad Meithrin yn barod i ddarparu'r gwasanaeth. Roedd y cyngor sir yn hyrwyddo'r gwasanaeth yno, rhyw hanner milltir o'r ffin, lle na fyddai rhieni o angenrheidrwydd yn gofyn am wasanaeth yn Gymraeg. Fodd bynnag, rwyf wedi gweld esiamplau lle mae pobl wedi mynd at y biwro ond nid oedd y cwestiwn, 'Ym mha iaith ydych chi isio'r ddarpariaeth?' yn cael ei ofyn. Hwyrach bod gwersi i'w dysgu o ran sut mae'r rhaglen yn hyrwyddo hyn. Ni fyddwn am weld plant o

**Aled Roberts:** There is a difference between responding to individual requests for childcare through the medium of Welsh and promoting it as part of a Government scheme. There are examples in north-east Wales, particularly in Flintshire. I went to Garden City, where there is a partnership between the county council, Flying Start and Mudiad Meithrin. The county council had a recruitment problem, but Mudiad Meithrin was willing to provide that service. The council was promoting the service there, about half a mile from the border, where perhaps the parents would not necessarily request a Welsh-language service. However, I have seen examples where people have gone to the bureau and the question, 'In what language would you like the provision?' is not asked. Perhaps there are lessons to be learnt in terms of how the scheme is promoting this. I would not want to see

gefndiroedd difreintiedig mewn ardaloedd Seisnigaidd yn cael eu hamddifadu o addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg, a dyna beth sydd mewn perygl o ddigwydd.

children from disadvantaged backgrounds in English areas being deprived of Welsh-medium education, and that is what is in danger of happening.

[112] **Vaughan Gething:** In the guidance that we issued and reiterated at the end of October last year, we were clear about the proactive nature of the offer. It is not just a reactive offer of Welsh-medium provision. For example, there is the Sealand scheme, which is about promoting Welsh-medium provision. When you talk about people from deprived backgrounds being deprived a Welsh-medium provision, this is why we have a proactive offer. It is about language delay. So, if you have a Welsh-speaking family and they are not able to access provision, we recognise that that will be a challenge in terms of language acquisition. That is what Flying Start is there to do. It is about ensuring that you do not have that language delay, so that when children go to school, they are ready to learn and are not already behind their peers. Making sure that we have adequate language provision is part of what we want to do and it is very much part of the scheme.

[113] I am always interested in specific examples, because what I have found difficult are the general arguments without specific examples that have come in. So, if there are specific examples of where the proactive offer is not being made, I would be interested in them, and if there are specific examples of the proactive offer being made but provision is not available, then, again, I would be interested. I would be interested in what the Flying Start partners are doing in that area to meet and match what they are supposed to do. They are supposed to make all reasonable efforts to meet and match the requests that come in from parents, and that is what I would expect them to do.

[114] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thanks. Could we move on to the child poverty strategy? Bethan has some questions on child poverty, and I think that Simon has some around childcare.

[115] **Bethan Jenkins:** Pan gefais fy ethol yn 2007, fe wnes i gysgod i'r Gweinidog dros dlodi plant ar y pryd, sef Huw Lewis. Roedd e'n dweud bod targedau yn anodd eu cyrraedd, oherwydd roedd y rhan fwyaf o'r pŵer yn ymwneud â'r hyn a oedd yn digwydd yn San Steffan. Roedd lot o broblemau ar y pryd er mwyn cyrraedd targedau tlodi plant, oherwydd y gwahaniaeth rhwng y pwerau yn y lle hwn a San Steffan. Felly, rwy'n trio deall pam mae Llywodraeth Cymru wedi dewis ailddatgan y targed o ddileu tlodi plant erbyn 2020, o ystyried bod digon o sail i ddatgan y bydd hi'n anodd iawn cyrraedd y targedau hynny o dan yr amgylchiadau presennol.

**Bethan Jenkins:** When I was elected in 2007, I shadowed the Minister for child poverty at the time, namely Huw Lewis. He told me that targets were difficult to achieve, because most of the powers relating to what was happening were held at Westminster. There were a number of problems in achieving child poverty targets at that time, because of the separation of powers between this place and Westminster. So, I am trying to understand why the Welsh Government has chosen to reaffirm the target of eradicating child poverty by 2020, given that there is plenty of evidence that it is going to be extremely difficult to achieve those targets under the current circumstances.

[116] **Vaughan Gething:** It will be extremely difficult, and I have been asked ever since I was appointed to this role whether we should keep the target and how achievable the 2020 target is. I have always been really upfront about the fact that, yes, the target is really challenging and difficult. The context that we are in, the state of the economy being relatively flat for the last three years and the additional challenges of welfare reform, especially for families with young children make where we are difficult. The 1% rise, which is less than inflation, in a number of benefits does make that difficult, but my view has always been that we should not ditch the target. We should say, 'That is still our aspiration'. We should be upfront about the challenges that we have and what we are doing to try to achieve the target.

If we do not meet the target, we should be honest about what we think has happened and why, rather than saying, 'At this point, we are going to get rid of the target'. I think that getting rid of the target now, because we think it is difficult, rather than it not being appropriate or not something that we should aspire to, is what makes people cynical about politicians and what we are here for. I would much rather have a robust debate in 2020 about whether we have achieved it, rather than say now, 'Because we do not think that we can and we think that it will be difficult, we will get rid of it'. I do not think that that is what we should be here for.

[117] **Bethan Jenkins:** Nid wyf yn credu bod pobl yn dweud nad yw'n uchelgeisiol, ond rwy'n credu, efallai, fod pobl y tu allan yn gofyn, 'Beth sydd yn realistig, o ystyried beth yw gallu Llywodraeth Cymru, i ymrafael â nifer o'r sefyllfaoedd sydd yn wynebu pobl, o ystyried, fel rydych newydd ddweud, nad yw'r pwerau dros fenthyciadau neu drethi, er enghraifft, yn nwylo Llywodraeth Cymru?' Y cwestiwn felly, yw: sut fydd Llywodraeth Cymru yn cyrraedd y targed hwnnw heb yr allwedd i bopeth, fel petai? Hefyd, mae'r canrannau yng Nghymru yn uwch na lefelau mewn rhannau eraill o Brydain. Sut ydych chi'n mynd ati i ailasesu a yw'r targed yn realistig, o ystyried bod gwledydd eraill o fewn Prydain yn gwneud yn well na Chymru?

**Bethan Jenkins:** I do not think that people are saying that it is not ambitious, but I think, perhaps, that people on the outside are asking, 'What is realistic, in terms of the Welsh Government's powers, to tackle many of the situations facing people, given, as you have just said, that the powers for borrowing or taxation, for example, are not in the hands of the Welsh Government?' The question is, therefore: how will the Welsh Government achieve that target without having the tools for everything, as it were? Also, the percentages in Wales are higher than they are in other parts of Britain. How do you go about reassessing whether the target is realistic, given that other nations within Britain are performing better than Wales?

[118] **Vaughan Gething:** As I said, the target is really challenging. I have acknowledged that from the outset, but I stick to the same position that we should not ditch the target because it is challenging.

[119] In terms of the levels relative to the rest of the UK, child poverty is worse in inner and outer London, and we are broadly comparable with a couple of English regions. We do not perform as well as England overall, but in Scotland—. Again, you see, I am interested in those regions of England and those other parts of the UK that are doing better and understanding where, why and how that happens. So, some of this is about the policy response, and what policy response that we are in control of we can undertake and achieve to make a real and lasting difference on child poverty. It is also about having an understanding of where we are not in control of the levers, because I do accept—and I have accepted from the outset—that we do not have all of the levers that make a difference.

10:30

[120] When you talk about the tax and benefit position for working families with children, we are not in control of that. That has a contribution. The benefit and assistance given to families where no-one is in work have a real impact too. That should be part of the explanation and the debate around child poverty, and how you get to a certain point, rather than saying, 'Because we don't have all the levers, we won't have a target', or, 'Because we think it's going to be a really big challenge, we'll just get rid of the target'. Understanding what we do and how to improve what we do is where we should be, and having an honest debate about where we end up is where I still think we should be.

[121] **Bethan Jenkins:** Mae eich datganiad yn y dystiolaeth yn dweud bod Llywodraeth

**Bethan Jenkins:** Your written evidence states that the Welsh Government's approach

Cymru yn ceisio ymwneud â gwella lles plant i'r un graddau ag y mae'n mynd i'r afael â thargedu tlodi incwm. Mae hynny'n edrych fel newid *emphasis*. A yw hynny'n meddwl bod lles plant yn fwy pwysig yn awr na mynd i'r afael â thlodi incwm?

to tackling poverty is as much about improving children's wellbeing as it is about addressing income poverty. That seems to be a change of emphasis. Does that mean that the wellbeing of children is now more important than tackling income poverty?

[122] **Vaughan Gething:** No, it is recognition of the reality of where we are. A child's wellbeing is not just about income levels. If you want to look at the prospect of doing something about tackling poverty and child poverty, you need to think about the child's wellbeing as they grow up. For example, whether a child is healthy and happy and has aspirations for their future makes a big difference to their outcomes as an adult. Part of our challenge is how to intervene as successfully as we can with the powers that we have to ensure that poor parents with poor children do not go on to become grandparents of poor adults with poor children. That is our challenge.

[123] The work that we are doing within the tackling poverty action plan has six focus areas that I have set out. Three of those are directly related to young people and children: early years focus; closing the attainment gap between children receiving free school meals and their peers; and tackling young people not in earning or learning. Those three things all make a difference, but they are not about dealing with a person's income poverty. If you want to improve the early years offer and the early years' achievement, it will make a big difference to that child as they go through education, in terms of what we hope will be their attitudes and aspirations in life, but it will not deal with their income. We know that if you do not do anything about their educational achievement, their prospects of being economically successful adults are significantly reduced. That is the point that we are trying to make.

[124] If you consider the work that we are doing on the deprivation programme across Government and the new announcement made this week about schools challenge Cymru, it is about saying that we need to do more. We recognise that we have to make a step change difference in early years. That is why, in all of our interventions on early years, there is a big focus on those, just as it is a big focus in the tackling poverty action plan. It reiterates that the position that children are in in Wales and their prospects issues are very much at the centre of our thinking.

[125] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rwy'n cydnabod hynny, ac ni fyddwn yn anghytuno. Ond, yr unig beth y mae'r pwyllgor yn ceisio'i ddeall—rydym wedi siarad am *free school meals* ac yn y blaen—yw sut fyddwn yn mesur effeithiolrwydd hynny o fewn y system. Sut fyddwn yn sicrhau bod y bobl hynny sy'n derbyn gweithredoedd lles yn mynd ymlaen i deimlo'u bod yn gallu newid eu bywyd mewn realiti? Ni fyddwn yn mynd yn erbyn hynny o gwbl.

**Bethan Jenkins:** I recognise that, and I would not disagree. However, the only thing that the committee is seeking to understand—we have talked about free school meals and so on—is how you will assess the effectiveness of that within the system. How will you ensure that the people who benefit from these interventions go on to feel that they can change their lives in reality? I would not seek to contradict that at all.

[126] Mae gennyf gwestiwn arall. Mae'r comisiynydd plant wedi dweud bod y ffordd y mae'r Llywodraeth yn edrych ar daclo tlodi ym mhob oedran, yn hytrach nag edrych ar dlodi plant yn benodol, wedi glastwreiddio'r hyn sy'n digwydd yn sector tlodi plant. A ydych yn cytuno ag ef?

I have a further question. The children's commissioner has raised the fact that the way in which the Government is looking at tackling poverty at all ages, rather than specifically focusing on child poverty, has diluted what is happening within the child poverty sector. Do you agree with him?

[127] **Vaughan Gething:** No. I had a constructive meeting with the children's commissioner. He is very positive about a number of our interventions around families with young children. He is positive about a number of things that we are doing. That comes from his view about wanting to have a specific child focus, rather than have it within a plan for people. I understand where he comes from. I respect his point of view, but I think that the focus around the whole family is important. In a lot of ways, he agrees about having a family focus to help children out of poverty, in terms of addressing parental aspiration and not just the aspirations of children. The children's commissioner will continue to provide a robust and independent view. We will listen to him. We will not always agree with him. On this point, I do not think that you can point to an area where there has been a dilution in focus and attention. It is a broad concern that he raises, but there is no evidence that we have made a change that is detrimental to the interests of children and families with young children in the way that we are trying to direct our resources and our policy action in this area. Again, the continued investment in Flying Start is a good example of that. At a time of budget squeezes, we know that Flying Start is expanding, and more children are going to benefit from that service, while the comparator programme in England is shrinking. I think that it is difficult to make a real pitch that we are squeezing resources and squeezing the action away from children.

[128] **Bethan Jenkins:** Hwn yw fy nghwestiwn olaf: mae'r *Child Poverty Action Group* wedi dweud bod tlodi plant yn costio awdurdodau lleol dros £1.4 biliwn y flwyddyn, a ydych yn meddwl y bydd hyn yn gwaethygu, gan fod newidiadau syfrdanol yn digwydd ar lefel awdurdodau lleol? Er enghraifft, rydych wedi sôn am un awdurdod lleol sy'n torri addysg ar gyfer pobl ifanc. Felly, a yw hynny'n mynd i effeithio ar lefelau tlodi plant yn y dyfodol a gwneud y targed hyd yn oed yn anoddach i'w gyrraedd?

**Bethan Jenkins:** The final question from me is this: the Child Poverty Action Group has said that child poverty is costing local authorities over £1.4 billion per year, do you think that this will get worse now, as there are staggering changes happening at local authority level? For example, you have already mentioned one local authority that is cutting education for young people. Is that, therefore, going to have an impact on child poverty levels in the future, making the target even more difficult to achieve?

[129] **Vaughan Gething:** All of us should have a huge concern about what is happening in terms of the levels of public expenditure and what happens to services and their impacts and outcomes for children and young people. People around this table have different views about why we are here. People around this table have different views about what the UK Government is doing and its strategy around public spending, but all of us should have a concern about the cost of poverty. One of the points that I have made since appointment is that this is not just in the interests of people who are poor; it is in all of our interest to tackle poverty, because of the significant human cost that all of us should care about. Even if you do not care about other people, there is a significant financial cost to this as well. The figure that you have quoted is one that I have heard, and I have heard lots of other different figures about the cost of poverty. It goes back to questions about value for money as well; if you do not have an intervention that helps to raise the achievement and aspiration of children and their parents, you know you will have a much bigger cost later on in life. The cost of intervening successfully later on is much more significant as well.

[130] So, I am not going to get into challenges about what individual councils are doing, but I feel genuine sympathy for the difficulty that everyone in local government has right now. Regardless of your political shade, if you are in office in local government, now is not a pleasant time to be there and awful choices are having to be made. However, the focus that we have is on trying to say that there should be a priority on how you are tackling poverty, how you are making sure that your budget strategy is still about directing help and assistance towards people in the greatest need. That, in itself, has its own small and large 'p' political challenges.

[131] **Ann Jones:** I have got Angela and Suzy and then we will have about 20 minutes for about four sessions, so we will have to be keen.

[132] **Angela Burns:** Mine is really a quick comment. I agree with you very strongly that we should measure poverty not just by income. There are many families out there that are income poor but emotionally very rich. What I am interested to know is how you are going to judge the other side of the poverty equation, and see whether it improves or not. Income poverty is very easy to measure, but what about the slightly more nebulous things—you mentioned education, I think, as one, and I think from your paper that you may be talking also about those who are not in education, employment or training later on? Do you have any other monitoring measures for the more difficult-to-ascertain elements of what constitutes poverty?

[133] **Vaughan Gething:** Yes, it is always a challenge, but if you look at the tackling poverty action plan, you will see that there are a range of measures in there. The milestones and targets that we have are to make sure that we can measure ourselves and that, objectively, we get measured by yourselves and the wider public on what we are doing. When you get to challenges around emotional wellbeing, that is when you get into a much more difficult area. Who are we going to ask to do that? How are we going to fund them to do that? The outcome measures that we have in Communities First for how people feel, whether they feel more confident or positive, are the things that we should be interested in and we should want to try to understand what is happening due to the impact of that programme. However, because they are softer outcomes, I would expect that if I came to this committee and said, 'Actually, there's a 60% improvement in parents who feel more positive about their future', you might ask, 'How do you know that? How is that something that we can rely on?' So, there is a challenge around the scrutiny of measurement. I am trying to be honest about the challenges in doing something meaningful—

[134] **Angela Burns:** Do you run annual surveys or do you have any way of being able to quantify that evidence?

[135] **Vaughan Gething:** It is what we expect from our different programmes. For example, Communities First is a good one to look at in terms of what we are getting in terms of the levels of engagement and what people are telling us about their engagement. The reason why the outcomes framework was slimmed down in the first place was to try to make it more meaningful and easier to measure and assess. I am taking an interest in that outcomes framework and trying to see whether that is where we should still be and how that then links into other programmes. There are a number of outcomes that are consistent but not exactly the same, but that is part of what we are trying to do to get a more coherent approach to how those two programmes work together.

[136] **Suzy Davies:** It is just a short question. You are aware that we are conducting an inquiry into the attainment gap for children from poorer backgrounds, compared with those from wealthier backgrounds. I am assuming that you are working very closely with the Minister for Education and Skills on that particular issue. In your annual report, will you be evaluating your colleagues, if you like, to explain how they are helping you? Tackling poverty, as you have mentioned, is a cross-portfolio issue. How are you going to deal with that in your annual report?

[137] **Vaughan Gething:** The tackling poverty action plan spans a wide range of Government action. So, of course, the contribution that different departments make individually, and through working together, will be set out in the response. Again, if we go back to the milestones, we will see that there are milestones about closing the attainment gap. So, there will be a measure in there and we will be able to say what progress we are making or not making, just as there are measures in there on housing, in terms of whether we are

meeting our targets on increasing the level and the quality of housing. So, I would not say that I am assessing my colleagues; it is an honest assessment from Government about where we are, given the plan that we have set out and the milestones and targets we have within it.

[138] **Ann Jones:** We are going to move on to Simon on childcare.

[139] **Simon Thomas:** Rwy'n sylwi eich bod chi ar hyn o bryd fel Llywodraeth yn cynnal adolygiad o'r asesiad digonolrwydd gofal plant—y *childcare sufficiency assessment*. Beth yw pwrpas adolygiad o'r ddyletswydd honno ar awdurdodau lleol ac a oes gyda chi ddisgwyliadau neu obeithion am ganlyniadau'r asesiad hwnnw?

**Simon Thomas:** I note that you as a Government are conducting a review at present of the childcare sufficiency assessment. What is the purpose of a review of that duty on local authorities and do you have any expectations or hoped-for outcomes of the results of that assessment?

[140] **Vaughan Gething:** The childcare sufficiency assessments are refreshed annually and then there is the fuller childcare assessment, if you like, which has just taken place. So, we will look at the outcomes of the review that has just taken place in terms of identifying gaps in provision and how well local authorities are able to match their assessment to the needs of parents. Then, we will have a formal consultation towards the end of spring this year on the childcare sufficiency assessments. That will be about trying to make sure that we have the right level of questions and guidance in terms of what we want local authorities to do and how that helps them to plan and arrange services. When we undertake these assessments, it is not just about local authorities and the maintained sector, because you are looking at the non-maintained sector as well, it is also about looking at whether they are straight businesses or whether they have more voluntary arrangements in place.

[141] So, you need to understand how that works and how that looks, because childcare has differing objectives for different groups, if you like. For some people, it is very much about allowing parents to work, and there is an issue about access to childcare and cost, which is a big challenge. Then you have childcare that helps with child development, so there is an issue about quality that we want to try to pick up. However, you always have issues around, again, helping people to get closer to the labour market. So, if we want people in the 'Lift' programme that we running in eight Community First areas, we need to ensure that if there are parents who are engaging in that programme, the childcare matches up to the training opportunities to help them get closer to the labour market. So, there are a number of different things that we will want to consider, both in terms of current policy and how that informs future policy. It is possible that there may be an impact on legislation, but that is why we are having this consultation. I look forward to this committee having a view on that.

[142] **Ann Jones:** We will. [*Laughter.*]

[143] **Simon Thomas:** Rwy'n siŵr y bydd barn ar hynny. Rydych wedi sôn am nifer o feini tramgwydd sy'n rhwystro pobl rhag mynd i mewn i'r farchnad lafur, ac mae'n amlwg bod incwm o ran tlodi yn un o'r pethau y mae'n rhaid inni edrych arno yng Nghymru. Yn eich dogfen 'Adeiladu Dyfodol Mwy Disglair: Cynllun y Blynyddoedd Cynnar a Gofal Plant' rydych yn sôn am ymwneud â busnes a'r trydydd sector—pethau rydych newydd sôn amdanynt. Yn benodol, rydych yn sôn am lansio dau gynllun pilot i edrych ar gynyddu

**Simon Thomas:** I am sure that we will have a view on that. You mentioned many of the barriers that prevent people from getting into the labour market, and it is obvious that income in terms of poverty is one of the things that need to be addressed in Wales. In your 'Building a Brighter Future: the Early Years and Childcare Plan' document, you mention involving business and the third sector—things that you have just mentioned. You specifically mention launching two pilot schemes to look at increasing childcare provision. Have you launched those pilot

darpariaeth gofal plant. Ydych chi wedi lansio'r cynlluniau peilot hynny a beth sy'n digwydd gyda nhw? schemes and what is happening with those?

[144] **Vaughan Gething:** No, they have not been launched. We now have three areas that we are looking at: Anglesey and Gwynedd in north Wales, and Blaenau Gwent. So, we are looking at those areas and we expect, over the next few weeks, to do some more work on what will happen with those pilot schemes. So, it is definitely happening this year. We recognise that we cannot do all of this in the maintained sector. In terms of what I have already done, I have looked, for example, at what happens in childcare in England and how there are different structures in the way that the childcare market, if you like, and businesses are set up. There is quite a significant difference, actually. We have much smaller groups of childcare businesses and often stand-alone childcare businesses. You still have those in England, but there are also much bigger groups. So, it is about saving to scale and what you can do in a good larger business in terms of driving up quality. So, there are big challenges there.

10:45

[145] Developing the childcare market also refers to our aspirations for improving quality. Our aspirations for improving quality and upskilling the workforce inform the work that we are doing. We are looking at a European social fund project, potentially, to help upskill the workforce. We are talking to the Care Council for Wales in the coming weeks about the level of qualifications, and whether they properly match what we will need. We have issues around the inspection framework that the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales undertakes. So, there is work being done around a quality judgment framework to try to ensure that we are not just judging minimum standards, but the quality of the provision as well. All of these things matter in terms of what we want to try to do. So, it is a matter of doing something about the amount of childcare available, and whether it is accessible to parents, but we should never forget the quality that we want if we want to make a difference to children and a difference to parents, allowing them to go into education, training or work.

[146] **Simon Thomas:** It is interesting that you talked about the difference between England and Wales in that regard—and, of course, there is a quality debate going on in England—but given that the major financial factors are not different between England and Wales—. The LSE report that we were looking at has identified childcare in the UK as the second most expensive in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, coming second only to Switzerland. We also know that the childcare components—the working tax credits and so forth—are UK issues. So, it is not clear to me why there should be such an apparent mismatch in many areas of Wales and a lack of provision that allows working families to get back into that labour market. You have not launched the pilot projects yet, and I look forward to seeing them, but is there not a mismatch also between not having the pilot projects, reviewing the strategy, and looking at potential legislation? In other words, are you going to learn from the pilot projects to influence that work?

[147] **Vaughan Gething:** Yes.

[148] **Simon Thomas:** But the two are not quite aligned at the moment.

[149] **Vaughan Gething:** In terms of what we are doing to try to stimulate the market, given the regulatory nature of the framework and what the assessments tell us, we are going to have a series of assessments that will inform us of where there are gaps in provision, where there is need in provision, and the issues around the quality and the cost of the provision.

[150] **Simon Thomas:** Yes, but the only thing that you can control is regulation, in effect.

You cannot control the input from the income side. What you can look at in the Welsh context is regulation. You are talking about making the market more available. Is that a kind of deregulatory approach? What are you looking at?

[151] **Vaughan Gething:** We are looking at whether we can stimulate the market and whether we can actually try to help new businesses to be created where there is a recognised need. Again, if you were to look at Flying Start, you would see that there is a relatively low level of take-up in the childcare component of Flying Start, where it is available. Parents are not attending. We know that there are issues around childcare availability in that particular area. It is why it has been chosen to try to have a project that looks at trying to create and stimulate a business. That is what we are looking at there. If we can stimulate more businesses, and if we can have an ongoing conversation with those in the sector on how they organise and support each other, and what would help them to grow in areas where we can identify that there is a need and a gap—. That is the point about this. You may ask, ‘Where is the gap? Where does it exist? Where do we have a challenge around quality, access and cost, and what can we do about trying to do something about that?’ The point that you make is a completely fair one: we are not in control of the tax and benefits system; we are often helped to make childcare affordable—for working parents in particular.

[152] **Simon Thomas:** I recognise all of those issues, and I do not disagree with them. However, I struggle to understand what intervention you can reasonably make. You could throw money at the programme and help to set up businesses, but would they be sustainable, given that they would have to interact with the tax and benefits system that you cannot have anything to do with? So, what ideas can you tell us about today that are genuine interventions to stimulate business? Many local authorities have tried to do this and have failed. The Government in the past has tried to do it and has not been successful. What do you have up your sleeve that is going to be different this time?

[153] **Vaughan Gething:** This is part of the reason for running pilot schemes to try to have new businesses created, because we recognise that, if you want to see an expansion in the amount of provision, it is not all going to come from the maintained sector. So, that is why we are working with providers who already exist outside the maintained sector. When we look at a whole range of things around childcare, we recognise that there are three or four big blocks of providers organised in different membership bodies. So, some of this is about the interaction that we have with them, and what would make it easier for them to start businesses and continue to run them, and what it is that we can do. So, it is about the nature and quality of the conversation that we have with them. That is very much a part of it. I know that Martin is already talking directly to those particular business groups, not just about where we are going to run the pilot schemes, but what they want now. As I said, the structure of the businesses that operate in Wales is different from those in other parts of the UK, and that gives us some challenges.

[154] **Simon Thomas:** I am sure that we look forward to looking at the pilot schemes, Chair. There were a couple of other questions that we touched on earlier, but maybe we can write on those.

[155] **Ann Jones:** Yes. Aled also has a point on this.

[156] **Aled Roberts:** Rydych wedi sôn am Loegr, ond mae’r astudiaeth gan yr LSE yr oedd Simon Thomas yn sôn amdani yn cynnwys ffigurau trawiadol iawn o ran costau gofal plant ym Mhrydain, sef rhyw 26.6% o incwm ar gyfartaledd, tra bod y cyfartaledd yng nglwedydd yr OECD yn rhyw 11%. A **Aled Roberts:** You mentioned England, but the LSE study that Simon Thomas referred to includes very striking figures about the cost of childcare in Britain, which is around 26.6% of income on average, while the average in the OECD countries is about 11%. Have you studied any foreign systems? I

ydych wedi astudio unrhyw gyfundrefau tramor? Rwy'n gwybod bod budd-daliadau yn effeithio ar y ffigurau, ond a oes gwersi i'w dysgu o ran cyfundrefnau mewn gwledydd cyfandirol? know that benefit payments affect the figures, but are there lessons to be learned from the systems in countries on the continent?

[157] **Vaughan Gething:** We do look at international evidence as well. This is not a simple thing to do. When we talk about wanting cheaper childcare, we also have a big problem with the fact that most childcare workers who deliver childcare—and we want to raise the quality of childcare—are not very well paid. You can often earn more working in a supermarket than you can working with children. That is a problem for us. If we want to have greater aspirations for the childcare workforce to provide greater quality and a greater number of them around the country at a reduced price to parents, well, if you give people a better education and give them greater aspirations, they often want to be paid more, and that is not unreasonable.

[158] Much of the international evidence is that there is a different societal attitude and consensus around childcare. If you go to the Scandinavian countries, which are always talked about, they accept that those childcare workers have a higher status and that they get paid more. In this country, childcare workers are relatively low paid, and that affects what we can do in terms of the development of business and quality within that as well. So, yes, we do look at other parts of the UK, where there is a similar tax and benefits situation, and we look at other parts of Europe, where the settlement on tax and benefit is different, but the wider societal settlement is probably the most important aspect, because of that much bigger and broader acceptance of the fact that childcare really matters to the development of the child, and that it matters in terms of the economic ability of different parents to be able to access the labour market.

[159] **Ann Jones:** Deputy Minister, we have about six minutes left and we have about six questions. The way that we have asked questions this morning and taken answers to them, we could be here until the start of Plenary, but I do not intend to keep us that long.

[160] **Vaughan Gething:** I can talk that long, if you want me to.

[161] **Ann Jones:** No, it is fine—I think that you are doing a fairly good job at the moment. [*Laughter.*] Do you have another five minutes, though, so that we can try to do some of the more pertinent questions? We have a set of questions that we will write to you with as well.

[162] **Vaughan Gething:** Okay, no problem; I am happy to respond.

[163] **Ann Jones:** On Communities First, then, Keith, if you can find the pertinent ones.

[164] **Keith Davies:** When we look at the paper you have produced, you have 100 Communities First staff who are focused on learning and education. You also talk within your paper about linking in with the pupil deprivation grant. So, what discussions have you had with Huw Lewis on these issues?

[165] **Vaughan Gething:** I am really pleased with the discussions that I have had with Huw Lewis on this particular issue, because of the Communities First match funding, and we are very clear that the guidance that the Minister for education has recently issued also covers the way in which we would expect the match funding to be used as well. We want to see Communities First schools more closely and properly engaged with Communities First projects, because a key part of the deprivation programme is about the recognition that you need to have family and community engagement in learning. It is very consistent with what we expect from Families First, Flying Start and the wider Communities First programme. So,

we want to see a greater consistency and expectation around the engagement we should have there. So, I am comfortable with where we are now in terms of that engagement between me and Huw Lewis as Ministers, but that needs to filter through on the ground. The honest truth is that not every Communities First cluster is as engaged with all of its schools as some are. So there is a point about consistency and what we expect in terms of outcomes and how you evidence the outcomes between Communities First spending and education spending. My main obsession is that, if the achievement of pupils rises, I am a little less worried about whether there is a fight between me and Huw Lewis about who is most responsible. I am just interested in the outcome.

[166] **Keith Davies:** Yes, but one of the reasons I am asking the question is that I did not know that these 100 people were engaged with learning. It was only when I read your report that I realised that.

[167] **Vaughan Gething:** Well, on the three strands of Communities First of improving prosperity, improving learning and improving health outcomes, a lot of that work is obviously around learning and community learning and that includes schools as well as adult learning and engagement with adults in terms of skills and education to help them to get closer to the labour market if not enter the labour market, as well as some of the more wellbeing-related focus on learning. We have a strong focus on helping people back into the labour market with learning. You will have seen this in your own constituency, in Llwynhendy, where there is a partnership between Communities First and Jobcentre Plus, where learning is provided in that setting where people are more likely to trust a Jobcentre Plus adviser and much more likely to engage in the learning and then have much better outcomes with regard to getting jobs. That has an impact in terms of their engagement in education as well. So, that is what we expect and, with the match funding, we will see over the next year or two the projects that have been approved and then we will start to see some results in terms of, 'Well, are you achieving outcomes?', and I and the Minister for education will definitely be interested in that.

[168] **Keith Davies:** Good.

[169] **Ann Jones:** We will turn to David, very briefly.

[170] **David Rees:** You have highlighted the fact that these Communities First clusters are looking at developing people to get them into the workforce. I understand that, but Estyn came to us and talked about community schools and the importance of the community school concept and ethos. In that sense, how are you measuring the match funding going to projects that help parents to develop and gain numeracy and literacy skills to be able to support their children through the learning process, because that is going to be the critical element? So, when they go to the family home, there will be support there for the development of the child.

[171] **Vaughan Gething:** It is part of the work that I am really interested in engaging in in the outcomes framework and with regard to the measures that Communities First clusters have chosen and how they are then meeting those measures. I take a very real and continuing interest in parental engagement in learning and equipping parents to be engaged in that learning. I recognise the point you make: if parents do not have basic skills themselves, they are unlikely to be able to support their child and, in turn, it affects their aspirations for their child and how those are met. So, it is definitely part of what I am looking for in terms of the view I take on Communities First clusters, and there is going to be an evaluation of the new clusters, which is being signed off. The work will be done over the course of this year. So, we should have a bit more from an objective point of view on what that looks like as well as my own view on how that looks, and, in particular, on the function and the relationship between the outcomes framework and what has actually been achieved and how meaningful those measures are, going back to the point from the discussion I was having with Angela Burns earlier about the different measures of achievement there will be.

[172] **Ann Jones:** We have questions on Families First now from Suzy.

[173] **Suzy Davies:** Thank you. I will keep this to one question, Deputy Minister. On Families First, you are putting quite a lot of money into this—more than £40 million a year—and it is a reasonably well protected budget actually. The first annual report came out in December. I did not get to see that; I do not think that there has been a written statement on it. It says quite a lot about what is being done, it seems as though you are getting there, but I cannot see any evidence of an impact assessment. When are we getting an impact assessment report?

[174] **Vaughan Gething:** Martin, do you want to talk about the impact assessment and the next part of Families First, just on the process bit? I will ask Martin, because it is a programme that his department directly runs, and then I will come back on it.

[175] **Suzy Davies:** Okay. Thank you.

[176] **Mr Swain:** I am not sure whether your reference to the annual report is a reference to the first evaluation report so I need to check on that—

[177] **Suzy Davies:** Yes, December 2013.

[178] **Mr Swain:** Yes, I think it is the first evaluation report. I mentioned earlier that the evaluation team was in situ when this programme started, so it is very different to the points on Flying Start. However, we were starting this programme from scratch in a sense so it is only now that we are starting to collect income data. If the Deputy Minister is happy, we can perhaps provide a note on the numbers of families going through the programme, going through the team-around-the-family process, and the numbers engaging with individual projects. That was not picked up in the first report.

11:00

[179] **Suzy Davies:** With respect, I am not very interested in inputs. I am interested in the outcomes. If you have even preliminary data on that, that would be great.

[180] **Mr Swain:** I absolutely accept that. From my perspective, I am very interested in inputs because, without the inputs, we do not get the outputs. So, we work through.

[181] **Suzy Davies:** Bearing in mind the criteria against which you are assessing success, which are in your paper.

[182] **Vaughan Gething:** We have a range of indicators against which those outcomes will be measured. I am happy to provide a paper on the outcomes and the measurement, and then to look at when we expect to be able to provide a useful assessment of early achievement against those, and what the response is. I am happy to come back to that. I know the committee will be writing to me as well.

[183] **Ann Jones:** That is helpful, thank you. We will quickly run this one past you; I think play is very important, and here we are squeezing it in in the last few seconds. Nevertheless, we are interested in it. Angela has the questions.

[184] **Angela Burns:** Your paper, for which I thank you, makes mention of the importance of play. I wanted to pick up on the play sufficiency assessments. I see that you receive play sufficiency assessments from all local authorities in Wales, which cheers me up no end, because I know that, when I talk to the two that I deal with, I find it quite difficult to get hold

of any real indication of their play sufficiency assessments. Will you give us an indication of where you think the state of play is in Wales for children? Will you also be able to give us an overview of how much you think those sufficiency assessments pick up on the rurality of so much of our population? You can have a play base if you live in a decent sized village or a town or city, but sometimes it is much harder for those children who are spread around the rural community to be able to get to a play centre. Finally, could you give any views you might have on driving forward play-based facilities in tandem with primary and secondary school collaborations?

[185] **Vaughan Gething:** On the rural issue—I will deal with that first—in terms of what we look at, it is obviously a factor. We think about access to opportunities, and the opportunities differ in terms of the context of the child and where they are. I grew up in a rural community, so many of the play opportunities that we had were not around formal facilities, but about the fact that we lived in that particular area and the points about a feeling of greater safety in your environment, whereas, in an urban environment, it is much more managed, with more adult oversight. When we look at where we are and at the state of play across Wales, I am actually more optimistic than perhaps I thought I would be at the start of my term of office, because local authorities have themselves recognised that the play sufficiency assessment process was really helpful from their point of view, in terms of properly looking at where there are opportunities and at where they could do more without it necessarily costing a great deal. I did announce some new money a couple of weeks ago, literally just after I had provided the papers. I was able to announce a small amount of money to help in the provision of and maintenance of play facilities across Wales. I am going to make an announcement about the second part of the duty, and what has been really helpful in the conversation around that is that we have had local authority engagement in the discussions that we have had, but also Play Wales in particular has been very helpful, because it has recognised that, if we want to say, ‘You need more facilities’, actually this is a time when there is not a lot of money around, and so we have been trying to look at ways of having low-cost or no-cost play opportunities and how those are provided. I can come back to you about the point around schools, and the use of school facilities, because there is a broader point that I am discussing with the Minister for education about how those are used. I am optimistic about where we are, but I recognise that there is going to be an honest limit to what we can achieve, given that we are looking at low-cost and no-cost opportunities moving forward. There will be a conversation around the guidance, because, if we are going to commence the second part of the duty, there has to be guidance that goes with it. Again, I would be very interested in the committee’s view on the draft guidance when we produce it.

[186] **Angela Burns:** The reason why I ask about that collaboration issue is that I have looked at a couple of examples in England, which I would be very happy to forward to you, of where secondary schools are on a site where a primary school is either nearby or on the same site, and what they have done—this in different counties; I have looked at about four now—is they have also built a youth club, for want of a better term, that starts from the primary school age and goes all the way, during school hours, up to the age of the school children, and then, out of school hours, it might go up for a couple more years. They have used it to offer free school breakfasts at the start of the day, all the way through to being able to keep children there until 6 p.m. That has a number of advantages. One is the childcare issues that we were talking about. The second is about poverty and attainment and inclusion. For the children who go away after school and travel any distance, a lot of them have difficulty getting back to join sports clubs and so on. They have that wellbeing poverty that we talked about and that sense of exclusion. Their families do not have money for the endless fares or they just do not have the transportation systems in place. This enables those children to take part in all those kinds of activities before they even get to the home base. It is an interesting proposition, because it fulfils that very important part of every child’s psyche, which is to be part of a community and have the play element, and also it helps to solve some of the other issues that we have discussed.

[187] **Vaughan Gething:** We have schools in Wales with youth service provision on or near the school site. There is an issue, going back to some of the other questions, around the aspiration for schools to be genuine community schools, so that you do not see the gates closing at the end of the school day and everything is locked and you cannot use the services and facilities. I know that a number of projects, and new build twenty-first century schools money, are looking at community schools where there is genuine use of that community facility, not just until the end of the school day. It is an area that I will happily come back to the committee to discuss. I would be very interested if you want to come back to me, individually or through the committee, with a view on how you think we might do more.

[188] **Ann Jones:** Thank you, Deputy Minister. There are a number of points that you will send back to us. We have a number of questions that we did not get to; I suppose that that is poor chairing. I will take the blame for that, although I do not know whether the length of some of the questions and some of the answers had something to do with it as well—but, there we go. Nevertheless, we will write to you with those. Thank you also to your officials. We look forward to having you at another session within the next term or so. We will send you a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy.

11:07

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

[189] **Ann Jones:** I move that

*the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42.*

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

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.  
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11:07.  
The public part of the meeting ended at 11:07.*