



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru The National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc The Children and Young People Committee

**Dydd Iau, 1 Rhagfyr 2011
Thursday, 1 December 2011**

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These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

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

Angela Burns	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Christine Chapman	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Jocelyn Davies	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Keith Davies	Llafur Labour
Suzy Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Julie Morgan	Llafur Labour
Lynne Neagle	Llafur Labour
Jenny Rathbone	Llafur Labour
Aled Roberts	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Simon Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

Eraill yn bresennol**Others in attendance**

Iestyn Davies	Ffederasiwn Busnesau Bach Federation of Small Businesses
Steve Hole	Uwch-reolwr, Gyrfa Cymru Morgannwg Ganol a Phowys Senior Manager, Careers Wales, Mid Glamorgan and Powys
Joyce M'Caw	Prif Weithredwr, Gyrfa Cymru Gogledd-ddwyrain Cymru Chief Executive, Careers Wales, North East Wales
Rachel Searle	Ffederasiwn Hyfforddiant Cenedlaethol Cymru National Training Federation Wales
Arwyn Watkins	Cadeirydd, Ffederasiwn Hyfforddiant Cenedlaethol Cymru Chair, National Training Federation Wales

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

Claire Griffiths	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Gregg Jones	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Claire Morris	Clerc Clerk
Anne Thomas	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.14 a.m.

The meeting began at 9.14 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Christine Chapman:** Good morning and welcome to the Children and Young People Committee. We have not received any apologies this morning.

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Faterion Ewropeaidd Update on European Issues

[2] **Christine Chapman:** This item is about EU policy issues relevant to the Children and Young People Committee. I welcome Gregg Jones from Brussels via video link. You have provided a paper on the relevant EU policy developments that are ongoing or planned for 2012 and fall within the committee's portfolio. I see that you are sitting in the Committee of the Regions room, so I would like to thank that committee for allowing this today. Gregg, please introduce the paper and I will then ask Members to ask some questions on it.

[3] **Mr Jones:** Good morning, Chair and Members. I will say a little about who I am and what I do, because I have not met all of the Members so far, so that might be useful to put the paper in context. I am based in Brussels and work exclusively for the National Assembly for Wales—I am your person in Brussels, if you like. I do a range of things for Members, including visit programmes when Members come out to Brussels. I also do forward-look briefings and papers, with alerts on matters that are coming up at the Brussels end that look relevant to the Assembly. You may have seen two of these. One is an EU weekly e-mail update, which comes out every Monday, and the other main output is a series of policy updates on key developments here. Their purpose is to give Members an insight into what is happening here in a way that is understandable and relevant to your work.

[4] In terms of work with the committees, to come back to the paper, under the fourth Assembly there is a different approach from in previous Assemblies when it comes to considering European issues. In the past, there was a dedicated European and External Affairs Committee, which took lead responsibility for European issues and had a strategic view about developments relevant to Wales. That did not mean that other committees did not have a role to play, but there was a single committee that took the lead. Under the fourth Assembly, there is not a dedicated European and external affairs committee. The Business Committee, with the support of the four parties, agreed to take a more mainstream approach, whereby European matters are considered by each of the main thematic policy committees, including this one. Today is the first opportunity that we have had to look at this from the point of view of children and young people. There is work ongoing in a couple of the other committees. The Enterprise and Business Committee is undertaking a strategic inquiry into the future of EU structural funds programmes and it will also be looking at public procurement issues and the Horizon 2020 programme, which is a research and innovation programme primarily focused on the HE sector. The Environment and Sustainability Committee is looking at agriculture and fisheries policies and some environmental issues. So that sets the paper in context.

[5] What I have tried to do with the paper is to use it as an opportunity to explain how things happen at the Brussels end. That is what section 2 does. It flags up who the key players are and what the competences are in relation to children and young people—what the policies related to those are. I have then highlighted some of the issues that are on the agenda here and will continue to be on the agenda during 2012 and beyond. Finally, I have tried to tie that into some suggested areas of work that the committee may want to consider. You have a discussion later this morning on future work, so that might be something that you want to look at. I can go into more detail on sections 2 and 3 of the paper or I can pick those matters up during questions, whichever way you want to play it.

[6] **Christine Champan:** I will now invite some Members to ask initial questions. As you have said, this is the first opportunity that this committee has had to discuss these issues relating to the European Union. It is a comprehensive paper, but sometimes this gets quite complex. So, I think it is useful that we are mainstreaming this across all committees. Are there any questions from Members?

[7] **Julie Morgan:** The Eurochild conference is being held in Wales at the moment. I wonder whether you could say more about how these networks operate and what influence they have.

[8] **Mr Jones:** In some ways, the Eurochild conference was both good and bad timing from the committee's point of view, because we looked to see whether it would be possible to do a European session with the conference while it was in Cardiff, but that has not proved possible. However, that is one of the issues that I have suggested for a potential follow-up action. In terms of its work, I think that it would be useful to explain the context in which issues related to children and young people are dealt with. When it comes to education and social policy, the main drivers of those policies are national Governments, or member states and the relevant players within the member states. The EU has limited competence in that area. It cannot make laws explicitly. So, its role is to support the actions that member states and national Governments are taking. In that context, the role of the networks—this would apply to networks in general, not just those on issues related to children and young people—is to try to influence and lobby so that they put their issues and concerns squarely onto the agenda that the EU is looking at. As I said, most of this relates to national competence. What the networks are trying to do is to push the agenda, so that the EU puts pressure on national Governments to adopt best practice, to prioritise issues such as children's rights and to address child poverty, so that they become key and important political issues on the Brussels agenda. Networks such as Eurochild and the European Anti-Poverty Network, which I mention in my paper, are effective and active networks. They are known by the Commission, the various representatives of the member states, and within the European Parliament. They are seen as bodies that can make a difference.

[9] If you look at some of the issues that are being considered, such as child poverty, early learning for children and early care and so on, these are issues that Eurochild in particular has been pushing and has been trying to get on to the agenda, and they are on the agenda now. The question then is what the networks can do to influence action on the ground. It is for the member states, national Governments and would be called the regional Governments in our case, to translate that into action on the ground. The fact that Eurochild is in Wales today is a testament to how Wales is viewed with regard to how it deals with children's issues: Wales is seen to be at the forefront of these matters.

[10] **Christine Chapman:** I have had some dealings with Eurochild, and I am hoping to attend part of the conference this afternoon. However, perhaps at some point it would be useful for this committee to talk to its representatives, perhaps via video conference, because there is some fantastic work going on there.

[11] **Jenny Rathbone:** The global recession in Europe and its impact on children is a huge issue for us, and presumably for people on this European platform. I notice that you do not have any specific targets, although you have an aim to lift 20 million people out of the risk of poverty or exclusion. How can we measure how effective you are being if we do not have a target?

[12] **Mr Jones:** The issue of targets is an interesting one, because even getting that European target of taking 20 million people out of poverty was controversial. There was quite a lot of lobbying. The European Anti-Poverty Network, in particular, was pushing strongly

for there to be a hard measure on that. It is then about taking it down to measures at the national level, because, as I mentioned already, when it comes to poverty, the European role is to support initiatives that are being undertaken at national and sub-national level. It is fair to say that the UK Government—this is not a political point; my role is not at all political—has been resistant to having national targets within the area of education as well, because it sees these as being very much the competences of the member states, and that it should be for the member states to decide on what they consider to be the appropriate ways of dealing with these issues. However, they sign up to the general aim of reducing poverty and eradication of child poverty. When it comes to translating that into specific targets, that would be seen as being an issue that is an internal matter for the state and for the relevant regional and other institutions within the state. I am not sure whether that answers the question explicitly.

[13] **Jenny Rathbone:** It is helpful in understanding the parameters of how you manoeuvre in Europe. However, we heard on Tuesday that there will be no increase in the working families tax credit and the child tax element of it, which is obviously going to have an impact on lower-earning families. However, it is not clear quite what Europe can do about it, apart from trying to prevent a race to the bottom in relation to wage reductions.

[14] **Mr Jones:** There are a couple of practical ways. It would be seen as peer pressure—naming and shaming. Most of these decisions are based on Governments talking together and agreeing actions. There is a facilitation role, so the European Commission puts financial and other types of support into sharing best practice and trying to promote innovative action to address and combat poverty on the ground. Therefore, there are some practical ways, but, when it comes to the fundamentals of policy, there are limits as to how far it can overstep competence, if that is the right phrase. It would see that as being down to the member state.

[15] **Christine Chapman:** On that point, regarding the European Anti-Poverty Network, perhaps we would like to think about whether it could give us evidence at some point, if we wanted to look at this in more detail.

[16] **Suzy Davies:** I want to examine the last point that you made a little further, in the context of tackling early school leaving. In your paper, you state:

[17] ‘The Commission published a strategy on tackling early school leaving in January 2011, and the EU education Ministers in the Council of Ministers adopted a recommendation on early school leaving in June 2011, which includes an action for all member states to have comprehensive strategies to address this issue by the end of 2012.’

[18] This has only come out in the last year. My first question is: do you know whether that work has already started in the UK and, if so, what input has the Welsh Government or the National Assembly for Wales put into the member-state strategy? Secondly, is this a case of support from the EU, or gentle nudging?

[19] **Keith Davies:** Hoffwn ddilyn lan ar y pwynt hwnnw, ar yr un cwestiwn. Yn adran tri, yr ydych yn sôn am darged o dan 10 y cant o blant yn gadael yr ysgol yn gynnar, ac yna yr ydych yn ein beirniadu yng Nghymru—neu, nid yn ein beirniadu, ond yn nodi hyn fel ffaith—am fod ein niferoedd o bobl ifanc nad ydynt mewn addysg, cyflogaeth neu hyfforddiant, neu NEETs, yn uwch na'r targed gwreiddiol. Ai 10 y cant yw'r targed ar gyfer NEETs? Nid wyf yn deall y paragraff hwnnw. Mae'r ddau beth yn

Keith Davies: I would like to follow up on that point, on the same question. In section 3, you talk about a target of under 10 per cent of children leaving school early and then you criticise us in Wales—or, rather than criticising us, you state this as a fact—that the number of people not in education, employment or training, or NEETs, is higher than the original target. Is 10 per cent the target for NEETs? I do not understand that paragraph. The two things seem to me to be contradictory, because children can leave

ymddangos yn wahanol i mi oherwydd gall school early and then be in college or plant adael ysgol yn gynnar ac wedyn bod employment. Are the two things the same? mewn coleg neu mewn gwaith. A yw'r ddau'r un peth?

[20] **Mr Jones:** First, as regards member states' strategies, I will defer to colleagues who know the UK context better than I do, because I follow things at this end, but I can perhaps give a partial answer. That recommendation directly links back to the Europe 2020 strategy, which is referred to in section 3.1 and is the EU strategy that gets all the headlines and is the one that is driving everything, including the budget. It includes a target on reducing the number of children leaving school early, as was just pointed out. That should translate into the member-state level and the national reform programmes that are produced each year. The Welsh Government participates in the preparation of national programmes. The first one under Europe 2020 covers 2011 and was agreed earlier this year. There is a link to it in the paper. I cannot remember how early school leaving is addressed in that, but I can check. That is one point where it should be flagged up, because that is the key document when it comes to implementing Europe 2020 in the UK and, as I say, the Welsh Government feeds into that.

[21] Specifically, with regard to the question around NEETs, I need to defer to colleagues who know more about that because I am not an education expert, I am an European expert, so either that could be answered in Cardiff or we can come back to you on that, if that is okay.

[22] **Ms Thomas:** The Welsh Government has an action plan on NEETs, as part of 'Skills That Work for Wales', but we have not done any work that looks at how that fits in with the European aspect, and how that compares to what other countries are doing. Therefore, that is an area that we could take forward if that would be helpful.

9.30 a.m.

[23] **Keith Davies:** Our NEETs figure is 11 per cent, is it? That is quite high.

[24] **Jenny Rathbone:** It may have gone down.

[25] **Aled Roberts:** No, 11 per cent is the most recent figure.

[26] **Christine Chapman:** Ok, we will look into that. We will have a note from Anne.

[27] **Jocelyn Davies:** This may sound like an absolutely ridiculous question but, from taking evidence on a range of issues on the committee, we know that best practice does not travel across Wales, so how does it travel across Europe?

[28] **Mr Jones:** That is a good question.

[29] **Jocelyn Davies:** It does not require an answer; think about it and tell us again.

[30] **Aled Roberts:** I was going to require an answer, because my point was that Gregg made it clear at one stage that resources were put in to disseminate best practice across Europe. I am concerned about the NEETs issue because, if you look at some of the later papers, Wrexham and Swansea were chosen as the two areas that had very poor NEETs figures. Many resources were put in by both authorities and they are now held up as examples of best practice. I am not convinced that even their best practice is best practice. Many youngsters are being put through training sausage machines just to keep them out of the statistics. If the target is 10 per cent, there must be some countries in Europe that are doing a lot better at this than we are, and yet, we do not seem to get any information regarding that best practice. For example, Finland is seen as some sort of exemplar with regard to education,

but I know very little about what actually happens on the ground.

[31] **Christine Chapman:** That is a good point. How do you see your role in this, Gregg? Obviously, it has changed now because the European agenda is being mainstreamed, which I believe is a positive move. How much do you see it as your role to help facilitate that, for example, as Aled mentioned, in line with what is being done in Finland?

[32] **Mr Jones:** It is certainly part of my role, but working with colleagues in Cardiff. I am just one person, and, obviously, there is a limit to how much I can do myself—I have been pushing that limit recently, but that is a separate point. The committee could look at a piece of structured work, and then we could look at evidence and so on. There are opportunities for visits. I know that visits can be problematic because of media perception, but I am a big advocate of it, because I think that it adds value and you meet people who know things and who can share and discuss them with you. We are doing this by video-conference, but it is much better to do it in person. Once you know people, it is easier to do it by video-conference. This is about establishing links, so I think that visits are an important way of doing that.

[33] I have two specific points in response to Aled's question. The first one is the concept of open method of co-ordination, which is a bit of EU jargon for saying that member states—it is national government, but the Welsh Government would participate in this—have a sort of structured way of trying to exchange best practice between themselves. They have signed up to it, and they see this as being something that is valuable and useful. Their officials will talk to each other, share examples and describe what they are doing on the ground and so on. Is that being used effectively? Could it be used more effectively?

[34] The second point is the other way in which the EU tries to support, which is through funding programmes. A stream of funding programmes is being discussed and negotiated at the moment. Are Welsh organisations, where possible, participating in those programmes? If so, are the results of the work being fed back into the system? Those are two ways in which Wales can look to drive it and, as I have already mentioned, the committee can also take a direct role in trying to engage in that.

[35] **Jenny Rathbone:** Another area where it would be helpful to learn about best practice is the development of engineering skills. Some of the evidence that we are looking at later today is about what is appropriate work-based training and is it effective in placing people in jobs that need doing. In a wider context, we know that we need to move away from being dominated by the banking industry, towards more manufacturing and engineering. Germany is always held up as a country that has got it right. Would you be able to provide us with information about how other countries do this, which we could possibly learn from?

[36] **Mr Jones:** Absolutely. We can try to look into that issue. There are other ways in which it can be done as well. The current European Social Fund programme has possibilities for transnational actions, where you can work with other countries to explore exactly these types of issues. There is scope to do that in the proposals for 2014-20. So, the question is whether those opportunities are being used and whether people are aware of them and making the most of them. In terms of a specific piece of work, that is exactly the type of thing we can do through the research service. I would do that with colleagues from Cardiff.

[37] **Lynne Neagle:** Are there any initiatives we should be aware of in relation to tackling child trafficking on a pan-European basis?

[38] **Mr Jones:** I will have to come back to you on that, because I did not look at that issue in preparing the brief. I did refer to it, but I do not have the knowledge on that area. I would need to come back to you on that, if that is okay.

[39] **Aled Roberts:** The evidence that we heard in the meeting that we had some weeks ago suggested that there was a particular problem with Slovakia and Wales. So, it might be that, when you are looking at it, you could consider what the evidence is. I think the problem is that we have certain agencies in Wales that are denying that there is a problem. The anti-human-trafficking co-ordinator was quite clear in saying that he had established that there had been problems, as result of freedom of information requests.

[40] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, so you could possibly come back to us with some information, Gregg. That is a good point. Would any Members like to ask any specific questions before we bring this to a close?

[41] **Julie Morgan:** On the EU agenda for the rights of the child, how can we see how each nation's status is progressing, for example in raising child awareness and participation?

[42] **Mr Jones:** We could have a specific session with Eurochild. It is working on these issues and will speak with authority on them. We could also ask the European Commission to cover that, because it will have a role. It is looking to monitor performance, because that is part of its role. It can do that; it can monitor. Obviously, that leads towards developing examples of best practice. So, I would be inclined to look at addressing it in that way, if you want to get into the quality of debate. Again, it is also an issue that we could look at purely in terms of preparing a paper.

[43] **Julie Morgan:** It is important. Obviously, things have been done in Wales that are quite forward looking, but it would be good to understand more in the European context.

[44] **Christine Chapman:** I think that there is huge scope here. Particularly with this committee, there are many really good networks out there, and experts, and obviously this would not just be down to Gregg, but I think that Gregg could be the facilitator of this to help us contact these people, if you are happy with that. Thank you for that, Gregg. That has been useful today.

[45] May I just now ask Members how they would like to proceed with this? It has been very useful today. My initial thought is that rather than having an inquiry immediately, we should look at our forward work programme. There is always that European dimension to the work we do. So, rather than just thinking in terms of Wales and the UK, we could now think of the European dimension and possibly get those people in to give evidence, whoever is appropriate.

[46] **Keith Davies:** Of the potential actions, I think that is the first one.

[47] **Christine Chapman:** How do others feel? Would you like to do that?

[48] **Aled Roberts:** I agree.

[49] **Suzy Davies:** I agree.

[50] **Julie Morgan:** I think that we should consider going to Europe and having a face-to-face debate. I know, as Gregg said, it is not the flavour of the month—

[51] **Jocelyn Davies:** We do not all have to go.

[52] **Julie Morgan:** Exactly. Are we going to shut ourselves into little silos?

[53] **Jenny Rathbone:** As long as we have all the paperwork to establish where the best practice is. One of the issues that it has raised for me is to ask what our Welsh Members of

the European Parliament are up to, because they are collecting a nice wage. What are they doing about children and child poverty?

[54] **Keith Davies:** Recommendation 1 allows you to do that.

[55] **Christine Chapman:** I know that Welsh MEPs give evidence to other committees anyway, so—

[56] **Jocelyn Davies:** I think as well, Chris, that when we are doing everything else, that we should always try to include some questions on the European dimension. So, when the Minister is here, we should make sure that we ask those questions. If an attempt is being made to mainstream the European dimension, we should try to get something in when it is appropriate. We could be asking people about best practice elsewhere when we are talking about NEETs. We could try to incorporate that. However, I have no objection if some of you want to go to see something in Europe, but I will not be able to come.

[57] **Angela Burns:** To take Jenny's point forward, we could formally write to our MEPs to ask them what priority they place on child poverty within their work. If we have a European evidence session, we could ask them to send a representative. In the same way that we can be held to account in other places, so can they.

[58] **Aled Roberts:** The only other point on that is that three European committees are identified on page 5 as being the most relevant to children's issues. There are no UK representatives on two of the committees, and there is only a substitute representative—Jill Evans—on the third committee. So, it might also be helpful if we knew who the UK representatives were on that committee, because they have a role. If the EU's view is that competence is held by the member state, they also need to represent the interests of Wales as part of that member state.

[59] **Christine Chapman:** I am a representative on the Committee of the Regions. I was not able to go to the Eurochild conference this morning because of this committee meeting, but councillor Doreen Huddart—who you might know, Aled—is a colleague on the committee, and she is speaking on behalf of the Committee of the Regions at the conference.

[60] With regard to potential action 1, are you happy to investigate or undertake further consideration of that? Gregg, are you happy if we were to do some further work on that? I see that you are. It has been an excellent session this morning, as it has given us a lot more information about the potential for this committee to engage with Europe. So, thank you on that, Gregg, and we will see you at another point.

[61] **Mr Jones:** It will hopefully be in person next time.

[62] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, thank you. We will now take a short break for five minutes.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 9.43 a.m. a 9.52 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 9.43 a.m. and 9.52 a.m.*

Gweithredu Mesur Dysgu a Sgiliau (Cymru) 2009: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009: Evidence Session

[63] **Christine Chapman:** I now reconvene the meeting. Today, we will take evidence from the National Training Federation for Wales and the Federation of Small Businesses.

Again, this evidence is part of our inquiry into the implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009. I welcome to the meeting from the National Training Federation for Wales, Arwyn Watkins, who is the chair, and Rachel Searle; and, from the Federation of Small Businesses, Iestyn Davies. Thank you for attending today and for providing papers in advance. The Members will have read those papers and, if you are happy, I will invite them to go straight into questions. I see that you are happy with that. I ask Jenny Rathbone to start with the first questions.

[64] **Jenny Rathbone:** Thank you for your papers. How do you think that the implementation of the learning and skills Measure is helping to achieve the Welsh Government's aim of having 95 per cent of young people by the age of 25 ready for high-skilled employment or higher education by 2015? It is a very demanding target. How do you think this Measure is contributing to that?

[65] **Mr Watkins:** My initial response to that is that I do not think that the Measure has been in place long enough for us to measure that expectation. I see the Measure as part of an evolution, and we are at stage one in terms of the Measure. It is about education and training for high-skilled employment. There is evidence that there are wider options available, but that is very much within an education setting. It is only recently—from August of this year—that the traineeship entitlement has come into the learning Measure, which brings the employment dimension into the Measure. We will wait and see how that will be taken up, because, from our experience, it is not really offered as an entitlement under the Measure as things stand. It is an evolution: it is about changing hearts and minds, and it has a considerable reliance on how employment opportunities arise within local communities and areas.

[66] **Ms Searle:** The Measure presents a challenge, in some ways, to reach the high-level target of 95 per cent. While it is still early days, as the target is employment and education at a high-skill level, the Measure, as we have alluded to, does not include a reference to apprenticeships or the higher-skill area of work-based learning. Therefore, the engagement strand of Welsh traineeships is part of the Measure and we welcome that. It brings in the work-based learning sector. That is not our high-level area of work-based learning, so it does not necessarily encourage, during the early days, looking towards the high-level goals. Consequently, there is the issue of parity of esteem between the academic and non-academic routes to high-level education and employment, which I do not think it is addressing at the moment.

[67] **Jenny Rathbone:** Therefore, there is still a great deal of work to be done to get that parity of esteem and to drive up the skills levels. Other people will come in on the specifics of how we can address some of your concerns.

[68] **Mr Davies:** According to the feedback from our members, there is a recognition that this is a move in the right direction. That is without doubt, therefore I think that there is unqualified support for that step change in how we deliver vocational and high skills. Our members are still aware of that stigma—is that too strong a word to use?—but that is not generally shared by our members. They value the skills agenda and have experience of when that has not been delivered. In many ways, one of the real challenges that they have recognised is not the high end, but the lower end—the basic skills. Perhaps we might like to come that later. They also recognise that the learning and skills Measure is the means by which that knowledge, skills, training—call it what you want—are delivered. It is not the answer in itself; it is the conduit, as one member put it. Once the conduit is right, what goes through it needs to be right and fit for purpose.

[69] **Christine Chapman:** There are three other Members who want to come in on this point, then I will move on to the next questions. I am sure that we will come back to some of these issues.

[70] **Angela Burns:** Thank you for your paper. I am sorry, but I am going to have to drive you on that point, because Jenny asked you whether you think it will help to meet the targets. You sort of said ‘yes’, then you said ‘maybe’, then you said ‘perhaps’, and then you said, ‘Yes, it probably will’. That is what I think you said. I am going to press you for clarity, because in the final paragraph of your paper, you describe it as having an ‘essential flaw’. To me, an essential flaw is an essential flaw—it is not that it is pretty good and that you would like to tweak it around the edges. You are saying that it has a fundamental problem. Therefore, will it or will it not achieve the targets that Jenny Rathbone spoke of?

[71] **Ms Searle:** I think that it will, as it stands.

10.00 a.m.

[72] **Keith Davies:** Mae'r Mesur yn dilyn y llwybrau dysgu, ac yr wyf yn gyfarwydd â hwy. Yr oedd un rhan o'r llwybr dysgu yn cael pobl ifanc i fod yn y gweithle—sef y *work-based learning pathway*—lle oeddent yn y gweithle am 50 diwrnod. Yn sicr, yr oedd Bwrdd Hyfforddi'r Diwydiant Adeiladu yn edrych am blant a fyddai'n gallu rheoli gwaith adeiladu, nid y plant a oedd yn mynd i osod briciau neu fod yn seiri, ond y rhai a fyddai'n arwain a rheoli. Fodd bynnag, y broblem yr oedd colegau ac ysgolion yn ei chael oedd bod yn rhaid i'r plant fod yn y gweithle am 50 diwrnod y flwyddyn. Yr oedd cael cwmnïau a oedd yn barod i gynnig 50 diwrnod i'r plant yn broblem fawr i'r ysgolion oedd yn cymryd rhan. Yr oedd bai ar yr ochr honno. Wrth gwrs, mae'r Mesur wedi'i adeiladu ar y llwybrau dysgu, ond yr oedd problemau sylfaenol gyda'r system honno o ran cael plant yn y gweithle.

Keith Davies: The Measure follows the learning pathways, and I am familiar with those. One part of the learning pathways had young people in the workplace—the work-based learning pathway—where they were in the workplace for 50 days. Certainly, the Construction Industry Training Board looked for children who could manage construction systems, not the bricklayers or carpenters, but those who would lead and manage. However, the problem that colleges and schools had was that the children had to be in the workplace for 50 days a year. Finding companies that were willing to offer 50 days to children was a big problem for the participating schools. There was a problem in that regard. Of course, the Measure is built on the learning pathways, but there were fundamental problems with that system with regard to getting children into the workplace.

[73] **Mr Davies:** Felly, yr ydych yn sôn am ddisgyblion neu fyfyrwyr yn mynd i'r gweithle unwaith yr wythnos ar gyfartaledd, os ydych yn gwneud y fathemateg. Mae hynny'n rhoi pwysau penodol ar y cyflogwr mewn amgylchedd sy'n anodd iawn ar hyn o bryd. Felly, mae hynny'n uchelgeisiol. Nid wyf yn credu y byddai unrhyw un yn anghytuno â'r egwyddor. Yr ydym i gyd yn derbyn ei fod yn rhywbeth cadarnhaol a bod angen mwy o brofiad gwaith ar unigolion sy'n dod i'r gweithle. Mae agendor rhwng dysgu yn y gweithle a dysgu sgiliau yn y coleg neu'r ysgol, ac nid yw'r sgiliau hynny bob amser yn gymwys yn y gweithle.

Mr Davies: So, you are talking about pupils or students going into the workplace once a week on average, if you do the maths. That places specific pressure on an employer in an environment that is very difficult at present. Therefore, that is ambitious. I do not think that anyone would disagree with the principle. We all agree that this is a positive thing and that people entering the workplace need more work experience. There is a gulf between work-based learning and the skills learnt in a college or school, and those skills are not always applicable in the workplace.

[74] Felly, yr ydych yn sôn am gyflogwyr yn chwarae rôl flaenllaw, heb unrhyw dâl na chymorth ariannol, hyd y gwn i, o'i gymharu

Therefore, you are talking about employers playing a prominent role, without any remuneration or financial support, as far as I

â phrentisiaeth, lle mae'r strwythur yn wahanol. Nid wyf yn credu bod unrhyw broblem ymysg cyflogwyr ac nad ydynt am gyfrannu fel hyn, ond mae'n rhaid ichi fod yn hollol realistig. Yn y pen draw, nod cyflogwyr yw creu arian a chyflogi pobl; nod colegau ac ysgolion yw rhoi hyfforddiant. Yr ydym yn derbyn bod rhywfaint o gydweithio, ond, yn y bôn, nod cyflogwyr yw gwneud arian i'w busnes.

understand, compared with an apprenticeship, where the structure is different. I do not think that there is a problem among employers and that they do not want to contribute like this, but you have to be realistic. At the end of the day, the aim of employers is to make profit and employ people; the aim of colleges and schools is to provide training. We accept that there is some joint working, but, essentially, the aim of employers is to make money.

[75] **Keith Davies:** Codais y pwynt gan eich bod yn feirniadol iawn o'r cyrsiau galwedigaethol sydd ar gael. Byddai'r cyrsiau yr oeddwn yn sôn amdanynt yn ateb eich cwynion, mewn ffordd.

Keith Davies: I raised this point because you are very critical of the vocational courses available. The courses that I mentioned would deal with your complaints, in a way.

[76] **Mr Davies:** Yr wyf yn derbyn hynny, ond mae gwahaniaeth rhwng delfryd a realiti, oherwydd gall fod yn anodd ei delifro. Nodwn yn ein tystiolaeth fod angen, yn y pen draw, mwy o sgiliau yn y colegau ac ysgolion sy'n seiliedig ar realiti byd gwaith, yn hytrach na cheisio creu'r realiti hwnnw y tu mewn i fyd gwaith ei hun, os nad yw hynny'n rhy ddryslud.

Mr Davies: I accept that, but there is a difference between aspiration and reality, as it can be difficult to deliver. We make the point in our evidence that, at the end of the day, colleges and schools need to offer greater skills that are based on the reality of the workplace, rather than trying to create that reality in the workplace itself, if that is not too confusing.

[77] **Jocelyn Davies:** With regard to work-based training, you say in your paper that, despite the fact that money has been available, pump primed by the Welsh Government, the take up has been limited and patchy for various reasons including complexity, cost and the need to adopt a radically new approach to course provision. So, what is the resistance to adopting a radically new approach to course provision? In using the word 'complexity', are you being diplomatic?

[78] **Ms Searle:** I want to clarify that that is in relation to a qualification called principal learning qualifications. That is a radical and new way of working at pre-16 and post-16 levels when looking at the school environment. There is an expectation that there is not one individual organisation or sector that will be able to deliver all of that learning. It is very much about working in partnership often—a school and a college; a school, college and a training provider; or a school, a work-based learning training provider and an employer. It has to have those essential links.

[79] Like any period of transition, it takes time to look at how that will be adopted. However, the requirements of those consultations were heavy, and there were expectations about how they would be delivered and the collaborative way that they would be delivered. That would require, in some cases, some quite fundamental changes to approach. Also, those vocational course qualifications were very much aimed at learners who were not low ability, but at middle to high ability learners. That relates a little to what my colleague said earlier with regard to looking for managers to go into construction.

[80] There is also an issue about how those courses are perceived by the general public, by parents and by children, and whether they would choose to go on one of those courses at the expense of the traditional raft of A-levels, although people know how the traditional raft of A-levels then progress to a degree. So, while those courses have a high grounding with regard to knowledge, competence and practical ability, and huge progression opportunities into

employment—often into sectors with a growing need for employees—actually understanding how that works in practice and translating it into getting the right young people onto the courses, as well as having the right make-up to start to make those courses deliverable, has probably caused a lot of difficulty.

[81] **Mr Watkins:** The barriers in the first instance to enable this to happen are very often some of the key competencies of the workforce that will be within an individual institution or organisation. It takes a number of years to develop a team with the competencies and the knowledge to deliver new products in the right place, or you must really start working collaboratively across the whole of the education and training provider network with regard to developing the solutions. We cannot deliver this in isolation. I would not be critical of anything that is delivered in any institution in that regard.

[82] One thing that we alluded to in the paper, and I do not know whether it will come up, is for individuals to come out with competencies that are based on skills that are developed in the workplace. When you compare those competencies with the competencies of someone who has undertaken a period of over 18 months' full-time employment within the workplace, you can see the disillusionment that the youngsters are feeling. Indeed, when we do a skills scan, we have to go back over some of the competencies that they have already achieved. We require the delivery of in-depth knowledge, so that the competencies can be achieved in the right environment, which is with the employer. So, if they come to an employer with that depth of knowledge with regard to a particular sector and industry, the competencies can be gained in employment.

[83] **Aled Roberts:** Os derbyniwn mai prif ffocws y Mesur yw'r ddarpariaeth o fewn ysgolion a cholegau, pa effaith mae'r Mesur wedi'i gael ar eich sector chi'n benodol? **Aled Roberts:** If we accept that the main focus of the Measure is school or college-based provision, what impact has the Measure had on your sector specifically?

[84] **Mr Watkins:** To date, it has had very little impact. When the Measure was first being discussed and considered, the federation submitted a paper regarding our concerns at being excluded from the Measure. As from August, we are now included under the entitlement, with regard to the traineeship aspect of that, and that is the first time that we, as a work-based learning network, have been included in the Measure.

[85] **Aled Roberts:** Yn eich papur, soniwch am wahaniaethau o ardal i ardal o ran eich bod chi neu eich aelodau'n cael sedd o gwmpas y bwrdd. Faint o'r ardaloedd sy'n gadael ichi wneud hynny a faint sy'n gwrthod? **Aled Roberts:** In your paper, you talk about the differences from place to place regarding whether you or your members get a seat at the table. How many areas allow you to do that and how many refuse?

[86] **Ms Searle:** I will have to come back to you with the exact figures. The situation has improved over the last 18 months. There is a minority of areas where things are more challenging, but, as I alluded to in the paper, the way that the mechanism is managed is very complex. There are various layers of committee, and it is about the right people being on the right committees. They may now be included within the network, but, again, are they in the right decision-making part? It is certainly evolving and improving, but there is still a way to go.

[87] **Christine Chapman:** Do you want to come back on that?

[88] **Aled Roberts:** I just think that it would be helpful if we had a picture of the variation across Wales.

[89] **Christine Chapman:** Yes. Could you provide that for us?

[90] **Ms Searle:** Yes.

[91] **Jenny Rathbone:** With regard to influencing stakeholders' approach to this matter, as far as you are aware, do any of your members have representation on school governing bodies? School governing bodies are only as good as the membership, and if they lack that sort of industry input or local-employer input, it can be quite difficult for people to realise what kind of shift is required. Off the top of your head, you may not be able to give us that information, but just remember that all governing bodies have community representatives. If people do not put their names forward, it is difficult, because they cannot pluck names out of a hat.

[92] **Christine Chapman:** Jocelyn, is your question on the same point?

[93] **Jocelyn Davies:** It is. In your paper, you say that the curriculum teams put this together. That is sometimes within the local network or within the school itself. I think that you are being diplomatic when you say that the consultation is limited at best. Am I to take from that that, on the whole, it is very poor? I know that I am putting you on the spot, but the point of all of this, I guess, is to ensure that the learner has the best experience in order to gain employment and in order that businesses can choose from a pool of people who are well qualified or who have the competencies to carry out the work. This is something that is not happening, so I am not asking you to criticise anything in particular, but would you say that, on the whole, this is poor?

[94] **Mr Watkins:** I do not mind being put on the spot, to be honest. The point is very pertinent. I see the whole of the process as being a total supply chain to the businesses and the economy that operate in the communities in which we live. If any of us are not servicing that requirement, we are doing an injustice to the economy of Wales, quite frankly, in that regard. I speak not purely as a managing director of a training company, but as the managing director of a licensed meat-cutting plant. So, I am a key employer in a community in Wales. That is the service that we should be providing, and we should not be taking any youngsters down any dead ends or cul-de-sacs. They should know at the point when they start something where it is likely to take them and what opportunities it will give them.

[95] **Jocelyn Davies:** May I come back on that? Earlier, we were talking about some of this work being highly skilled and needing the most able pupils. If we are not training up Welsh young people to take those positions, can you tell me who is taking those positions? Or is it the case that those positions are filled by people who do not have the ability to carry out the job to the highest level that you would require?

[96] **Mr Davies:** I think that it is a mixture of both. Clearly, there are skills shortages. When we speak to generic members, not necessarily training members, but, also, as Arwyn has pointed out, people who have a foot in both camps, they often say that they cannot get the people with the right skills. We would need to drill down into that more to find out exactly what, from the employer perspective, the right skills are. In many areas we have referred to, it encompasses everything from basic skills through to the high-level skills that Arwyn has referred to. We have not put the question in terms of the link with governing bodies of schools and further education colleges—although I would say that the new common inspection framework should be doing its job to ensure that there are better links between schools and the wider community beyond the school or college gates—but in terms of understanding.

10.15 a.m.

[97] There are projects happening elsewhere, and we are aware of the work of the FSB and the fact that the Government is trying to pin down the real situation in terms of labour market intelligence, so we would simply ask whether these things are being joined up. If information is sitting in the department somewhere showing that we need x skills in y location, it is okay to ask whether the local school is working enough with local employers in the meat-processing industry, or whatever, but surely Government should be providing that information to the trainers, saying, 'Our best analysis is that these skills are required in these areas'. I go back to my earlier point: there is overwhelming support for the move towards vocational courses and away from what some would criticise as the liberal-theory model of education, where we give people a good, rounded education—all of a sudden we have transferred to giving people the right skills for the workplace. No-one would want to devalue that model, but if information about the workplace is there, is it being joined up and given to training providers?

[98] **Jocelyn Davies:** We do not mind schools producing well-rounded people.

[99] **Mr Davies:** No, of course not.

[100] **Christine Chapman:** Before I bring Lynne Neagle in, on the point that Iestyn made about skills, and leaving aside basic skills for the moment, because they are obviously relevant, are you talking about skills or about the right attitude?

[101] **Mr Davies:** One thing that we tend to talk about at the FSB is soft skills, or life skills. We use those terms to try to tease out exactly what our members' gripe is when they are faced with a problem. One gripe is that the purported skill level is not the actual skill level, and the question that we are asking is whether that is to do with the level of knowledge and experience within the training provider, be it further education or a school. In other words, have you got the geography teacher switching to be Mr Composites-and-Engineering in the afternoon before running off to take assembly? That is the question—is the school the best place to deliver that kind of skills-specific education? It is more fitted to this rounded individual kind of approach, which we cherish in the right place. However, if you speak to employers—this is more than just employers saying, 'Things ain't as good as when I was in school or college, or did my apprenticeship'—there is this continual awareness that individuals do not possess the correct life skills to be able to turn up to work on time, do a full day's work or a full week's work, and thrive in the workplace.

[102] **Lynne Neagle:** I wanted to ask specifically about engineering. I am lucky to still have a significant manufacturing base in my constituency of Torfaen, but, without fail, when I visit manufacturing companies, they complain that they cannot get young people, and that there are no young people coming through to take on the skilled work in engineering. I know that some companies have placed adverts for vacancies as far away as Guatemala, which is very depressing when you have all these young people who need help. I just wondered where you feel we are going wrong with that kind of thing, and what needs to be done to address that so that we can get young people providing these skills locally.

[103] **Christine Chapman:** Before you answer that, Simon Thomas wants to make the same point.

[104] **Simon Thomas:** This is very much related to Lynne Neagle's question—it is the flip side of it, really. Do you feel that businesses' needs, and their skills mapping, if you like, is reflected in the planning done within the learning pathways, and by Government in general? Responding to evidence that employers were saying that people did not come with the basic skills, you mentioned soft skills, as well as specific skills, and you said that you might have to drill down a bit more. Are you drilling down? Are you feeding back that information? If so, what kind of response are you getting? Have you taken it forward in a coherent enough way?

We keep hearing these anecdotes, but we do not see much evidence.

[105] **Mr Davies:** It is a question of capacity in the relevant sectors beyond Government. We could ask the same question of all areas of concern. For us, it is about trying to understand what is really going on there, and the starting point is to scrutinise the labour market intelligence that we are told is emerging from Government, and simply to go to employers and say, 'In Torfaen'—or in Welshpool, or wherever it may be—'is this the skills picture that you recognise?' That is a piece of work that we would be happy to contribute to, but it is not something that we could lead on. I know that that work is being undertaken, and with the limited resources that all member-led organisations have, it is a question of being able to scrutinise it to ensure that it is robust.

[106] In terms of the methodology that people often employ to engage with employers, there is a false expectation about what employers will be able to contribute. If you send a questionnaire to a small or medium-sized employer, it is not going to have the time, energy or the inclination, in fairness, to fill it in. If other methodological routes are taken to assess the need, then you will get the robust data that you require. It seems to me that if someone says that something is the case two or three times, you begin to see a pattern. I do not think there is a connection, but, unfortunately, I could not give you particular evidence that that is the case.

[107] **Christine Chapman:** I very much take Simon's point. There is this lack of coherence sometimes. I am wondering about the sector skills councils. They know their own sectors; could they not come up with this information?

[108] **Ms Searle:** That is the point I wanted to make. There are sectors with skills shortages and those are highlighted in the sector skills councils' published reports and agreements. Engineering is one of those areas. For example, e-skills UK has recently published some interesting research that shows that the number of young people going into the technical and professional aspects of information technology has dramatically reduced over the past 10 years. There are skills shortages in those areas too. We have the knowledge. The issue, sometimes, is that the knowledge is sat in various areas and it is about how we get it in. You alluded earlier to planning. For example, sector skills councils are often not involved in curriculum planning, or, if they are, it is once the plan has been completed and they sign something off, rather than being an integral part of the planning process early on.

[109] The other thing about the skills shortage is that it is about raising the aspirations of young people in Wales and making them aware of career opportunities and different skills areas. While we do that, and the careers service will do it at the age of 14, in terms of choices available, we need to be a lot smarter. That needs to happen earlier on. There has been research into the education programme in the Heads of the Valleys area which suggests that young people can be switching off to things at the age of nine. To what extent are we bringing the needs of the economy into the employment and high-level skills opportunities in some of these vital areas? To what extent are we making them available to children at a much earlier age, to switch them on and get them to start looking at that? So, when it comes to curriculum choice at the age of 14, it is not a case of, 'Oh well, do I take the academic route or shall I do that vocational route? Maybe the people who are being encouraged down that route have lower ability or are more likely to be disaffected'. We are raising it at an earlier age in terms of parity and aspiration.

[110] **Mr Watkins:** Chair, there is another fundamental issue here for us, namely the supply side. Ultimately, we are the supply side in this. In my experience of human nature and curriculum planning and so forth, you tend to plan the curriculum on the competencies and ability of your workforce, from the supply side. This is a fundamental flaw in the whole system. What you should be looking at is what are the competencies in that particular curriculum planning area and how do they fit into the needs of industry in that area. It is

human nature that you will default to teach the subject that you are comfortable with. A Member asked a question earlier about identifying a skills need, for example in north-east Wales. It is great to identify that the need is there, but if you do not have the resource to deliver on that need, it will always remain there.

[111] **Jenny Rathbone:** I am still struggling to understand why the sector skills councils are not being more active in persuading schools and colleges that these are markets where there is a shortage of trained labour and are, therefore, good career pathways. You told us that you are being involved only once the general framework of the offer has been set. Why are you not involved at an earlier stage? What is preventing certain sector skills councils from contacting local schools and colleges? It is not as if there is a huge number of them; there will be fewer than a dozen in any given locality. Why are sector skills councils not forcing schools and colleges to engage with them at an earlier stage?

[112] **Mr Watkins:** I am unable to comment on that.

[113] **Mr Davies:** We cannot comment on behalf of the sector skills councils either.

[114] **Christine Chapman:** We will take evidence from Keith then. [*Laughter.*]

[115] **Keith Davies:** Siaradaf yn Saesneg **Keith Davies:** I will speak in English so that er mwyn i chi wybod beth sy'n digwydd. you know what is happening.

[116] The sector skills councils produce the principal learning qualifications, and there are 14 different qualifications available in Wales. It is totally different to the situation in England because the principal learning qualifications in England were all-encompassing for 14-year-olds. They have to do extended projects and so on. When you look at how much time is needed for a principal learning qualification, it is quite horrific. In Wales, the Minister decided three or four years ago that the principal learning qualifications would be subsumed within the Welsh baccalaureate, and, within that, you would have to do all your essential skills and have the equivalent of five GCSEs, or five A-levels, or whichever level you are at, but the requirement of the principal learning qualification is such that it is very difficult for an institution to provide them. We must not then forget the impact that parents' advice has on children and the impact that universities have on schools and colleges. As well as running the Welsh baccalaureate, I have had two youngsters going through the system, and in the University of Manchester, in Imperial College and in Swansea College of Engineering, what they want youngsters to do post-16 is maths and physics; there is no doubt about that. Careers companies will say to people who want to do an accountancy degree, 'Don't do an accountancy degree; do a general degree and do accountancy afterwards'. It is about keeping your options open, which is a big issue, because once you go into a principal learning qualification, you have cut your options. What do you say to a youngster at 14? Do you tell them to cut their options, because there is no guarantee of a job? There is pressure on 14-year-olds and their parents with regard to specialising in vocational qualifications too early. That is the issue.

[117] **Jocelyn Davies:** I think we should ask Keith to produce a paper. [*Laughter.*]

[118] **Christine Chapman:** We could take evidence from Keith for the committee. [*Laughter.*] I am going to move on now because we have other very important areas of questioning. I move on to Keith for the next one as well. [*Laughter.*]

[119] **Keith Davies:** I will answer it as well. [*Laughter.*]

[120] A oes gan bobl ifanc ystod ehangach Do young people have a wider range of o sgiliau galwedigaethol? Yr ateb yw 'oes, vocational skills? The answer is 'yes, of

wrth gwrs', ond beth yw'r gwallau yn y system bresennol?

course', but what are the faults in the current system?

[121] **Mr Davies:** Mae'n gwestiwn anodd iawn i'w ateb ar ran pobl ifanc. Yr ydych chi wedi sôn rai munudau yn ôl ba mor gymhleth yw dewisiadau pobl ifanc. Credaf mai'r cwestiwn yw sut mae pobl ifanc yn gweld galwedigaethau a'r swyddi sydd ar gael. Yr ydych wedi sôn eisoes hefyd ein bod ni'n gwthio plant o hyd tuag at ryw begwn arbennig, a taw pen y goeden Nadolig ym myd addysg yw prifysgol. Oni bai ein bod yni'n newid y meddylfryd hwnnw, a chael gwared â'r gagendor rhwng sgiliau galwedigaethol a sgiliau academiaidd, nid wyf yn credu bod hynny'n mynd i newid. Os ydych yn siarad â busnesau, fel yr wyf i'n ei wneud yn aml, mae tyndra o hyd, ac mae pobl weithiau'n dweud na fyddent am i'w plentyn nhw fynd i'r brifysgol yn y sefyllfa bresennol. Ond, ar yr un pryd, yr ydych yn dal i'w clywed nhw'n dweud bod addysg brifysgol yn bwysig. Mae tyndra sylfaenol yn y fan honno rhwng y modd yr ydym yn deall addysg a sgiliau a'r hyn yr ydym yn ei briodoli i'n syniad ni amdanynt.

Mr Davies: It is a very difficult question to answer on behalf of young people. You have already said a few minutes ago how complex the options available to young people are. I believe that the question is about how young people actually view the jobs and careers available. You mentioned the fact that we are constantly pushing children towards a certain aspiration and that the top of the Christmas tree in education is university. Unless we change that mindset and get rid of this gulf between vocational skills and academic skills, I do not think that that is going to change. If you talk to businesses, as I do regularly, there is still tension, and people sometimes say that they would not want their child to go to university in the current climate. However, at the same time, you still hear them saying that university education is important. There is a fundamental tension there between our understanding of education and skills and what we ascribe to our notion of them.

10.30 a.m.

[122] Mae hwnnw'n fater sy'n mynd y tu hwnt i'r ymchwiliad hwn, rhaid cydnabod. Yr hyn sy'n dod o'm trafodaethau i â chyflogwyr yw bod yr agenda, y ddeuliaeth honno, bellach yn amherthnasol. Mae myfyrwyr sy'n meddu ar sgiliau galwedigaethol uwch, a'r tu hwnt i hynny hyd yn oed. Mae eisiau nodi hynny a'i glodfori y tu mewn i'n diwylliant gwaith, ond nid wyf yn credu y bydd y Mesur hwn, er ei fod yn mynd â ni i'r cyfeiriad iawn, yn delio â'r ddeuliaeth honno. Mae'n rhywbeth sy'n mynd y tu hwnt i'r cynghorau sgiliau sector—mae'n rhywbeth cynhenid yn ein hetifeddiaeth o'r hen system addysg a ddaeth cyn y system addysg gyfun.

That is a matter that goes beyond this inquiry, it must be acknowledged. What is emerging from my discussions with employers is that the agenda, that dichotomy, is no longer relevant. There are students in possession of higher vocational skills, and beyond that even. That should be noted and praised within our culture of work, but I do not think that this Measure, despite it taking us in the right direction, deals with that dichotomy. It is something that goes further than the sector skills councils—it is an inherent part of the pre-comprehensive education system that we inherited.

[123] **Christine Chapman:** Let us move on.

[124] **Keith Davies:** There is a review of qualifications currently being undertaken by the Deputy Minister, and it may be that the kinds of issues that you have brought up are something that the Deputy Minister ought to be looking at.

[125] **Mr Davies:** We have said in our written evidence that we welcome that. It goes back to this issue that the conduit seems to be fine, but for some of the exceptions that you have

perhaps heard about with regard to how we construct the learning mechanisms. It is what we drive through that conduit that must be looked at; that is, what we want our young people and people of all ages to be learning as part of a lifelong learning culture in Wales, and whether or not the tension between knowledge and skills is a less than creative tension that we need to put to one side.

[126] **Mr Watkins:** Clearly, we welcome the qualifications review, but let us hope that we end up with something that might actually limit the choices that are available and that better reflects the needs of the economy locally.

[127] **Julie Morgan:** I think that a lot of it is to do with young people's aspirations. We have mentioned nine-year-olds; when I speak to them, they want to be footballers and the like. Inevitably, the boys want to be footballers and celebrities. It seems to me that that has to be tackled somehow. We want young people to have aspirations, but within those aspirations, we want them to switch to some of the things that you have been talking about today. Do you have anything to say about that?

[128] **Mr Watkins:** I have an eight-year-old son, and he has the boots and all the kit. Business has a part to play, in terms of how it engages, and our schools must have an open door to enable businesses to go in, even at primary level, to raise awareness of that. I do realise that this is not a one-part fix; the whole community has to get together to deliver the solution, not just one part of it. How you turn their thinking and aspirations towards being entrepreneurial is a big challenge for us, but it is one that we should look at, to be honest.

[129] **Christine Chapman:** I am not always convinced that nine-year-olds think in terms of careers; they just want a rounded education. That is my personal view, however.

[130] **Jocelyn Davies:** My daughter wanted to be an anthropologist, an all-in wrestler or an author. [*Laughter.*] She was a bit stuck on the As.

[131] **Simon Thomas:** That would make quite a reality television programme.

[132] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes. Actually, she became a sports coach. Do you think that the Measure needs amendment, so that consideration of local economy needs becomes a statutory requirement when devising the choices?

[133] **Mr Davies:** I do not think that a statutory requirement in itself is required. What is required is a change of culture and a change in the mechanism. If we have a statutory requirement that employs current methods to ascertain the views, needs and requirements of the business sector, then nothing will change; all we will have done is to tick the statutory requirement box, and our knowledge will be lacking.

[134] **Ms Searle:** Something along those lines would be very helpful. Looking at the Measure, we have already mentioned the fact that work-based learning as a sector has not been included, apart from in the engagement strand of traineeship. Looking at that would be helpful. It is human nature to always deliver to a measure, because that is what you are measured against. The Measure has 25 academic options and five vocational options. While you would not be necessarily looking for equality, if you are looking at developing parity of esteem, and if you are looking at being able to deliver vocational options, not just to lower-ability learners or those likely to get disengaged, but to those higher-ability learners and the vast group in the middle, then perhaps just looking at five vocational options is automatically going to reduce the level of choice. Sometimes, that looks as if the learning pathways offer is the same for all learners of all abilities and I do not know whether it is, necessarily.

[135] **Christine Chapman:** Suzy has a question on that point, then Aled and Keith will ask

a question before we move on to another subject.

[136] **Suzy Davies:** Going back to that magic word ‘entrepreneurship’, which you mentioned Arwyn, one of the most depressing pieces of evidence that we received last week was that, when it comes to the vocational strands in the curriculum, the business and management strand was one of the least taken up strands. If we are looking at developing an ethos of entrepreneurship in our schools and colleges, let alone the workplace, then that has to be addressed seriously. What you said about the sector skills councils is slightly worrying. It goes back to how to involve employers, and I am specifically talking about private sector employers and social enterprises, particularly, and how they can be involved in the planning of provision in schools and colleges. Do you have any views, for example, on the idea of asking schools to engage in social enterprise activities and, for example, to set up their own social enterprises? Is that worthy of consideration? That leads on to the next part of my question, which is: how can private sector employers, social enterprises and even public sector employers respond quickly in terms of planning, or helping to plan, these courses to meet the changing demands of any specific part of the economy? We started to talk about it, but we did not develop it. This ever-changing need is something that worries me. It is great to talk about people contributing to planning, but, if we are always behind the curve, that is not going to help. Sorry, that is a complicated question, because I wanted to ask you lots of things at once.

[137] **Mr Watkins:** As I was driving from Llanfaircaereinion to Cardiff this morning, I was thinking, as I was driving in the dark, if someone was driving along this road 20 years ago, the skills needs would not, probably, be very much different from what they are today, in terms of the core of businesses. As I was driving, there was an announcement on the radio about Starbucks creating 5,000 more jobs, and I thought, ‘How does that fit into what is available here in the local curriculum area and that sort of thing?’ Fundamentally, lots of the skills that we require now are the same skills that were needed when I left school, in that area, many moons ago. Maybe the issue, in terms of the poor take-up of business management stuff—I do not know; I have not seen the evidence for it—could very well be down to the point made earlier about the competence of the individuals who are there to deliver the curriculum. You need an inspiring person to inspire people to go on that programme.

[138] **Suzy Davies:** This is slightly controversial, but could it be that one of the reasons that it is not being taken up is because it is seen as part of the vocational strand and therefore perhaps not for high flyers?

[139] **Ms Searle:** I have worked with one network that had a refreshing approach; it approached us to say that it had a shortage in the business and enterprise area in vocational qualifications, and asked what we could come up with. It worked with providers and went out to tender, and came up with a solution for pre-16 provision of six-week blocks, with one day a week in the classroom and one day a week in the workplace. We found that businesses were very willing to get engaged and offer placements. That was probably helped by the fact that it was a provider who had an existing network with businesses. That course was taken up, but, sadly, not all of the places on it were filled. There was a potential 15 places. Off the top of my head, I think that seven of those places were filled. Part of that, again, is about an understanding of what it means. To some pupils and parents perhaps there was an existing academic course in business studies, so they were not sure how the business and administration course differed, but it was about the skills of maintaining a business, customer service skills and running a business. Therefore, a lot of it relates to perception, concept, parity and getting the right people. When we set up the course, it was stressed that it was not for those with lower ability and that it was very much for people with higher ability. We were expecting people to go out and make their way to the workplace one day a week, so there could not be issues there, and that may have been part of the reason for the low take-up. The take-up numbers were across a whole local authority and not across a school.

[140] **Christine Chapman:** I want to move on. It is a fascinating aspect and there are some important areas that arise. We have just had a discussion with our representative in Brussels, and at some point it might be useful to look at some video-conferencing from Germany or other places where they seem to have the parity-of-esteem issue sorted. That might be useful. I am going to move on, Aled, if you are happy with that.

[141] **Aled Roberts:** I have a quick question. Wrexham and Flintshire used Make It In Manufacturing. It was not available in the four western counties of north Wales. Is there a Make It In Manufacturing initiative in Wales? We had to piggy-back on an English initiative.

[142] **Mr Watkins:** No, not that I am aware of.

[143] **Keith Davies:** I have a correction, Chair. If you do the Welsh baccalaureate, you do not need to offer 30 options; you only have to offer 27. When students do the Welsh baccalaureate, they have to do six essential skills, so that is two choices, and, in the Welsh baccalaureate, because students have to be involved in an enterprise activity—with a business, work experience and an individual investigation—that counts as a third choice. Therefore, the smallest comprehensive schools in Wales that offer the Welsh baccalaureate to key stage 4 students have to offer an additional 27 options.

[144] **Julie Morgan:** I want to ask about the basic skills: literacy and numeracy. Both organisations mention in their submissions that there are concerns about basic skills. Have there been any improvements since the Measure was introduced, or do you have any comments on this?

[145] **Mr Watkins:** The basic skills issue comes up constantly with all the employers that we work with. In fairness to the young people who we are talking about, I would not say for one minute that they do not have the basic skills, but it is a question of how they apply them in the workplace. I do not know what it is about the inability to apply basic skills. I do not know whether it is because of the route that we have taken in setting exams and so on, but, when you take them out of that context and put them in an applied context, there is an inability to apply the skills. However, I would not say for one minute that they cannot read or write.

[146] **Mr Davies:** The phrase that crops up regularly when we speak to members of the Federation of Small Businesses is ‘real-life skills’, not so much basic skills in terms of numeracy, literacy or oracy—they do not count it in those terms. It is often a question of trying to tease out what they mean by that. I think that what they mean is the confidence to apply the basic skills that they have learned in school to the workplace—being able to do a fraction or a percentage, or being able to phrase something in such a way to a customer that demonstrates that you have those basic GCSE-level skills, or whatever it is that you have, and can apply them. I think that that is a confidence issue. Is that something that comes with time, perhaps? Students go from the fairly regimented environment of a school into the workplace, where confidence needs to be re-instilled. Emerging from the conversations that we are having is something that is not so much about the core, fundamental level of skills, but rather about the ability to apply those skills outside of the school setting, in a setting that is not digitised or mediated between young people of the same age group, but is mediated across a wide age group, and different social groupings. There is a nuanced element to this that needs to be explored, because I do not think, fundamentally, that people are leaving school with an abject failure in core skills; the disconnect lies in the appropriateness of the skills to the workplace.

10.45 a.m.

[147] **Julie Morgan:** Do you think that this is getting worse?

[148] **Mr Davies:** It is hard for me to tell, having been in post for seven or eight months, but when I speak to members—I think that it was Socrates who complained about the standard of young people in his day. I think that we have to be careful about that, and that is the caution that I give our members when we discuss this at our branch, regional and policy meetings. It is easy to say, ‘Kids aren’t as x, y or z as they were when I was leaving school’, but if this comes up and is cited as a problem increasingly, clearly it is a problem for the employer, if not a problem for the young person. So, that connection has to be maintained.

[149] **Julie Morgan:** It is interesting that you are both saying that the skills are there, and do not want to put young people down in any way, but to encourage them. What could be done at an earlier stage to ensure that they can apply the skills that they have, that is, to prepare them?

[150] **Mr Watkins:** It is about the employability skills arena. It is about work experience. If there is a statutory requirement to undertake work experience, I do not care where you live in Wales, it is impossible to do that in the same two weeks of the calendar year. There are not that many businesses around. So, a fundamental change has to be made. What an opportunity it is, if done right, to expose an individual to a business that is willing to invest in young people in its community by providing work experience. However, we cannot provide work experience for everyone during the same two weeks every year. It is not possible.

[151] **Mr Davies:** Work experience has to be meaningful. This is the Children and Young People Committee, not the Enterprise and Business Committee. So, that experience has to be predicated on what is good for the children and young people. We happen to think that what is good for them is also good for business, and that is taking a more holistic approach, but simply shoving young people out of the door for a fortnight when teachers can take a breather does not meet the needs of a holistic appreciation and understanding of what it means to be in employment. It fails not just business, but young people.

[152] **Christine Chapman:** As someone who used to organise work experience, I can tell you that it is a nightmare, because there is a lot of pressure from schools to have the same weeks. A brief question from Angela and then we must move on, because we have about 10 minutes left.

[153] **Angela Burns:** All that I want to say is that almost everything that you have said resonates completely with me. I ran businesses for almost all of my life before I came here. I had a lot of young people in my businesses and now, as an Assembly Member, a lot of people come to me for work experience. They are all as bright as buttons and they are the motivated ones, because they want to do the work experience, but I have to sit down personally with almost every single one of them—they can all read and write—to show them how to write a letter. It is about that kind of basic application of skills. So, I understand that and I think that part of the solution is to revisit providing some of those simple life skills within a school.

[154] **Christine Chapman:** Do you have a quick response before we move on?

[155] **Mr Watkins:** It is about whether we are measuring—when we talk about what we are measuring and to what, are we measuring the right level of success? As a network and as employers and so on, we have an issue in terms of what we mean by basic skills and how we interpret that. Are we just talking about literacy and numeracy, as they are interpreted academically? I do not think that we are—

[156] **Angela Burns:** Sorry, perhaps I should have been a bit clearer. I do not mean how to write a letter as in how you set it out, but understanding how to communicate a point. It is

about comprehension and sometimes in our learning we do not quite enable people to develop their comprehension skills, which is a fundamental part of reading and writing and of general basic skills.

[157] **Christine Chapman:** Before I bring Rachel in, is it also an issue, given the amount of work that young people do on computers, of perhaps lacking human skills a little bit?

[158] **Jenny Rathbone:** May I add something as well? You mentioned in your paper that people are sent here and there in taxis, rather than learning how to use public transport.

[159] **Mr Davies:** It is about that real-life application of skills and knowledge. Again, we are asking what is a skill and what is knowledge and we can have a quasi-academic debate about what we mean by these things. For an employer, as Andrew has pointed out, it means some basic things, such as that this person can take this from A to Z, get there and back in one piece within the time allowed to do it, and knows what to say when they are speaking to the person on the other end of the phone or in the department. Our members say that you only get that when you are exposed to the world of work. Are we expecting too much of the Measure and the provision? It is only going to happen when you are out there in the real bad world. I can still remember my first day at work, and I know that the new Assembly Members around the table will remember their first day in the new Assembly. It is a transitional process for us all. We have to be realistic about what we can expect the curriculum to deliver. It cannot deliver the full experience that you get when you walk into a workplace for the first time.

[160] **Christine Chapman:** Arwyn, did you want to come in?

[161] **Mr Watkins:** No, it is fine.

[162] **Christine Chapman:** I am conscious that we have nine minutes left and I know this has been a good session. A couple of Members want to come in, but I would like to cover other areas. Jocelyn, you may have a quick question.

[163] **Jocelyn Davies:** Is it really the place of schools and colleges to teach young people to turn up on time and to communicate in the way that we are talking about now? Those are the basic skills that you are talking about. [*Interruption.*] I do not know—I would hope that the family would have some input and that society in general would help. It is easy to say that there is a problem and think, ‘Oh, I know, we will put the responsibility for that on those people there’, because the school or college is there. Whose responsibility is it, do you think?

[164] **Mr Davies:** If you are asking me as a parent, I would say that it is my responsibility. As an employer, I would say that it is my responsibility to ensure that my staff can understand what is required of them in the workplace. You are right. School or an FE or HE college with a special course or tag-on at the end of it cannot deliver the reality of the workplace. It is a collective responsibility.

[165] **Christine Chapman:** This has just reminded me about the role of the learning coach. The original idea of learning coaches would apply to training providers as well, which could pick up the very problems and issues that we have raised. What information do you have on that?

[166] **Mr Watkins:** The role of the learning coach is different in each setting that you are in. Within work-based learning, the learning coach works on a one-to-one basis with the apprentice. With an employer, you would get a different experience of a learning coach role within an institution. Clearly, from a work-based learning point of view, the learning coach is close to the individual learner and his or her needs. That is the way that we are structured, namely to look after the individual. Every single learner within work-based learning has an

individual learning plan based on the needs of that individual learner, which is a very different structure to the other paths in the Measure.

[167] **Christine Chapman:** I am going to move on, because we have other witnesses coming in soon. Simon, you wanted to come in on a couple of things.

[168] **Simon Thomas:** Yr ydym wedi ymwneud â'r maes hwn sawl gwaith yn ystod y bore ond cwestiwn penodol sydd gennyf ynglŷn â chyngor gyrfaoedd i bobl ifanc 14 ac 16 oed. A ydych yn meddwl bod y bobl ar y ddwy adeg bwysig hyn yn cael y cyngor gyrfael priodol ar hyn o bryd?

Simon Thomas: We have touched upon this area on a number of occasions this morning, but the specific question that I have is on careers advice for young people aged 14 and 16. Do you think that young people at these two important times are being given appropriate careers advice at present?

[169] **Mr Watkins:** I suppose the fundamental question that I would ask is, 'Appropriate to what?' Do you mean appropriate to the needs of the local economy or appropriate to that individual's aspirations? I think that it is within that area that there is pressure, because, as we have alluded to earlier—

[170] **Simon Thomas:** I will elaborate then, just to tease a bit more out of you. Both of you have given evidence this morning, and you, Arwyn, have talked about a cul-de-sac and dead-end choices and Rachel Searle, if I remember rightly, spoke about the perception of courses and how parents, in particular, see courses. I inferred from that, perhaps wrongly, that we sometimes give careers advice on the basis of what we should have been doing several years ago, and not on the basis of what the future skills needs might be.

[171] **Ms Searle:** I think that it depends on who is giving the advice as well. I do not mean just on an individual basis, as there are some good resources and facilities available from Careers Wales online, for example. However, as we mentioned in the report, there are changes to how careers advice is organised: it is going down the route of advising those with the greatest need. The question then is: who steps into the vacuum to give advice? There are resources that can be directed but, by and large, will young people just get advice from the people whom they are exposed to? Their parents' knowledge of skills needs would not necessarily be as up to date as when they sought their advice. They could seek advice from a range of academic professionals, who you could not expect to have knowledge of the whole world of work to the same level and who also would only be able to advise on what they know best, so then perhaps it comes a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy and you are not getting the full range of advice offered.

[172] **Mr Davies:** I am conscious that there are members of the careers service here in the room now. [*Laughter.*] I am sure that the quality of the advice given is right: the problem is with, to use the Welsh word, *addasrwydd*—how appropriate it is. The information and advice can be appropriate in relation to the courses available and the perception of the skills that are needed, but still not meet the requirements of employers. So, all of the boxes could be ticked and the quality indices achieved, but it might not be what is required. That could simply be because the courses on offer are those that are in vogue at this point of time. I do not want to single out x course over y course, but the point has been made that it is no good if a course is not appropriate to the skills needs of a particular area and does not meet the aspirations of the young people, because forcing young people to learn skills that they do not want to learn is not appropriate either. Ultimately, this is not the Enterprise and Business Committee, it is the Children and Young People Committee, but, if skills are not appropriate for the world of work, we are not doing young people any favours.

[173] **Simon Thomas:** Along the nexus of what we talked about earlier, about knowledge about the skills needs of local businesses, as well as the choices available to young people,

and the cultural influence on those choices, whether from parents or the television and so on, do we have a reliable enough source of information that is sufficiently up to date and that is really encouraging young people to consider their options in the best possible way? Is that your experience, or do you think that there are things missing?

[174] **Mr Watkins:** No, I do not think that we have enough knowledge in that regard. The intelligence is there in the business community, but it is not utilised in the way that it should be. Very often, in my experience, by the time that you have delivered the solution to address the need, the need has gone.

[175] **Mr Davies:** We are aware, as the Federation of Small Businesses, that work is being done by the Welsh Government to look at labour market intelligence. We have not had the opportunity to scrutinise that to see whether it meet the needs of our members. It would be a viable area for further exploration by anyone who is concerned with this issue.

[176] **Jocelyn Davies:** Surely your members would be involved in that work.

[177] **Mr Davies:** I would not guarantee that that is the case, but I would hope so.

[178] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yours is an umbrella organisation, so you may not know.

[179] **Mr Davies:** That is right.

[180] **Christine Chapman:** We can pursue this subject with our next witnesses. We have one final question from Angela.

[181] **Angela Burns:** I want to touch on the subject of funding. You raise concerns in your paper about what is going to happen to the funding, as well as about the amount of funding that should, from your point of view, go into skills development that is actually spent on such things as transportation at the moment. Will you, as quickly as you can, highlight your concerns about the potential funding issues and the sources of funding?

11.00 a.m.

[182] **Ms Searle:** One thing that we alluded to in the paper was about the annual network development plan being very much initially a pump-priming mechanism and concerns about the sustainability of some of the solutions that have been put in after the end of ANDP. We still have those concerns. We are talking about there still being a way to go while we are still perhaps at stage 1 of the evolution of this—and that is with a select piece of funding to pump-prime things. Although there has been a hope that this new way of working will be embedded and that practices will change to free up some funding to allow for that, I do not really believe that we are in that position at the moment. There is certainly a fear among the network that, if that ends, it is very easy for organisations, with regard to some of the new collaborative arrangements that are starting up, to bring things back in-house, because you almost have two levels of funding. You have the bulk of funding that is based on individual institutions, and then you have the ANDP that sits on the top, and that is what has been used to develop some of the collaboration, with the hope that funding will be freed up underneath that. However, I do not necessarily feel that funding has been freed up sufficiently as yet to allow that to continue.

[183] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you all for attending this morning. It has been an absolutely fascinating session. If Members have any further questions, we will write to you, if you would be happy for us to do that. Other than that, we will send you a transcript of the meeting for you to check for factual accuracy. Thank you very much for attending.

11.02 a.m.

**Gweithredu Mesur Dysgu a Sgiliau (Cymru) 2009: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth
Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009: Evidence
Session**

[184] **Christine Chapman:** We will now take evidence from Careers Wales. I welcome to the meeting Joyce M’Caw, the chief executive of Careers Wales North East, and Steve Hole, senior manager for Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys. Thank you both for your written papers. Members will have read those. If you are happy, we will go straight to questions. The first question is from Jenny.

[185] **Jenny Rathbone:** Hello. Good morning. You say in your initial paper that anecdotal evidence indicates that learners now have greater enthusiasm about vocational courses. How much do you think it is genuinely increased choice as opposed to what a school or college might be inclined to offer? To what extent is there genuine choice in terms of being able to make an impartial decision on the basis of the 25 courses plus five vocational courses?

[186] **Ms M’Caw:** We feel that it has definitely increased choice. The reference to anecdotal evidence was in particular with regard to those learners who, although in school, may not necessarily be thoroughly engaged with the learning in school. The ability to choose something different, where they are more involved and where the teaching methodology is somewhat different, has attracted them to that and the anecdotal evidence—it must be that at this stage—is that they are engaging more and learning more and building their self-confidence and motivation.

[187] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, but you mention in your evidence that parental preference is obviously very influential in the decisions that young people make about what courses to take. Can you tell us a bit more about that and what you think are the problems in relation to that—or is it perfectly fine?

[188] **Ms M’Caw:** The first statement to make is a very general one: although parents do not believe that they have any influence whatsoever on their young people, in reality, they do—they have a great influence, whether it be in terms of the courses that they choose at the age of 14 or 16, or in terms of the careers advice and guidance that we will be providing for them.

[189] **Jenny Rathbone:** How much is it an informed choice, in terms of understanding the career pathways that that might open up or close off?

[190] **Ms M’Caw:** One of the difficulties with parents—it is a little like your earlier question about careers advice and guidance—is that they may well know about the career that they are involved in, and be able to give good advice around that, but you cannot expect them to know about the full range of opportunities or the up-to-date learning that is required for them. That is where things get a bit muddy.

[191] **Jenny Rathbone:** That takes us back to the original question, which is: how well are schools and colleges laying in front of learners the range of options and the implications of choosing x or y?

[192] **Ms M’Caw:** Each school is different, so even within one network, you will get different answers to that question. Each school will be using Careers Wales online so that youngsters can see the options that are available, and can make their choice online, if that is how the school chooses to do it. If they do it like that, parents can also access that

information. Schools will have their parent evenings, where they will go through the options available within the curriculum, and my understanding is that they would take the young people through the different options and implications. All of this is in terms of the learning. Where Careers Wales would be involved at the year 9 stage is in ensuring that the young people and parents know where they can find all that information, including Careers Wales online, and then in helping with what the career implications might be around choosing a particular learning option.

[193] **Jenny Rathbone:** We just heard from the Federation of Small Businesses and the training federation that the courses being offered do not necessarily fit with the requirements of businesses, particularly in manufacturing. How much input do you have into ensuring that people are clear about how particular courses relate to particular career options?

[194] **Ms M’Caw:** This is really important because, having read some of the reports, this is the point being made, is it not? Some young people are enthusiastic about the courses, but it does not necessarily mean that they will go straight on to the next level of learning. I think that it is about managing their expectations. We need to be very sure that the learners, parents and, indeed, the school staff, in a sense—but particularly learners and parents—are well aware of what is on offer in terms of, ‘If I take that particular course, what will it do? What is the teaching methodology?’, so that they can make some reasonable choices about whether it will suit them. Equally, what will it not do? It may not give sufficient work experience, so it may well be that they need to do a further level-2 qualification when they go into FE or into work-based learning. It is about information and guidance, so that they are making informed decisions and managing their expectations as to what it will and will not do for them.

[195] **Jenny Rathbone:** Finally, could you tell us how these choices that are on offer are impacting on modern foreign languages and Welsh as a second language, and indeed the gender bias—how that is improving and opening choices, as opposed to girls doing this and boys doing that?

[196] **Ms M’Caw:** It is difficult, is it not? When you offer wider choice, particularly post 16, there is still the same number of learners, but there are more choices, so inevitably, there will be fewer students on courses, and some courses may find that there are insufficient learners opting for them to make them viable. That is really difficult. It may well be that that is having an impact on modern foreign languages and Welsh as a second language, as you say. I know that, in the network that I am involved with in north Wales, in order to counteract that, they have offered a modern foreign language as a twilight session in collaboration with the school and the college, to try to impact on that. You had a second question—

[197] **Jenny Rathbone:** It was about gender.

[198] **Ms M’Caw:** As yet, there does not appear to be any evidence that the collaborative courses are impacting on that in any way, shape or form. We still seem to see the stereotypes: girls going for the obvious courses and so on.

[199] **Mr Hole:** I will try to go through some of the questions that you asked. On the last point, I am aware that there are concerns from modern foreign language departments and teachers about the take-up of the subject. There has been some good work in terms of network supporting with Careers Wales; those teachers are producing information on the benefits of studying modern foreign languages in terms of career progression. The range of new subjects, and the increase in vocational subjects in particular, is an area where, particularly at year 9, Careers Wales is often called upon for support, to ensure that the individuals understand the nature of the course and are not just allured by a title. They need to know what it involves and what it can mean practically, as well as the career outcomes. There is also an issue with parents. There is a parity of esteem issue here, and it is about ensuring that parents understand

that some of the new courses available are simply not fly-by-night courses and that they have credibility—an academic value—and are able to buy something in terms of employment and progression.

[200] One of the major issues for me is that what we have now, and what the Measure has supported, is impartial information on what is available within the network. There are prospectuses and there is information on Careers Wales online, so we can be fairly sure that young people at least know all of the options that are available to them, which is important. One thing that we have found with Careers Wales online is that, where the young people get involved in making choices online at year 9, and where they complete their choices using the technology, they often take that home and get parents involved in the process. So, people are sitting down and making those choices together. Anecdotally, some schools have commented that it has improved attendance at parent evenings, because parents have been involved in the process before parent events.

[201] **Jocelyn Davies:** What is the evidence that parents are influential? Do you think that the young people know that parents are influencing their choices? I take on board the point you make that parents might not be aware; their own experience might be narrow and they might not be aware of the courses that are available. You mention knowing what all the choices are. We have heard evidence that schools will deliberately, on occasion, not let pupils know what is available in the college because they want to make their own courses viable.

[202] **Mr Hole:** I will take the last point first. I can understand those concerns. The Measure has ensured that information is provided on all those opportunities via Careers Wales online, where those courses are not hidden and an individual can go in and look at what is offered in the college, maybe via a link. They can also look at what is offered at another school, which is equally important. Some networks also produce a prospectus to support that. So, there would be one prospectus for the local authority area, delivered to all schools, which will include college courses and alternative courses offered at other venues. So, the information is there. How well it is accessed and how well it is interpreted is another matter.

[203] I can understand the question about whether parents are still influential with today's young people. The research is conducted on a national basis by various groups that are interested in how people make career decisions. Consistently, parents are still up there with the most influential people in terms of supporting young people's choices. So, although it is perhaps counterintuitive to our view of modern culture, people still turn to those who are closest to them in making important decisions.

11.15 a.m.

[204] **Ms M'Caw:** I was going to reference the national research as well. In a careers guidance interview, because our careers advisers are aware of this, they will always talk with the young people about what their parents are considering and what their views are. You need to be aware of that, and where the steers might be—the new guidance is iffy, as well, to be honest. Engaging with parents is extremely difficult, and not because they are being difficult. Some research that we did years ago about linking with parents showed that parents only engage with outside agencies at the point of need, not as a general ongoing concept.

[205] **Christine Chapman:** We have many areas to cover, so we will move on to Keith.

[206] **Keith Davies:** A yw gweithredu'r **Keith Davies:** Has implementing the Mesur wedi arwain at fwy o ddewis i Measure led to an increased provision of fyfyrwyr o gyrsiau drwy gyfrwng y options of Welsh-medium courses for Gymraeg? Pa anawasterau sy'n bodoli o hyd? students? Are there still problem areas?

[207] **Mr Hole:** The short answer is ‘yes’ and ‘yes’. There is greater choice and, speaking anecdotally from my experience in mid Glamorgan, there are linkages between networks in terms of looking at provision through the medium of Welsh. There is increased collaboration between the Welsh-medium schools and colleges. Has there been improvement? Yes. Are the opportunities available through the medium of Welsh as wide as those through the medium of English? The answer to that would be ‘no’. Some of that is down to the practical logistics of the provision of courses and the potential take up. My feeling would be that the area that is most affected is probably the vocational area.

[208] **Ms M’Caw:** It has certainly increased collaboration, not only with Welsh-medium schools individually, but across networks and across local authority areas. There is good evidence, certainly in north Wales, of where Welsh-medium schools have worked very well together. One of the difficulties for the collaboration with FE is the lack of FE lecturers who can teach through the medium of Welsh.

[209] **Keith Davies:** Mid Glamorgan does not have dual-stream schools, but Powys and north Wales have them. What about the difficulties facing them?

[210] **Ms M’Caw:** In my own area of north-east Wales, there are two or three such schools. I do not know whether they have necessarily had any different problems to the Welsh-medium schools; I would have to check. They have the English options, but they also have the Welsh options.

[211] **Keith Davies:** However, the groups in those schools would be smaller, so it would be far more expensive to provide courses in both languages.

[212] **Christine Chapman:** I think that Treorchy is the same. I am conscious of the time. Jenny, would you like to ask the next question?

[213] **Jenny Rathbone:** Estyn talked about the lack of impartial advice still being given at key points, at the age of both 14 and 16, and of the competition that still exists between colleges and sixth-forms in trying to influence people in one direction or another. Can you give us specific examples of what the careers service is doing to try to counter that, so that these young people get impartial advice?

[214] **Ms M’Caw:** Thank you for recognising that that is what we are all about, and that our advice and guidance is impartial. When all the institutions are complaining to us, we tend to take that as evidence that we have been impartial. We do not take sides. I cannot pretend that it is easy, because it is not. We will work with young people in group sessions, and in one-to-one interviews, and obviously that advice is impartial, but other people will come in. We have talked about the parents; we can talk about tutors in school, and it is really difficult if you are a tutor in school and you think that your class is going to be too small. If you are a learning coach employed by a learning setting, again—

[215] **Jenny Rathbone:** We know the difficulties; how are you going to tackle them?

[216] **Mr Hole:** There are some practical examples. We support the ‘Careers and the world of work’ programmes; it is a small element of our budget, but it is quite effective, nevertheless. So, we actually give advice to schools and colleges on how they develop their careers programmes. One of the things that we do is quality-assure all of our work to ensure that it is impartial. So, we are involved in preparing a lot of resources for those programmes, which look at issues of options for post 16 in a fully impartial way, and the website that we use is also wholly impartial. We have curriculum inputs ourselves through group sessions and so on, and the careers conventions that we organise would be another opportunity. We also promote bringing employers into the classroom through our education business links.

[217] **Jenny Rathbone:** How often does that happen in terms of employers coming into the classroom, because that is key in relation to what we heard earlier?

[218] **Mr Hole:** In the mid Glamorgan and Powys area, it happens a huge amount. We are talking about sessions at key stage 3, more than one session at key stage 4, and sessions at post-16 level in schools and colleges. The national education business partnership network said some time ago that Rhondda Cynon Taf probably had the best pupil access to employers in the UK.

[219] **Ms M'Caw:** I would be happy to supply figures on that on an all-Wales basis if you have an interest. We could send you the figures on that.

[220] **Keith Davies:** Steve mentioned earlier that some networks produce a common prospectus. It would be useful to see how many networks produce a common prospectus. When you had TVIs, it was a requirement of funding, and if you did not have a common prospectus, you were not funded.

[221] **Mr Hole:** Absolutely. I remember those days. Just to clarify my point, the reason that some networks do not provide glossy hard-copy prospectuses is that they would say that the information is available on Careers Wales online, so they would cite money saving and funding issues.

[222] **Ms M'Caw:** We would not be in a position to be able to identify how many of the 22 networks do that.

[223] **Mr Hole:** We could certainly supply examples of prospectuses if that would be helpful.

[224] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you; that would be useful for the committee to see. I will move on to Jocelyn for the next question.

[225] **Jocelyn Davies:** You mentioned learning coaches earlier, and you probably know, if you have been following our deliberations, that the committee is concerned that the role of learning coaches is not as effectively delivered everywhere as was originally envisaged. So, what do you think the differences should be between careers advisers and learning coaches?

[226] **Ms M'Caw:** It depends on what sort of level you want to keep it at. In our paper, we have said that learning coaches, at the very basic level of looking just at the titles, are obviously very much about supporting the learner with their learning choices in terms of looking at any barriers that they might have to learning and how they might be overcome. Part of the overcoming might well be to signpost to other organisations or other people within the school setting, or indeed to the careers adviser, because there is quite a lot of referral to and from now. One of the difficulties is that it was not clear in the early days, but things are settling down more. However, it is about learning, whereas the careers adviser is about helping and supporting the learner to develop their career management skills to be able to assess their own abilities and interests and match that with their career goals and aspirations, and bring them hopefully to well-informed decisions that are also realistic. That is where you bring in the labour market information. There is no point in talking to individuals about something being nice to do; you have to set it in the context of what is available locally or nationally.

[227] That is where careers guidance has a real part to play with younger people. So, there must be that overlap. Learning coaches will move a bit around careers and how learning matches careers, and career advisers will also talk about learning. You cannot conduct a careers guidance interview without talking with the young person about their learning—how

they best learn and the subjects in which they think that they have real abilities. So, there is that area of overlap, but there are clear distinctions. I find it helpful to hold onto the two words of 'learning' and 'careers'.

[228] **Christine Chapman:** I want to pursue that, because there is clearly some confusion within other organisations. I was pleased with your paper, because it did spell that out clearly, but there is some confusion with regard to other areas. Some talk more about giving guidance as opposed to identifying learning barriers. So, have you also picked up on that confusion?

[229] **Ms M'Caw:** Yes, absolutely. However, somehow it is not moving on. There are organisations that still do not understand, which is why we try to be simplistic in the paper.

[230] **Mr Hole:** One of the issues for a learning coach is that talking about the future can be motivational. Painting a picture to a disaffected pupil about applying themselves better in school with regard to their future achievement is inherently motivational. That is where the confusion sometimes lies. They allude to future lifestyle and what that can bring through success at work to try to re-motivate pupils who are not currently sufficiently motivated.

[231] **Ms M'Caw:** It is important to say that the relationship is now good between learning coaches and careers advisers. There are instances where the learning coaches will follow the careers action plan. Advisers will develop an agreed action plan with an individual, and it may be that the learning coach will support the youngster to achieve those actions and, likewise, if the careers adviser identifies that the learner has some problems with the learning, then they will refer that to the learning coach for it to be picked up that way.

[232] **Jocelyn Davies:** I do not think that we have heard evidence that the learning coaches do not know what their role is. It seems that it is institutions that do not seem to know what their role is. Thank you for that answer.

[233] **Christine Chapman:** I think that there is a lot of multitasking going on.

[234] **Lynne Neagle:** To what extent will the organisational changes within Careers Wales impact on delivery for 14 to 19-year-olds?

[235] **Ms M'Caw:** Careers Wales is certainly in a challenging position at the moment; a great deal is happening for us. We are committed to organisational change in our structure by April 2012. We are working very hard following the 'Future Ambitions: Delivering Careers Services in Wales' report to modernise our delivery mechanisms and to take account of what young people and adults can get off the web, and how they can use telephone helplines, as well as the face-to-face guidance interview, which everyone knows something about. We also have budget reductions. So, it is a very challenging time.

[236] To a great extent, we are in the hands of the Welsh Government, because it is the Welsh Government that sets our remit. So, it is the Welsh Government that will be directing us with regard to work that we will perhaps not undertake in the future. An example of that in our planning guidance for the current year is that we would normally offer one-to-one guidance interviews for approximately 95 per cent of year 11 pupils, although the direction from the Welsh Government was 75 per cent. However, the expectation is that it will be less than 75 per cent.

[237] **Lynne Neagle:** Why is that?

[238] **Ms M'Caw:** It is to do with affordability due to the budget cuts. The only thing that we have to offset against that is the development of our new model of delivery. We are trying to present a holistic package to young people and to adults, where we will say, 'Right, that's a

little bit more on information, and you'll find that on Careers Wales online'. We have done a lot of work to update and to ensure that that information is available. We have a new version of it just recently out, in fact, I am not sure that it is available to the public yet; it is out to us for comments. That has a lot more labour market information, for example, than was previously the case. So, we will have to determine between information needs, advice needs, and the specialist guidance needs, which are quite difficult to provide in ways other than through face-to-face contact. However, we will have to look at that, but you cannot build that model in five minutes. That is the difficulty.

11.30 a.m.

[239] **Keith Davies:** The labour market information is important. Is that going to be targeted to the different areas of Wales?

[240] **Ms M'Caw:** Yes, we hope so. We already have information leaflets on Careers Wales online, but we are building up the labour market information now. It is exiting work, but it is early days. We include labour market information in our guidance interview; that is what makes us different in a sense—we provide up-to-date and realistic labour market information.

[241] **Mr Hole:** With regard to labour market information, there are challenges for us. We are working with external providers to source good-quality, reliable labour market information.

[242] **Christine Chapman:** Who are these external providers? We have just spoken to the Federation of Small Businesses and the training providers, and they did not have much information about that.

[243] **Ms M'Caw:** Are you referring to the new labour market information? That is on Careers Wales online, which shows more trends and gender issues, and so on. We are working with a chap from one of the universities in England.

[244] **Mr Hole:** It is in Warwickshire.

[245] **Ms M'Caw:** I think that his name is Graham Attwell. That is at an early stage. We only have a little of that information. That should show the trends a lot more.

[246] **Christine Chapman:** Could you write to us about that?

[247] **Ms M'Caw:** I think that 'screen grabs' is the technical term. We can send some of those to you.

[248] **Mr Hole:** Also, there are lots of links from Careers Wales online to other authoritative websites in relation to obtaining information. However, the real challenge is to make that accessible to individuals. Lots of authoritative labour market information is quite difficult to understand if you are a 15-year-old, and particularly if you are a 15-year-old with learning difficulties, or are perhaps less able than others. So, the way that we present the information is important. Also, you cannot assume that people will make rational choices when they are faced with the information, because people are people and they will make choices for all sorts of different reasons.

[249] **Simon Thomas:** We are politicians; we know that. [*Laughter.*]

[250] **Mr Hole:** So, the real challenge for us—and it is certainly about working with our partners in schools and colleges and looking at careers education programmes—is

understanding how people make career decisions, and helping individuals to become better at the process. Giving them information is part of the answer, but it is not the whole answer.

[251] **Ms M’Caw:** We are aware that the Department for Education and Skills is doing some work on labour market information, and we are doing some work on its behalf as well, linked to that. So, we are not working in isolation.

[252] **Christine Chapman:** I think that Aled is keen to contribute.

[253] **Aled Roberts:** I want to tease that out. We were told by the previous witnesses that work was being conducted by the Welsh Government on labour market information. I think that there was an implied criticism that employers had not been involved in the process—well, certainly, they were not involved in the process and were not able to confirm whether employers were involved in the process. So, are we talking about the same exercise that you are involved with on behalf of the Welsh Government, or are we talking about two exercises?

[254] **Ms M’Caw:** We might be talking about the same one, because the Welsh Government is setting up a labour market information unit. They may well have been referring to that. I was referring to that in the sense that the Welsh Government is looking at what is required and what is effective. It has asked us to do a piece of work on that, which is going on Careers Wales online. I cannot speak from National Training Federation Wales’s perspective.

[255] **Mr Hole:** We are members of the SHELL group, which is the Welsh Government group of multi-agency stakeholders that is informing collaboration across Welsh Government departments.

[256] **Christine Chapman:** What is SHELL?

[257] **Mr Hole:** It is the Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning group. The acronym is SHELL.

[258] **Christine Chapman:** Okay.

[259] **Aled Roberts:** On Lynne’s point, where we were talking about the reduction from 95 per cent to 75 per cent, was that on the basis of the reduction from £40 million to £38 million? Has any work been done on that? When the Deputy Minister came before this committee with regard to the budget, he indicated that he would impose a further reduction, down to £35 million. Has any work been done on the number that you would probably be able to provide advice to if the reduced budget is confirmed at £35 million?

[260] **Ms M’Caw:** It is actually worse than that. We were on £41 million—this is across Wales, of course—and this year, we have a budget of £38 million, going down to £36 million next year, 2012-13. We had expected that it would go down to £35 million in 2013-14, but the indication is that it will be £30 million.

[261] **Aled Roberts:** The evidence that we had was that it would be £35 million.

[262] **Ms M’Caw:** Under the comprehensive spending review, it was going to be £35 million in 2013-14—that was the indicative figure. However, in the recent budget, it has now gone down to £30 million, which is a huge cut of 21 per cent.

[263] **Christine Chapman:** We will try to get some clarity on that. We will make a note of it.

[264] We do not have even 10 minutes left, so I ask Members to be concise, so that we can get through as much of this as possible.

[265] **Julie Morgan:** How important and effective is the learning pathways document in terms of helping young people as they go along with the choices that they make?

[266] **Ms M'Caw:** Is this the learning pathways plan on Careers Wales online, or the guidance?

[267] **Julie Morgan:** The one that each student has.

[268] **Ms M'Caw:** It is early days for the learning pathways plan. It is a requirement of the learning pathways documentation guidance that there be one. Careers Wales has developed that, and it does sit on Careers Wales online, but it is still early days in terms of usage. The intention is—Steve will add to this—that the subject choices will automatically go into that document, and then the young person can add other things. To me, it feels a little bit like the record of achievement, but electronic, and it can be added to. The important thing is that it cannot be lost in the way that the record of achievement can be lost when it goes home.

[269] **Jocelyn Davies:** I was very happy when I heard about that.

[270] **Julie Morgan:** Is it important to the young people in the way that the record of achievement might be?

[271] **Ms M'Caw:** We would hope so, because it is a different way of doing things, and it is easier because the system allows information to be drawn through, as it were, so they do not have to rewrite it electronically all the while. Steve is more of an expert in this area, though.

[272] **Mr Hole:** It is nice to be an expert. [*Laughter.*] Young people have planning fatigue—they have lots of plans for lots of different things—and the advantage of the learning pathway document is that it can serve as one document for a whole host of issues. So, we would support it from that point of view. It is early days, but some very good practice is going on in different networks, and there is sharing of good practice. There are different formats of hard copy, and it is available on Careers Wales online as well. It works best where you have multi-agency partners contributing to the process. It has its roots in formal choices about formal education, but you will also have advocates, careers advisers, learning coaches and others all contributing and looking at the support needs of individuals for them to achieve what they are capable of. I think that we will probably have more clarity in perhaps a year to 18 months' time, but there is some very promising input.

[273] **Suzy Davies:** My question is about disengaged children and the problem of young people not in education, employment or training. Between 2005 and 2010, there seemed to be a suggestion that the number of NEETs at year 11 had gone down 2 per cent and that this Measure may have contributed to that. However, the same research shows that, at year 13, the problem had actually gone up 2 per cent. Is there a possibility that this Measure is just delaying the problem, rather than helping to resolve it? We have taken evidence that that may be the case.

[274] **Ms M'Caw:** I think that it is difficult to say. I think that it is probably a decrease of about 1.7 per cent at year 11—going on 2008 figures, which was the highest point—and a 1.8 per cent increase at year 13. However, there will be several reasons for that. You will have some youngsters who may go into the sixth form and then decide that it is not for them and drop out. Careers Wales does a follow-up of years 11, 12 and 13, with a cut-off point in October of the following year. However, for year 11 students, we are required to go back the

following March, after the cut-off point in October, to check where they are. When you look at those statistics, it is clear that some young people have dropped out of both sixth form in school and further education, and have therefore boosted the NEET figure, as it were. That happens even 12 months after they have left at year 11.

[275] **Suzy Davies:** So, even though it might not be the only reason, there is a possibility that there is an element of this?

[276] **Ms M'Caw:** Yes, but young people change their minds as well, irrespective of the Measure, as they are still very much forming their ideas. It is an issue for us because we do not always get to know that those young people have dropped out. Careers Wales would like to be able to work with and support them when they are feeling wobbly, before they drop out of education, so that we can go back in and offer further guidance, whether they are in school sixth forms or FE. The difference with FE is that it is not our responsibility to follow the destinations of students—FE does that for itself. We also hope to work shortly with consultants commissioned by the Welsh Government so that it will become a contractual requirement with FE that if youngsters are likely to drop out, FE will inform Careers Wales before they do so. That is already a contractual requirement for work-based learning.

[277] **Suzy Davies:** So, the potential intervention of Careers Wales could reduce the increase, if that makes sense?

[278] **Ms M'Caw:** Yes.

[279] **Jocelyn Davies:** Is it always a negative thing if someone drops out, changes their mind and does something else?

[280] **Ms M'Caw:** Changing your mind is fine as long as it is based on good information and reasoning.

[281] **Mr Hole:** It is about the rationale of the decision, what happens in between and the support that the individual can get during the process. It is very difficult to answer your question about the causal issues, because there are many related issues such as the state of the economy and returning to school to potentially avoid unemployment and so on. It is an area for research. It is clearly a concern, given the information from UCAS about the reducing number of applications for higher education, that there will be potentially more young people in year 13 looking for employment rather than looking at the higher education option. So, it is a real area for research.

[282] **Christine Chapman:** We will not manage to ask all the questions, but Aled has a question now.

[283] **Aled Roberts:** Has the Measure had an impact on specific groups that may have less choice as a result? I am thinking in particular of the information in your paper, and whether those with additional learning needs might be reluctant to move away from their home institution. What are your views on that?

[284] **Ms M'Caw:** All youngsters are reluctant to move away from their home institution, so that in itself is an issue. I will leave it to Steve to answer about those with additional learning needs. I will just say that, on the academic side, now that there are more vocational choices post 16, that seems to be an issue for some academically minded youngsters because it is reducing the number of academic options. We go back to the issue of modern foreign languages in that regard. I turn to Steve on additional learning needs.

[285] **Mr Hole:** There are two issues here. One is about perception, which arguably has the

greater impact on clients with learning difficulties and disabilities, particularly those from special schools when it comes to joining the labour market. It is about the fact that it is a very traumatic issue. Parents and young people in special schools largely rate their institutions very highly and feel very secure there. It is about the ability at 19 to move from that environment into another. The work of Steve Beyer in Cardiff University shows that there is a tendency for further education colleges to be seen as the option in terms of additional courses to build skills and employability, and so on. So, it is about the perception about worries regarding the labour market and work-based learning provision, and whether they will sustain the individual and provide the required level of support. The perceptions are there, irrespective of the realities.

11.45 a.m.

[286] In terms of the realities and whether they are poorer choices, I do not think that they are on the face of it. We have given evidence about the provision of link courses, which is very good. There is a new work-based learning contract in place at the moment, which needs to settle down, particularly in terms of engagement routes and how the needs of young people with learning difficulties are met. So, in short, people have to be assessed that they are able to perform at NVQ level 1. Obviously, some people leaving school are not able to perform at that level, or, even though they may demonstrate their ability to do so in school, they may not be able to demonstrate it in practice in the workplace. There is a huge issue, is there not, in terms of gaining a vocational qualification and then being able to demonstrate competence in the workplace?

[287] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you very much. We have some other questions, but, if you are happy for me to do so, I will write to you both and perhaps you could respond in writing. Thank you, Joyce and Steve, for attending this morning. I would like to thank Members for their questions, which have been very useful. We will send you a copy of the transcript of the meeting to check for factual accuracy. Thank you very much for attending this morning.

11.46 a.m.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd
Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public**

[288] **Christine Chapman:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(ix) in order to allow the committee to discuss matters relating to its forward work programme.

[289] I see that we are all in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11.46 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 11.46 a.m.*