OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 9 May 2018

Session 5

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Wednesday 9 May 2018

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EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE
14th Meeting 2018, Session 5

CONVENER

*James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)
*Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)
*Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green)
*Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP)
*Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
*Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
*Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
*Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD)
*Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

John Butcher (North Ayrshire Council)
Martin Canavan (Aberlour Child Care Trust)
Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab) (Committee Substitute)
Dr James Foley (North Lanarkshire Council)
Jackie Howie (Learning Link Scotland)
Susan Hunter (YouthLink Scotland)
Linda Lees (City of Edinburgh Council)
Graeme Young (Scouts Scotland)
Shelagh Young (Home-Start UK)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Roz Thomson

LOCATION

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)

Scottish Parliament

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 9 May 2018

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:32]

Interests

The Convener (James Dornan): Welcome to the 14th meeting of the Education and Skills Committee in 2018. I remind everyone present to turn their mobile phones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

We have received apologies from Johann Lamont. I welcome Kezia Dugdale to the committee as a substitute member. The first item of business is an opportunity for Kezia to declare any relevant interests.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): I have no relevant interests.

The Convener: Thank you.

Attainment and Achievement of School-aged Children Experiencing Poverty

10:33

The Convener: The next item of business is an evidence session as part of our inquiry into the attainment and achievement of school-aged children experiencing poverty. This is the fourth evidence session of the inquiry and this week we have two panels. The first panel has a focus on services that are provided outside schools. I welcome Martin Canavan, policy and participation officer, Aberlour Child Care Trust; Shelagh Young, director of Scotland Home-Start UK; Jackie Howie, lead officer, Learning Link Scotland; Graeme Young, head of national activity centre, Scouts Scotland; and Susan Hunter, senior development officer, policy and research, Youthlink Scotland.

If you would like to respond to a question, please indicate to me or the clerks and I will call you to speak.

For the benefit of those watching, I should explain that the committee held an informal meeting on this topic with front-line professionals earlier this morning. I thank all those who attended the session, some of whom are in the audience watching this formal session.

We have a lot to get through today, so I ask that both questions and answers today be succinct. Before I invite questions from my colleagues, I want to ask the panel about early intervention in the context of supporting families on low incomes. What does early intervention look like for your organisations and how does it support attainment and achievement?

Shelagh Young (Home-Start UK): As you probably know, Home-Start UK focuses primarily on children from nought to eight years; in fact, most Home-Starts focus on the years from before birth to five. The Government's own national parenting strategy from 2012 states:

> "Parents are the first educators and as such, the biggest single influence on a child's educational aspirations and attainment throughout life."

There is multiple evidence that working with families directly in order to enable their children to get everything that they need in terms of their social, emotional and behavioural development is the key to tackling the attainment challenge. It is not that we do not think that there should be work done with school-age children, but it is quite clear that parents and the home learning environment are incredibly important right from birth and throughout a child's school career. Our work is focused on those early years. It is focused on

working with parents on a one-to-one basis primarily, although we also run group work, to make sure that parents are able to do what they need to do with their children to create that positive home learning environment. There is nothing new in this. The Marmot review in 2011 said that families, rather than schools, have the greatest influence and our work is designed for that.

Jackie Howie (Learning Link Scotland): I would like to add that parents are much more likely to get involved in their children's education in the early years. If you can capture them with their children's education but also for themselves, they are more likely to stay with the educational process throughout its duration.

Martin Canavan (Aberlour Child Care Trust): At Aberlour Child Care Trust, we support families for a number of reasons. We offer holistic, needs-led family support. We work with children and young people, and their families. Often this is a result of parental substance abuse, parental mental health concerns, domestic abuse, parental learning disability or sometimes a combination of any of those. We do a lot of work in the early years. I echo the comments about how important it is to support families in the early years. We recognise that parents are often the first and main educators of their children and therefore, in addressing attainment, ensuring that we have robust, holistic family support throughout the early stage of a child's life and ensuring that they are school ready, is key.

Susan Hunter (YouthLink Scotland): Youthlink Scotland is a membership organisation of national, regional and local authority services. Early intervention does not have to mean the early years. There are always opportunities to intervene at times when professionals, practitioners, or volunteers recognise that something is changing in the life of a young person and know how they can best support that young person in negotiation with the young person themselves. Youth work is well placed to offer alternatives for young people to learn when formal education might not work best for them. We have to recognise that 85 per cent of a young person's learning happens outside the classroom. It is not to say that that happens within youth work all the time, but youth work has a part to play. Nearly 400,000 young people every week in Scotland are accessing youth work opportunities.

Graeme Young (Scouts Scotland): I echo those comments. Scouts Scotland is a volunteer-led organisation. We work in Scotland with 40,000 young people and we do it with the help of 11,000 volunteers. For us, early intervention is often about access and ensuring, particularly in some of the communities that this panel is focusing on, that, first, we are able to get the provision up and running and, secondly, that our young people are able to access it. We have an evidence-based programme. We have evidenced impact in different areas of that programme. For us, early intervention is really about access.

The Convener: Although I asked everybody to answer, do not feel that you have to answer every question; just answer if you think that it is relevant to you.

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): I want to carry on from where the convener left off with early intervention and family support. One of the things that Nancy Clunie, the headteacher of Dalmarnock primary school, brought out last week was that she created the community. She did not have a parent council, but she went out and proactively created the community. She said that you need happy families to get happy children. She saw that there was a life outwith the school gates that she had to be part of. Do you think that that kind of leadership is what more schools need and does the school need to be the one that leads that or can it be led by someone out in the community, working with the school? Does it have to be the same all over or are there other ways in which we can do that?

Shelagh Young: There is room for both. A really important point that was made in the informal session by one of our volunteers is that a lot of parents have had negative experiences of school, so professionals, even the great community-inclusive ones like Nancy Clunie, have a tough hill to climb to reach some families.

Volunteer-led models often work very well. That does not mean a volunteer could not work out of a school, for example. It does not have to come in the pre-school phase, as Home-Start does. However, as my volunteer this morning said, volunteers are seen as being "us" not "them". She mentioned families flying into a panic as soon as a formal letter arrives, even if the letter is offering them help. When we are talking about poor families, especially—poor families are not necessarily poor parents, by the way—the circumstances they live in work to create the sorts of stresses that undermine good parenting and sometimes they do not have a foundation. To echo what I think was a quote from someone from the violence reduction unit, which we know is doing some brilliant work in this area, if you do not have a good role model sitting across you at the kitchen table, you are already disadvantaged. A lot of parents have not had that and they are very suspicious and distrustful of teachers and of professionals, so volunteer-led models are incredibly important. I would argue that there is space for both; schools need to get more open, more accessible and more engaging, but they might need to link up more often with

organisations that are experienced in supporting volunteers to do that community-led work.

Martin Canavan: I echo what Shelagh Young said about both the school and the community being important. Certainly, partnership is the key. In the session last week, Nancy Clunie illustrated how proactive she has been in going out and creating the community, as you mentioned, and there are lots of headteachers who would be able to evidence and highlight a similar approach. Equally, there are lots of headteachers who are not quite as proactive, so there are opportunities for those who are providing services in the community or other key stakeholders to try to be champions for that family support and make that contact and those links with schools. That needs to be supported.

The point was made during the informal session that there is a lot of expectation on headteachers as a result of pupil equity funding and assumptions are being made are about what they know about what is happening in our communities. They are being expected to be able to go out and find the organisations providing services to support families. There is a lot of good work being done by the third sector with families in communities throughout the country. Third sector workers and services have already built really good relationships with families in communities, and there is an opportunity for schools to build on and develop the foundations that have been laid by those organisations and the work that is going on. Partnership, therefore, absolutely has to be the key in how we support schools to identify the best family support.

Graeme Young: This committee has talked about procurement in previous sessions and, although I do not want to raise a slightly dull process point, a lot of this is about the ability to commission well. We need a good commissioning process that allows headteachers and other members of the community who are in a position to do so, when they are considering the needs that are out there, to take in all the evidence, including research, consultation with parents and, most importantly, children in order to make an informed decision on what services are required. Sometimes, that might mean purchasing a service, but sometimes it might mean working in partnership to develop a new service. Sometimes, too, it is just about better signposting to what is already out there and supporting what is already out there. There is a process element in all of this.

Jackie Howie: I echo what has already been said about the importance of that good partnership work. If you can involve both community and the schools, it adds to the vibrancy and creation of a learning culture. Although schools are expert in school education, a number of different organisations round the table and elsewhere are expert in engagement, so collaborative work has to move forward.

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): I have a very brief supplementary. It is specifically directed at Martin Canavan and it is about something in Aberlour Child Care Trust's submission, which talks about literacy and numeracy being prioritised over health and wellbeing in raising attainment. The submission also talks about the poverty-related attainment gap and says that we should focus on all policy areas, not just education. Sir Harry Burns in his submission talks about the intergenerational pattern of poverty and mentions the skills-based curriculum, which produces

"a grad-grind 'pedagogy of poverty'".

I would be interested in whether you agree with that analysis by Sir Harry Burns and how you think we can encourage schools to take that wider look at attainment and to look not just at the skills that children and young people have but at their whole health and wellbeing.

10:45

Martin Canavan: I would absolutely echo and support anything that Sir Harry Burns says, because he is far more qualified than I am to comment.

In relation to the point on some schools prioritising literacy and numeracy, it is a simple fact that it is easier for schools to evidence improvements in literacy and numeracy and therefore it is obvious that, from an education point of view, that is where schools feel more comfortable about looking for additional support and being able to evidence that. We talked about wider achievement in the informal session earlier; Tavish Scott asked the panel about that.

We need to understand what we mean when we are talking about attainment versus achievement and what achievement, even though it may not be academic achievement, means for some of the young people we work with and for young people in our schools. We spoke a little bit about some of the anecdotal examples of the work that we are doing in Govan, for example. We are working informally with the school in supporting some of the young people there to access opportunities to gain practical, key, transferable skills. The impact of that is that they have been able to remain in school and not be excluded and they have been afforded opportunities that will help them after school, even though those particular young people are not necessarily going to achieve academically.

We maybe need to have a wider conversation, partly as a result of this inquiry, about what we mean by attainment versus achievement and what

the achievement of some young people will be in terms of their contribution to their communities, even though they have not necessarily attained academically, if there are wider achievement opportunities in schools.

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): I should state, although it is not a formal declaration of interest, that I am a cub scout leader in Dumfriesshire.

I want to go back to the point about commissioning and buying in services in schools. In the informal evidence session, there was a suggestion that there is huge variation across Scotland in what headteachers are aware of and what is being offered in different schools. If you agree with that, what do you think we should do about it, and how should we go about replicating good practice?

Susan Hunter: Thank you for that question. Youthlink Scotland is increasingly hearing from our members about the issue of how are they known about by headteachers. Previously, before PEF, large national youth organisations would have built relationships with their local authority. Potentially, they would have got an endorsement and they may have agreed a match-funding arrangement involving charitable funds and local authority funds, and the school may have contributed some money as well, once it wanted to have that service or programme. However, with PEF, the landscape has completely changed. Now, youth organisations have to have that dialogue with individual headteachers. As Graeme Young said, headteachers are now being asked to be, in effect, business managers and to think about how they utilise that resource.

One piece of direct feedback that we have had from headteachers is that they feel that third sector organisations are marketing—that they are on a sales pitch—whereas what those organisations want to be is collaborative partners. They want to make an impact on learners' lives and improve young people's experiences of education so they have a shared goal. It is not about the money; it is about creating impact and change and improving outcomes for young people.

There needs to be better involvement of the third sector and other statutory youth work providers at the planning stage, identifying needs through school improvement planning and coming up with something jointly involving children, young people and parents. That is exactly what collaboration is meant to be. Collaboration is not the purchase of a service; collaboration is about shaping a programme that will lead to improved outcomes for learners.

The Convener: If anybody else wants to come in, can you come in very briefly, please? That was just a supplementary question, and George Adam wants to come back in.

Shelagh Young: Home-Start runs a programme called big hopes, big futures, which is about reaching children just before they start school in order to boost their ability to flourish in school. It works mainly with children who have been identified by schools as being likely to be at risk. We have national-level funding for some of the architecture around that, but we work at a local level.

I echo what was just said. It is really difficult to work with individual schools because of the timescales that they work on, their capacity to get something started alongside our capacity and the fact that we have to talk to quite so many different people. That will limit both the roll-out and the reach of that programme, as well as its availability. How do we evaluate something when it happens only sporadically? That is a real problem.

Jackie Howie: There is an opportunity for the regional improvement collaboratives to invite the third sector into their meetings, their projects and their planning. That is one way in which schools could engage with the third sector.

George Adam: My next question follows on from what Shelagh Young said earlier and what Jackie Howie has just said. Last week, Nancy Clunie kept talking about how she had to get teachers to change their attitudes and work in a different way. She was not blaming her staff; she was just saying that there are different ways of dealing with things and that she had to do that. From my time as a councillor and my time here, I know that great work is being done with the third sector throughout the country. How can we get that to marry up with the organisations? Jackie Howie has given us one suggestion, but how can we get the third sector to work with the local authorities and the schools in order to get over the attitude that it all stops at the school gate?

Jackie Howie: There is a bonus in cross-sectoral professional learning. If a school can invite the third sector, local authorities and even the college sector in to look at specific issues—perhaps around science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects, which is a big area in which there is a lack of familiarity and knowledge across the sectors—cross-collaborative professional learning can build trust, awareness and understanding.

Shelagh Young: It is really important to recognise that some schools put extra pressures on families, albeit unintentionally. There are 31 Home-Starts in Scotland, and I doubt that a single one of them has not been working with a family that has experienced a school requesting money for the cost of school-day stuff—for example, for

activities—or excluding a child for poor behaviour rather than working with that child. That is an issue, and we want to work more closely with schools.

Home-Start Glasgow south, for example, runs creative play sessions inside the school during the school day or immediately after the school day. Those sessions involve parents, but teachers also drop in and see that work. Teachers have such a tough job that not everything can be dealt with in school, and they are not necessarily trained to deal creatively with the social and emotional behavioural difficulties that some children who are way behind the curve experience. That is why we will always argue for better-quality family support before children reach school. Home-Start and other organisations need to be working across that barrier, and our being in schools is a great thing.

My children were lucky enough to go to a primary school that was a bit below capacity, and a free classroom was given over as a drop-in space for parents. That made the school instantly a more welcoming place for parents to hang around, getting to know the school staff a little better than could be done in two parents evenings a year. As a parent—albeit a very well educated one—I found schools intimidating places, and we heard from the volunteers this morning about how parents feel. There is a need to make schools more open, which I think has been made more difficult because of more stringent child protection measures. At the primary school that my children went to, I was physically locked out of the building and never went inside except for parents evenings. That is not a great way of breaking down the barriers.

Susan Hunter: In direct response to George Adam's question about what we could be doing, I suggest that it is about not "othering" the third sector and other education practitioners.

Youth work does not exist to support schools; it exists as its own professional entity, and that is how it needs to be presented to leadership—whether that is you, as parliamentarians, or Government policy officials. We need to talk about all the professionals who want to have an impact on young people's lives, recognising that education is not just school. Recent documents talk about teachers and other professionals or about teachers and other educators. That automatically creates a divide, but we are all in this together. We all want to improve the lives of young people. Maybe a change in the rhetoric would help to break down some of the barriers.

The Convener: Let us move on.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): Shelagh Young's submission makes some very powerful points around the benefits of early years intervention, taking on board the point that not all intervention is made in the early years. What impact has PEF had in directing funding through schools? Obviously, that is beyond the early years, but what impact has that had so far on the success of intervention in the early years? Has it had a cascade effect and strengthened it, or has it moved the focus further up?

Shelagh Young: It is too early to say, but I can give you some examples of where it has not been helpful.

Some schools have told us that they are not allowed to spend money with organisations that provide support prior to the school starting age. That is not the case, but that is what they say they have been told by their local authorities. Some schools have wanted to join together in a cluster—we have place-based funding, so we would like to do place-based work—but they have been told by their local authorities that that would breach the tendering limits and that it would have to go through a full tendering process. I have been told that that should not have happened, but it has happened.

The most obvious and immediate issue has been that, although we are very proud of having 31 Home-Starts embedded in local communities, which all work in slightly different ways, we do not really want to have to find out what the micro rules are in every area in order to be able to work effectively with a cluster of schools. Frankly, we already do that. As I said, in Glasgow south we work with one school to provide creative play—that project was set up before PEF. We are perfectly happy to do that when it is feasible, but when we are talking about specially training a member of staff to run a specially trained group of volunteers to deliver a particular kind of intervention, it is not very cost effective to do that for four children in one school and three children two towns away. That is not really a viable way of going ahead.

We think that, at the moment, the likely outcome is a kind of fragmentation or atomisation of effort that, as I said earlier, limits the ability to evaluate, which is important because we have to show what works.

The Convener: You are saying that there will be an atomisation of the services but that—correct me if I am wrong—there would not be if the local authorities were given the right information about how they can spend the PEF money.

Shelagh Young: That could still happen, because the decision is down to a head's discretion and a head can commission only what they know about.

The Convener: But it does not have to happen—that is the point that I am making.

Shelagh Young: No, it does not have to happen.

The Convener: Thank you for that.

Ross Greer: I will continue the theme, but on a wider point. The goal of the pupil equity fund is not always early intervention, but, at present, we are talking about early intervention. If the goal is early intervention to close the attainment gap, I would be interested in whether you, representing the third sector, think that a funding model that works exclusively through schools is the best model or whether more direct models involving yourselves, which would avoid the issues that have been highlighted of your having to go through individual schools, would be better? What model would you like to have seen?

11:00

Martin Canavan: The picture around the funding model for PEF has been fairly inconsistent across the country. As has been said in the earlier evidence sessions, and as has been discussed this morning, where community relationships are already in place and where there are good relationships with schools, whose headteachers are quite proactive and understand the issues that are arising before and beyond the school gates, PEF is a really good model. However, where there is a need to support teachers and schools more to recognise what is happening, PEF does not necessarily provide the best model, because it could result in money being spent on things that do not work and that are evidenced not to work. In those instances, what is essentially a very valuable resource might not be used as well as it could be.

For example, we understand that, in one local authority—I will not be specific; I just raise this as a concern—PEF has been used to bring in campus police officers. Given the work that we do and the needs of the young people whom we work with, our organisation is not entirely convinced that campus police officers are a particularly good use of PEF. That is not to say there is not a role for the police in schools. It is not to say there is not a role for the excellent, focused programmes of work that are provided by the police in schools around things like antisocial behaviour. However, we are not entirely sure that having uniformed campus police officers patrolling school grounds is an appropriate use of PEF.

Where schools have decided locally to take that approach and use PEF for that purpose, it is highlighting inconsistency. We heard in the informal session this morning that some local authorities and schools are taking a very prescriptive approach to how they spend the money, which is focused on individual children, whereas, in schools where campus police officers are brought in, a much more general approach is taken in which the money is considered to be for the wellbeing of the school generally—as misplaced as we believe that understanding of wellbeing is—and not for a specific group or for individual children.

That highlights the fact that there is real inconsistency in the understanding of PEF—in how it is being interpreted and applied in different schools. It works well where teachers are engaged and supported to use the money in the best way that they can. That is evidenced to work excellently. However, there needs to be more guidance, from the Scottish Government or from local authorities, to ensure that the money is being spent appropriately.

The Convener: We have just been told that the local authorities are involving themselves too much and are giving out wrong information, but you are saying that they should get more involved, because you do not like the way in which some schools are spending the money.

Martin Canavan: As Shelagh Young has mentioned, the national operational guidance from the Scottish Government says one thing but some of the schools have interpreted it in a different way. Wherever the guidance comes from, it needs to be flexible. The whole point of PEF is that it provides autonomy to headteachers so that they can recognise and understand the local needs and spend their PEF money appropriately. However, as we have evidenced this morning, not all headteachers are best placed to make that decision, for any number of reasons. Maybe they do not understand what is happening in their communities.

The Convener: Or they are not spending the money in the way that certain groups would like.

Martin Canavan: It sounds mercenary to say that it is not being spent in the way that the third sector would like it to be spent, but I think that most people around this table would agree that campus police officers are perhaps not the best use of PEF.

The Convener: I am not going to put the matter to a vote, but there is a good reason why there are campus police in some schools and not in others, and I do think that it could benefit the education system.

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): I would not want folk to have the impression that campus police officers or community police officers are patrolling schools. There is maybe a misunderstanding about what police officers do in schools. We should be careful. A lot of good work goes on.

Martin Canavan: Lots of good work is going on in communities, and there is absolutely a role for community police officers in schools. However, from what young people whom we work with have told us, police officers being funded to provide services in schools through PEF will not necessarily impact positively on their education, specifically that of those who are on the fringes of education.

The Convener: Ross Greer can come in.

Ross Greer: I think that other panellists want to respond to the original question.

The Convener: That was some time ago.

Ross Greer: We have moved far.

Susan Hunter: You asked about where PEF might not be the best fit. The point was made earlier that PEF can work for literacy and numeracy programmes but, when it comes to health and wellbeing programmes, it becomes much more challenging. That is where schools may want to pool resources. We have heard an example of a cluster of schools that wanted to purchase a counselling service and breached a procurement threshold, so the whole process was kyboshed.

An area that we are particularly interested in is the provision of summer programmes. A school may want to purchase one or two places for specific young people with identified needs. National youth organisations can make that provision, but it is very difficult for them to do that through PEF, so there still needs to be space for national funding directly from the Government that national organisations can bid for and which meets local needs. There is currently a disconnect around the understanding that national organisations provide local services. That is an anomaly.

Shelagh Young: I want to say something about the pattern of funding, which can be very short term. As I sit here, over half of our network is on one-year funding deals and over 15 per cent do not even know what funding they will get for the financial year that has already started. When there is such uncertain funding, working in partnership with schools—or anybody else—on a basis that makes sense is very difficult. I echo the point about national-level funding being a backbone that helps local work to happen really well.

Ross Greer: I have a brief question about poverty proofing.

The Convener: You were going to ask a question about the scouts, as well.

Ross Greer: Yes—that is the question about poverty proofing.

Graeme Young, the committee has discussed poverty proofing in schools quite a lot and heard compelling evidence about it. It has been mentioned this morning. I imagine that the scouts are quite a good example of a third sector organisation that involves large numbers of young people. What steps do you take to poverty proof your largely volunteer-led service, which relies on various funding sources?

Graeme Young: Over the past few years, we have worked a lot on trying to evidence impact. As an organisation, we try to be as inclusive as possible, and we work to try to reflect the communities in which we deliver our service. Through that learning, we feel that we are developing a model that is able to develop provision in areas of deprivation or harder-to-reach communities in particular, but also in areas of rural deprivation. We have evidence of that. In Scotland, local development officers target specific areas.

Our issue is more that we know that the model works, but we cannot create enough provision quickly enough. We have around 4,000 young people on waiting lists in areas in which there is already provision. We are looking for opportunities to fund a model that we know works.

The model is very cost effective. As members know, most of what we deliver is delivered through volunteers. That has benefits from a public purse point of view and because the model is often sustainable. For example, we know that £550 will deliver a place for a young person that will last for four years, and potentially longer. We think that that is good value for money compared with some other services out there.

There is another point that I want to raise. The attainment gap has been described as an experience gap. As a universal service, the scout programme provides young people with a wealth of experiences that mirror the curriculum for excellence to a certain extent. There are real benefits from getting that programme into areas of deprivation.

When we have talked to our young people—we do surveys with them every year—they have told us that they are not getting enough opportunities for extra-curricular activities or informal education. What is really interesting about that data is that young people who get free school meals say more than their counterparts who do not get free school meals that they do not get access to the extra-curricular activities out there. Young people in areas of deprivation know that they do not get the access that is out there. That is a really interesting point.

We have a model that we know works, but we cannot get it into communities quickly enough. That is where we are at as an organisation.

Susan Hunter: In youth work—which, obviously, includes the scouts—the principle is very much inclusion. That is one of our core values. Therefore, poverty proofing is in the heart of every youth work organisation, and they want as much as possible to provide services that are free at the point of access. That includes providing young people with experiences of travelling overseas, whether they are funded through Erasmus or other funds, with no direct cost to the young person. We have examples of summer programmes in which young people are fed, taken swimming, have showers and provided with personal hygiene products. All those things create a zero-cost but positive and high-quality experience for young people.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I want to go back to achievement, which we discussed earlier. The issue absolutely relates to points that Graeme Young and Susan Hunter have made. National policy is about attainment, not achievement: discuss.

The Convener: Briefly.

Susan Hunter: If we look at the curriculum for excellence, we see that national policy includes achievement. At its heart, the curriculum for excellence is everything that education should be for young people. It is about personalisation, choice and personal achievement. All of that language is in the curriculum for excellence, but there has been a slide towards attainment. Our concern is that what gets measured gets done. That is a really difficult place to be in, because we know that, for many young people, achievement is about their sense of self, their self-worth, their contribution and their confidence.

Graeme Young: I have nothing to add: that says it all, really.

I am sorry: I have one thing to add. If you listen to young people, you will find that they say that achievement is incredibly important for them. Choice is often the gold dust around what will end up leading to attainment. It is about young people choosing for themselves and being motivated in a certain area, whether that be outdoor learning or STEM. There is a plethora of choices, and education ultimately needs to capture that.

I want to make another brief point. I mentioned £550 earlier on. That was to create a place. Scouting is free. There is a slight membership charge, but that would never come in the way of any child accessing scouting.

Martin Canavan: What is our ambition for our children and young people ultimately? Do we want them to grow up to be happy and healthy contributing members of the community? We probably all do. If that means that some of them will achieve academically, that is fantastic but, if others achieve in a wider sense but still manage to move on, to grow up, to contribute as members of the community, and to do the things that make them happy and healthy individuals, achievement needs to be considered to be as important as attainment.

Tavish Scott: Given the pressures that we place on schools—we are potentially about to place even more pressures on them, with a headteachers charter and so on—teachers are under enormous pressure to achieve attainment, not necessarily achievement. How would you like to see that rebalanced? Is there a development of policy that you would like to see in that area?

Shelagh Young: I can say what I would not want to see. I would not want to see a notion that we have a twin track so that children who enter school behind the curve go down a vocational route, and we accept that as achievement.

What I would like to see—this sounds ridiculous—is something more like the education that I benefited from, in which non-academic things were rated just as highly in the school. Let us consider sport, for example. In the informal session this morning, someone talked about the cost of the school day. I know from first-hand experience how expensive it is to support a young person who wants to achieve in sport to a reasonably high level. We see drop-outs all the time among children from poorer backgrounds, because their parents cannot ship them around or pay for physiotherapy, for example. Schools can be a huge place for that to happen, and that often reflects back into academic achievement. When people feel that they are doing well in one area, they start to do better in others.

It is really important to remember that there are a lot of people who could be in education but have become parents at an early age. They have a huge sense of achievement when they get their parenting right. Schools discouraging young people of school age to come back if they have had a child just has to end. We have to ensure that education is back to more of a lifelong thing, that people can dip into and out of it when their life allows them to do that, and that they are welcomed into it.

I think that there is too much pressure on schools, but I also think that there is almost too much pressure on every organisation that is trying to provide for people who are struggling. It cannot all happen in school; there has to be a mix of in-school and out-of-school provision, and the third sector has a big role to play in that.

We have to recognise something as a society. This morning, I mentioned that many families that we support come back and become volunteers for Home-Start UK. That is a massive achievement for them. People are on a lifelong journey, and not everything has to happen in school. However, if that journey starts well—which is with the parents—it is likely to end well. It is important to see that as a continuum, and not just consider what happens in school.

11:15

Tavish Scott: The Anderson high school in Lerwick has 900 kids and it has one full-time youth worker in the school staff set-up. Is that an experience that you see across Scotland? Are there enough youth workers as part of school teams across Scotland?

Susan Hunter: It is probably a growing picture, particularly as regards the involvement of local authority youth work staff in schools. There are still some challenges around what the role of the youth worker is. In some schools, youth workers are seen as part of the school staff team but, in others, they are staff who come into the school. There is still a journey to go on, but the use of youth workers is definitely an emerging practice. The work in Shetland is outstanding, and Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council have fantastic youth work provision in schools.

We need to put a spotlight on that and provide some evidence on the impact, including how teachers feel about having a youth worker in their school, the value that it brings to young people's wellbeing and the experience of pupils and parents. A study needs to be done on the impact. One youth worker will not go far among 900 pupils.

Tavish Scott: Indeed. That is a point that I hear all the time.

Susan Hunter: We should remember that youth work is an offer for every young person. We heard from a youth worker who told us that the project that they took into the school used to be open to every young person, but that they are now given a group of young people to work with. Youth work is a voluntary activity—young people choose to be part of a youth work experience. The aim might be to improve outcomes for them, and there might need to be an element of nurture, but it is a relationship and there is a choice involved. Those principles and values need to remain.

Ruth Maguire: I have a question for Graeme Young about uniformed organisations. On a practical level, even having to buy a uniform is a barrier. If there are trips away, it might be necessary to have a suitable rucksack or suitcase, even if the trips are funded. On a practical level, how do you encourage families for whom that might be a barrier to enable their kids to have those experiences?

Graeme Young: Uniform is never a barrier. There are different ways around that in the local setting. For example, someone could just wear a neckie, which might be something that they receive when they come through the door. As far as the uniform is concerned, there is no stigmatisation.

When it comes to going away on trips, there are outdoor adventure experiences that are core to the scout programme, so we run a central grant fund for individual groups, including groups that are just starting, to make it possible for them to go away. This year, we will introduce a travel fund, because our members are telling us that the cost of travel is a barrier to going away.

I want to make a wider point. We have talked quite a bit about the primary 7 residential trip, but going away can be a much cheaper experience for parents and carers. What the scouts do is a good example. We will often camp in tents. Camping in tents can cost as little as £5 at a campsite. As far as the equipment that is required is concerned, we have stores of equipment that we make accessible. When it comes to the skills that are required to set up a camp, we train our volunteers, parents and teachers. Making those experiences accessible is probably one of our strengths as an organisation.

Uniform is never a barrier, particularly in areas of deprivation. Schools could learn a lot from how we manage the outdoor experience. It is also possible to just go down to the local park. There are different ways of doing it.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I will pose a difficult but important question. I would argue strongly that some of the best educational experiences anybody can have are nothing to do with exams; they are ones that youngsters have outside the classroom. However, it is hard to define, never mind measure, the value of those experiences. You have spoken volumes—in private session and in the formal session—about the worth that that has, especially for youngsters who might not feel very valued.

Do you think that we have to do more to recognise those achievements? Could awards and certificates help to do that? I will cite an example that the committee is grappling with. There has been a big national debate about national 4s compared with national 5s. National 4s are not particularly well recognised because there is no exam at the end of them. How do we reward youngsters who have achieved in such areas? They might have done extremely well. Even though their achievement might be at a low level, it

is still very important to them. How should we be rewarding young people in those circumstances?

Susan Hunter: The most important thing is that a young person is able to articulate what they have achieved. Regardless of whether they are given a certificate or anything else, the most important thing is that they can tell somebody else what they can now do as a result of their experience, and can explain the skill, the knowledge and the confidence that they have gained. Having the ability to articulate that is extremely important. That is what employers want—they want people who can say, "Yeah, I can do this and I can show you how I can do it."

There is a process that we need to go through with employers and with further and higher education with regard to how we measure and evaluate beyond the certification process. Youth awards are extremely valuable in giving young people milestones that enable them to remember what they have achieved. That is an important way of using youth awards, because it means that a young person can look back over their learning journey and say, "I did that. To get my youth achievement award, this was my challenge. We went camping and I learned these skills: I worked as a team, I worked with other people, I set up a camp and I cooked food." Such awards can be used as an aid to help young people have their skills acknowledged and recognised.

Liz Smith: Do you feel that we have to do more with employers who, at the bottom level, are often looking for candidates' grades and exam results, particularly in a highly competitive world? What do we have to do to persuade employers that a lot of skills that are not related to academic attainment are as important in the world of work as those that are achieved in the classroom?

Susan Hunter: There was a report—I think that it was a Confederation of British Industry report—that described all the skills that employers look for. As the youth work sector, we said, "That's what youth work does." I do not think that we should push all employers into looking only at qualifications, but the landscape of the learning journey is now extremely variable. It is not simply a case of going to school, going to college, going to university and—Bob's your uncle—you are employable. There is much more diversity. The process will take time. We are talking about a societal change that involves recognising that there are multiple routes to learning and achievement.

Shelagh Young: I can give two very positive examples. For a time, I worked for Standard Life, which took up the challenge posed by the Edinburgh guarantee and brought in young people without the classic qualifications. It provided pastoral support as part of those young people's learning inside the workplace. Such interventions are brilliant. There was no award scheme attached to that; it was simply a case of an employer recognising the benefits of doing that.

I am very interested in the way that Training Initiatives Generating Effective Results Scotland, which, in effect, is an apprenticeship middle agency, has picked up on the fact that the apprentices that it has worked with often drop out of work even though they have had all the right training. Picking up on the work of Suzanne Zeedyk and the whole adverse childhood experiences agenda, it has recognised that those young people are suffering from experiences earlier in life that they have not had adequate support to work their way through. That is an incredibly positive development, because that message will get to more employers as a result of an organisation such as TIGERS taking it on, as opposed to an organisation like ours, which focuses on the early years.

I would like to say something about the growing up in Scotland study, the data from which has shown that 11 per cent of children are known to have social, emotional or behavioural problems. That is 94,000 children in Scotland. Because we know that, we can know when that situation changes. Generally speaking, the children with those challenges change dramatically not because of an external award or certificate but because an adult they have a relationship with, whom they respect and care about, says something good to them or remarks to them that what has happened is good.

I will give a little example from Home-Start practice. We sometimes use something called video interaction guidance, which involves videoing a parent interacting with their child. We play back only the good bits—the bits where the child responded to the parent's attention. By doing that, we show the parent that they can do a good job and that they are doing a good job, but maybe not all the time. Children respond to that just as much. We talked about what can happen in school. The notion of the trauma-informed teacher—the teacher who understands that the relationship matters—is important here. There is a lot of controversy over things like golden time, which involves a child being rewarded by being given extra playtime in the afternoon, because children with poor behaviour are excluded from that, and play is exactly what they need. The notion that you look someone in the eye and say how well they have done, even if their achievement is well below par for their age group, matters. It really is simple, but it takes time and is all about being human.

Jackie Howie: I want to mention a bit of work that the Scottish credit and qualifications

framework did. It works with schools and helps to badge and level courses that are non-accredited. It also works with employers to help them to level jobs. Putting a type of employment at an SCQF level might help an employer to look outwith an accreditation framework. The SCQF also works with trade unions to help them to negotiate on fair employment issues.

Martin Canavan: I echo what Shelagh Young said about relationship-based support and how important that is for many of the children, families and young people we work with. We know that poverty involves not just financial poverty but poverty of opportunity and skills. It often involves poverty of encouragement from any individual who is close to the young person in their life. When support and encouragement are provided by a teacher, or somebody else with whom a young person might have an important relationship, it is absolutely key that they recognise the young person's achievements and successes and recognise when they have done something well.

We definitely have an opportunity to think about how we can better recognise what some of those achievements, whether formal or non-formal, are. There are a number of awards that many of our young people work towards, such as the Saltire awards and the achievement awards. A couple of years ago, in partnership with the Scottish Mentoring Network, we developed a bespoke award for supporting some of our young people to become peer mentors through the Scottish Qualifications Authority. There are opportunities to develop certificated awards that give a sense of encouragement, support and achievement for many of the young people we work with that they might never have had before.

The Convener: Oliver, do you want to come in at this point?

Oliver Mundell: Most of the points that I wanted to cover have been dealt with.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Like Oliver Mundell, I find that quite a lot of what I wanted to ask about has already been covered. However, I want to pick up on the issue of collaboration with schools, which some of you highlighted in your written submissions. Learning Link says that it has issues around

"School workers with little or no respect for parents or carers"

or for

"the challenging circumstances in which some families live."

YouthLink talks about schools being "wary" of or "closed to" working with external agencies and having a "Lack of awareness" of what youth work is. Would you like to elaborate further on some of your experiences?

Jackie Howie: I will go first. Schools can be amazing places. A recent example is that one of our projects worked with a really enthusiastic headteacher to engage parents who did not normally come into the school through two different projects. However, that fell down because one of the teachers was not on the same wavelength as the headteacher. That teacher had had a poor experience of the parents concerned, as they had previously behaved inappropriately when they had come into school. I guess that there was a lack of understanding of the challenges that parents face in coming to school and being able to negotiate. Some parents who have had really poor experiences of school do not have negotiation skills. If their child is penalised or criticised for their behaviour, they get angry and so relationships break down. We have learned from that about the need to establish different ground rules and to ensure that everybody is on board prior to the start of a project. Even with good will, things can break down through a lack of understanding.

Gillian Martin: Do you consider that your organisations can be the link between a school and parents who are nervous about going into it? Could you be the facilitators there?

11:30

Jackie Howie: Yes—absolutely. In the project that I talked about, the parents did not attend the school to go to parent meetings or to drop the kids off. It was a really good project for getting folk involved in the school who did not normally go there. There was definitely a bridge there. Parents who have had poor experiences of education themselves are less likely to attend. If they can get a good experience of education as adults, they are more likely to invest in the education of their kids and to try to engage as peers.

I think that the teachers learned a lot from that project as well, which is really good. I am not making a criticism of the teacher that I mentioned, because she had had a challenging journey with the children. It was a learning journey all round. That is where partnership work works. Rather than that just being the end of the process and there being no communication between the school and the families, there is an on-going attempt to build relationships. External agencies that can do school-based work and perhaps work outwith the school environment can definitely act as a good bridge.

Susan Hunter: The questions that Gillian Martin has flagged up relate to some of the points that I have already made. There is a challenge with the recognition of youth work as part of the family of community learning and development and as a professional practice with a code of ethics,

professional competences and a value base, with its own clear purpose and outcomes. There has not been enough space and time—although it is starting to develop—to allow an understanding of the professional role that youth work can play.

As Tavish Scott said, there are challenges for youth workers in schools. It is really difficult when the bell rings every 55 minutes, because that is not how youth work works. Youth work is about a relationship and the time that the young person needs. It is about being in a place that the young person wants to be. There needs to be recognition that youth workers, as professionals, can deliver learning experiences in a range of contexts, including in schools but also in the wider community and in the evening, at weekends and during holidays. It is not a service that can or should always be aligned to a school. It is about aligning to the needs of learners.

Gillian Martin: As I said, YouthLink's written submission mentions a "lack of awareness" of what youth work is. Because of the pupil equity funding, a lot of schools are dipping their toes into engaging with outside organisations. Does that mean that there will be an incremental change and a deeper understanding of the value of youth work?

Susan Hunter: We find, and we hear from our members, that, when a school leader gets the value and gets what a youth worker does and has a positive experience, they will want more of it. We have all the early adopters and we are on that curve, but we are trying to get everybody else on to that page of thinking that youth work is a good thing and knowing what its outcomes are. However, it is not necessarily about having a programme. It is about creating an experience or a learning opportunity that is negotiated with the young person and being okay with not knowing what specific outcomes or changes might happen. It is about being brave enough to take those risks.

In the informal session earlier, we talked about being risk averse. It is not about saying, "If you do A, B will happen." It is about saying, "If you leave this young person where they are, probably nothing positive will happen but, if we take a chance and involve them with a youth work practitioner, something will likely happen." That will come through that negotiation and the recognition of the young person and the practitioner as partners in the learning journey, and seeing what route that will take.

Gillian Martin: A couple of weeks ago, we had an informal session with some youth workers, and one of the issues that they brought up was that youth work could be the key to getting school refusers some kind of positive educational experience and maybe even providing a bridge for them to re-engage with schools. Has that been your experience?

Susan Hunter: Yes—absolutely. The community learning and development practitioners who you spoke to come from within our membership. According to the committee paper that describes that session, one of the comments that was made was that it is not about rewarding perceived-to-be-bad young people with good experiences; it is about saying that we need to invest in those young people and give them good positive experiences to help them to learn, but we have to do that without stigma. We cannot have what is thought of as the base for young people who do not want to be at school; we have to do it in a way that is free from stigma, that is inclusive and that values young people as individuals and as contributors with something to give, not just something to receive.

Kezia Dugdale: I have a particular interest in the experiences of looked-after young people. I am looking at Martin Canavan in particular, but I am sure that all the panellists will have something to say about that. I appreciate that time is short, but I am looking for comments on the impact that multiple placements have on looked-after young people's ability to achieve at school and how being taken out of the classroom to attend children's hearings and children's panels affects their attainment. Also, will you say something about how those experiences become even more challenging when a young person hits 16 but wants to stay within the education system? What additional challenges do they face at that point?

Martin Canavan: We know about the statistics and the outcomes in relation to education for that particular population of looked-after children. We have a dedicated educational hub—a nurture hub—attached to our cluster of residential children's homes in Fife. The hub does excellent work for children who have often had early experiences of trauma that continue to impact on them. The hub helps them to achieve in a wider sense. We have already talked about wider achievement, and that is exactly the sort of work that we do with that particular group of looked-after and care-experienced young people.

On your point about multiple placement breakdowns or multiple moves because of fostering placements or moves from fostering to residential care, there is no doubt whatsoever that that will have a fundamental impact on a young person's wellbeing and development and, ultimately, their ability to achieve and attain.

Kezia Dugdale: If you do not mind me interrupting, I guess that the point of the inquiry is around the theme of collaboration. We have identified the problem, but what is the solution? How can we break the cycle of kids being pulled

out of class to go to a hearing, which impacts on their attainment, because computer says, "This meeting needs to take place now"?

Martin Canavan: That is a really difficult question to answer. We clearly need to look at the way that the entire system is provided and supported. What you say is true not just in relation to the group of children who are involved in the children's hearing system and have prescribed appointments that they need to attend. We find that the situation is similar for children who are referred through child and adolescent mental health services, as they have to be pulled out of school to attend clinical appointments and so miss essential points and times at school that they might otherwise enjoy. There is a stigma that goes along with that. The two situations are similar, in terms of the stigma that young people in those circumstances end up feeling.

There needs to be a collaborative approach so that we do that better. I cannot give you the answer to that now. I would love to be able to, but it is a really complex and difficult area. Maybe the care review will be able to identify and address that.

Shelagh Young: It is not my area of professional expertise, but I am an adoptive parent, and I have to say that, given that the school day is relatively short, I do not understand why a lot of that stuff cannot start in the afternoon. As someone who has been interested in volunteering through the children's panel, I know that it would be a hell of a lot easier for people like me to do that if the timing was shifted. That may sound like a stupid and basic comment, but I genuinely think that it is possible to stop that disruption. My children had meetings to attend, and one of them was at primary school when they moved in. It was difficult and there was the issue of their not wanting to be marked out as different. There really must be some practical solution on timing.

Kezia Dugdale: For the sake of clarity and for the *Official Report*, are you therefore saying that, if we were to change that, we could improve the attainment or achievement of looked-after young people?

Shelagh Young: We know clearly at Home-Start that children who already feel marked out as different and who are perhaps expected to fail usually fulfil that to a degree, unless interventions are made. All that I would observe based on our practice and my personal experience is that, the more that a child feels included along with the rest and the less that they carry around some sense of stigma and shame, the better they are likely to do.

Kezia Dugdale: I ask Martin Canavan to comment on that specific point, just to get it on the record.

Martin Canavan: As an example, I would point to work that we are doing up in the Highlands right now. Over the past couple of years, we have been developing a pilot service that is working with families and their children who have been identified as being at risk of being accommodated—children who are looked after at home and who are at risk of being moved out of the authority. Social work capacity and the traditional approach to supporting those families has ultimately not always produced the best outcomes and children have ended up moving into residential or fostering accommodation. We have developed a model that involves working with the whole family, as we talked about earlier in relation to family support. We work on a needs-led basis and do individual work with the children and other family members as well as working with the families together. Crucially, that is done at times and in places that suit them and their needs. It is done out of hours or at weekends, when the family are comfortable and need that support, not Monday to Friday, from 9 to 5.

From that bit of work, we have already seen in a relatively short space of time a significant impact through the number of children who are now not being accommodated or moved out of the authority. That is based not only on our own evidence, as the authority has said that it recognises that the service is excellent for children who would have been moved out of the authority unless they had received that support. Changing our approach to that group of children and those families has had a fundamental impact on whether those children end up in the care system or in residential or fostering care.

Kezia Dugdale: Are you measuring the impact on their school achievement as well as their wider life goals?

Martin Canavan: Inevitably, it will have an impact, because those children are not being moved out of the community and away from their school, and they can be supported to continue. No empirical study has been done on the impact on their education per se, but it is clear that it is beneficial to them to remain at home with their family and in the community and to remain in their school, where they have relationships and friendships.

The Convener: That brings us to the end of the first panel of witnesses. I thank you all very much for your attendance. I suspend the meeting for a moment or two to allow the witnesses to change over.

11:41

Meeting suspended.

11:45

On resuming—

The Convener: The second panel today will focus on the role of local authorities. I welcome to the meeting Linda Lees, who is the lifelong learning strategic manager at City of Edinburgh Council; John Butcher, who is the executive director of education and youth employment at North Ayrshire Council; and Dr James Foley, who is a performance analyst for youth communities at North Lanarkshire Council.

If witnesses would like to respond to a question, please indicate that to me or the clerks, and I will call you to speak. There is no need to touch the console and there is no need to feel that you have to answer a question if you think that it is not relevant to you. I reiterate that we have a lot to get through today, so I ask that questions and answers be succinct.

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): Thank you for coming to give evidence today. Our inquiry is looking at the impact of poverty on ability to learn. I turn to Dr James Foley in the first instance, but I would welcome any other contributions in connection with holiday hunger. I very much welcome the additional focus on holiday hunger. We have a good written submission from Lindsay Graham, who is an expert in food education and has been doing a lot of work highlighting how important it is. North Lanarkshire Council is doing a lot of good work on holiday hunger, and we welcome its announcements on dedicating a lot more resources to the matter. Why is the council doing that? What trends in cases of food poverty is the council experiencing? How should we tackle the matter, as a country?

Dr James Foley (North Lanarkshire Council): We started with a lot of anecdotal accounts. When poverty is discussed, the first thing that people who work in deprived communities raise with me is usually the growing incidence of hunger being a problem. Headteachers and teaching professionals across the board mention hunger every time we discuss poverty, and they think that it has a significant impact on their pupils' ability to learn.

The club 365 project came about in response to a conversation with our assistant chief executive and a headteacher in one of our most deprived communities, who was being asked what would make a difference. She said, I think partly in jest, that the best thing would be if we could run a boarding school during the holidays. Everyone kind of knew what she meant by that, which was essentially that pupils come back after the holidays with a significantly deteriorated ability to learn, from which it takes them several weeks to get back up to speed and learning properly again. There is a lot of evidence on learning loss, particularly from America, where pupils have an extra-long summer holiday. Our summer holidays are shorter, which makes a difference. The evidence suggests not just that there is learning loss during the holidays, but that the effect is disproportionate on pupils from families on lower incomes.

Obviously, there is rising use of food banks and growing awareness of food poverty as an issue. There is a tendency for there to be lots of anecdotal evidence on, for example, the number of people attending food banks, and poll evidence is used. I come from an academic background. Unfortunately, academic turnaround times are quite long, in the sense that after a problem is identified it can be four years down the line before there is proper academic evidence about causal links. In relation to food poverty and the impact on learning loss and so on during school holidays, according to Lindsay Graham there are eight PhDs and six research projects under way, but the research is still very much in its infancy. Our pilot project—our plan is to extend it—is also a research project: we are trying to do a bit of action research to find out how effective the measures can be.

Richard Lochhead: Your submission says that North Lanarkshire claimants will lose roughly £78 million per year due to post-2015 welfare reform. That is a phenomenal amount of money for one local authority area. Is that a driver in terms of your concerns about ongoing child poverty and the need to focus on holiday hunger issues?

Dr Foley: Absolutely. Universal credit is about to be rolled out in our area, and I know that it is a big anxiety for our financial inclusion team. This relates partly to my point about the recentness of much of this stuff. An Educational Institute of Scotland survey has suggested that many of the problems have intensified in recent years. I spoke to 50 teachers in our local authority area yesterday. I asked them to put their hands up if they thought that the problem of hunger had intensified since 2015. They all put their hands up. The problem has been widely recognised.

As I said, we need more research to validate the link between learning loss, hunger and attainment, and we are working with academic partners on that. Food, to me, is a fundamental human right, so that research is something that we need to do.

Richard Lochhead: My final question, after which we can bring in other witnesses, is on addressing holiday hunger. That absolutely must be a big priority now for the Scottish Government, but certainly also for the UK Government, which is responsible for the poverty in the first place and is closing its eyes to child poverty.

Schools are closed for a large part of the year during holidays. One idea is that we should open schools and follow the example of what is being done in America. Our schools carry a huge burden and have lots of responsibilities, as things stand. To add tackling food poverty through opening up and serving meals in the holidays, which sounds like a very laudable thing to do, would clearly be an additional burden. How could we involve the rest of the community in delivering that service? What is the way forward in terms of getting resources to deal with the problem? It seems to me that the UK Government's policies are causing poverty, and there is more pressure on the Scottish Government's budget to deal with the fallout and pick up the pieces, which then loads more and more pressure on to local government budgets.

John Butcher (North Ayrshire Council): I absolutely value the project that is going on in my colleague's North Lanarkshire authority, but it is not the only authority that is tackling the issue. My authority has been tackling food poverty for a number of years. Our response is targeted at communities that require it.

Food poverty is crucial: because it clearly impacts on their ability to learn, we do not want children going to school having not had breakfast, for example, and maybe not having had a proper meal from Friday to Monday. The initiatives that we run are not just about food poverty; they are about social isolation, about learning during the holiday breaks and about involving parents. They are a targeted community response.

On the point about schools opening in the holidays, I firmly believe that schools are and should be absolutely rooted at the centre of their communities. They are a community resource—arguably, an underused community resource—so we need to open our schools at all times for a wide variety of things. It is important that our teachers get involved in that. Quite a number do in my authority; they come out during holidays and they get involved in the initiatives. We also have to encourage people who live in the communities to contribute to the children's learning and to get involved in family learning initiatives when holiday clubs and food clubs are on the go. That is also really important.

Linda Lees (City of Edinburgh Council): I completely agree with everything that has been said. The council in Edinburgh is in an interesting position right now because we are developing our first project on holiday hunger. We will not call it that because the children, the young people and their families do not want to go to something called "holiday hunger" so we are looking at that. We are thinking about calling it "Discover"; we will encourage young people to discover new activities, to discover learning how to cook together, to discover family learning, to discover their own communities and to discover trips. We are taking very much a partnership approach. We have not started the project yet; the learning that has been gleaned from other local authorities is very important for us.

I echo what has been said about the importance of involving the community, the third sector, parents, teachers and pupil support assistants. Often, PSAs know the children very intimately and they live locally. It is quite important that we have that mix of people involved.

The other thing is that we are not looking just at the summer holidays. The Christmas holidays are a really important holiday, after which children often go back to school very distressed and hungry for a number of reasons. We are looking to adopt improvement methodology starting in October. We will do a summer holiday programme this year. We will evaluate it and learn from it for the start of the next holiday. We hope that by the time we come to the next summer holiday we will have something that is genuinely engaging a lot of partners and a lot of our own staff, because we have very experienced staff who also, like the third sector organisations, know the families and communities extremely well.

We are at a very interesting point at the moment; we are about to start and we definitely want to look to other local authorities to learn from what they have been doing.

Dr Foley: I completely agree with all those comments, and that local authorities cannot do it alone; authorities are looking to work in partnership with other groups. That is something that we will investigate for the future. The first thing that we want to do is maximise use of our own resources.

The only caveat is that, if Finland is the model of an education system that many people around the table would look to, I point out that Finland was able to roll out free school meals in the post-war situation, when Finland was not a particularly rich country. Maybe, therefore, this is a question of longer-term investment; we would need political consensus for that investment. That might be something that is worth considering.

Ruth Maguire: Good morning, panel. I should probably declare an interest, as I was a North Ayrshire councillor between 2012 and 2016.

In our first evidence session, Danielle Mason said 10 per cent of schools in England have managed to narrow the gap. When I asked her how they had done that—the obvious question—she spoke about the focus on what goes on in the classroom. Obviously I am not diminishing any of the work on reducing, alleviating or eliminating

poverty. However, can you, with a specific focus on what goes on in the classroom, speak to steps that your local authorities are taking. In that same evidence session Jim McCormick said that North Ayrshire is "bucking the trend" in respect of the Scottish index of multiple deprivation and performance of young people. Will John Butcher talk to us about the professional learning academy, which seems to be one of the differences in that authority?

John Butcher: Yes. North Ayrshire has, unfortunately, the second-highest level of child poverty in Scotland, behind Glasgow. I used to work in Glasgow as head of education there, so I have experience of the two highest levels of deprivation and child poverty in Scotland.

I firmly believe in partnership. I do not discount the evidence that you have just heard; it is really important and I want to come back to some of it later, if I can—specifically in relation to involvement of the police.

I firmly believe that our future is based in our children's learning. Our teachers, our support staff and everybody who interacts with our young people are our most valuable resource. Therefore, we should be investing in them for the future.

In North Ayrshire we have set up the professional learning academy. It includes our most qualified and best teachers, and staff drawn from a number of agencies, including speech and language therapists, early years workers and psychologists. Their prime function is to increase the capacity of our schools and to work with our teachers on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing strategies in the best possible way in order to get across what works.

The difference between the training at the professional learning academy and the training that I went to as a young teacher—which others may have experienced—is that in my training there was often very little follow-up. You went to something, you learned something and you may or may not have implemented it. The professional learning academy follows up the training: teachers go for training and staff development and it is followed up with coaching and mentoring so that they implement in the class the practice that they have learned. That is a key plank of our attainment challenge work, but it is not the only plank because we have work on nurture, on data analysis, on leadership and on family learning, and we have schools' counselling initiatives. Rooted in that is work with partners from a range of agencies. What difference has all that made? It has made a huge difference.

12:00

With over 50 per cent of our learners in SIMD 1 to 3, we have a significant challenge. We have evidence that we are closing the attainment gap without bringing the top down. That is equally important, because the easiest way to bring the attainment gap down is to forget about the top learners or high achievers. We are working with both: we work with the University of Glasgow in relation to our high achieving learners, on which I spoke at a conference last week.

Our targeted approaches have made a significant impact. I will give some figures. We have closed the gap in primary school literacy by 5.3 per cent, in secondary school literacy by 16.2 per cent, and by 14.1 per cent between SIMD 1 and 2 and those in SIMD 3 and 4. Numeracy has improved by 2 per cent, in respect of closing the gap between SIMD 1 and SIMD 3 and 4.

Soft analysis was mentioned earlier in respect of things that are difficult to measure. We have a nurture initiative that we brought from Glasgow City Council, which has made a significant investment in nurture. We have seen a 73 per cent improvement in the developmental strand and a 75 per cent improvement in the diagnostic strand. Of course, we must not forget the early years, where we have seen a 5 per cent improvement in individual learning in children in the early years in terms of their developmental milestones. There has been significant improvement.

The Convener: You can always send us those figures.

John Butcher: I can. I have those.

Ruth Maguire: Thank you for that full answer. I would be interested to hear from other panel members what specific classroom interventions to support teachers are happening in their local authorities and how you measure their successes?

Linda Lees: I am not a quality improvement officer, so I do not have detail on a lot of the support and challenge work that is going on with our schools. However, we are definitely focusing on the quality of learning and teaching, and we are putting in place a suite of frameworks to support headteachers and their teachers in order to improve the quality of learning and teaching for all learners.

The first framework, which has just been launched in schools, is a framework for equity. Among the things that we will be asking schools to do—this has not happened yet—is to understand their own equity profile, so that we can set authority and school stretch aims. There will be professional learning, support and challenge going along with that.

Ruth Maguire: That is coming up in the future.

Dr Foley: I was brought in to my authority specifically to deal with the poverty-related issues in the classroom, so I am coming at it from a

different angle to Linda Lees. We already have in place a large suite of interventions in the classroom; I was brought in to look specifically at what we can do about the rest of the social environment in terms of the attainment challenge. At one presentation I was at recently, I heard an estimate that 15 per cent of the attainment gap is to do with things that happen inside the classroom and 85 per cent is to do with other sociological issues. The other issues are why I was brought in. If the committee would like it, I can get the detail about what we are doing and its impact. I am sure that that is available. Unfortunately, I am just not particularly qualified to answer the question, to be honest.

Ruth Maguire: Both approaches are really important. It would be interesting to receive that information. Thank you.

Tavish Scott: I have a question for all of you, but particularly for someone who is a performance analyst. Can you give me three examples of how you measure achievement? We had a discussion about it earlier—I do not know whether you were in the room then. The committee is interested in how we do that, given that it is one of the biggest challenges in education policy. Do you measure it and, if so, how?

Dr Foley: Unfortunately, I have been in my current job for only a week, so it is not something that I am particularly abreast of. I am still dealing with the club 365 initiative and so on right at this minute.

Tavish Scott: Do you plan to measure it?

Dr Foley: I know what we are trying to do. We are trying to incorporate more qualitative analysis into what we are doing with measurement. We are going to be using the benchmarking tools to try to improve our performance. Unfortunately, I do not have the detail on that. I am happy to get it to you.

Tavish Scott: That would be great. Do the other councils have any measurements?

John Butcher: The real answer to that is we have a whole suite—

Tavish Scott: Give me three. I do not want a whole suite; I just want three.

John Butcher: Okay, I will give you three. You heard about the importance of outdoor education. We are one of the authorities that is lucky enough to have an outdoor education resource—ours is on the island of Arran. Everybody gets an outdoor education experience, plus a certification for being part of that. That is fully recognised and is really valued by those children and their parents. We measure the number of children who take part in the Duke of Edinburgh award programme. We also measure the number of children who are involved with the Outward Bound Trust. We pick up on the numbers of people who take part in a whole suite of things such as the John Muir awards and external college courses as well as aspects of community involvement, as we recognise that that involves a range of wider achievements for children.

Tavish Scott: Could you give the committee some details of that in writing, with specific regard to how you measure achievement?

John Butcher: Yes, we can gather some of that for you.

Tavish Scott: What does Edinburgh do?

Linda Lees: There is always the question of whether we value what we measure or we measure what we value. We perhaps need to shift some of the dialogue and start to think about what we value so that we can ensure that we are measuring it.

There is some measurement around accredited awards, youth achievement awards and so on but we need to consider wider achievement slightly differently. Outdoor learning is certainly an issue in that regard. There are accredited awards that relate to that but, again, the actual individual achievement that young people might experience and be able to draw upon is not talked about quite enough across the sectors.

I would also suggest that there are issues around learning instrumental music. There is a poverty issue around that as well, as some authorities charge for instrumental music instruction and others do not. Learning an instrument is not an easy thing to do, and the achievements that are involved in young people standing up and playing an instrument can be measured through the SQA qualifications and diplomas from the Royal Conservatoire. However, there is also the sense of achievement that you get when you just stand up and play an instrument in front of your peers and get positive feedback on that. It is an area that needs a lot of debate.

Tavish Scott: I totally agree but, if I have got your job title right, Ms Lees, you are the lifelong learning strategic manager, so I suppose that it is part of your job to come up with a better way of giving your elected members authoritative advice about how all of those informal education and other measures are working to deliver achievement.

Linda Lees: Yes. My job has changed fairly recently and I have been quite involved with community learning and development, particularly with regard to inspection. One of the things that we are recognising that we have not done so well, and are definitely looking to improve on, is how we measure wider achievement within our lifelong learning service and how that is shared with

schools, and also how some of what is captured within schools is shared. Certainly, we have noticed situations where young people are doing achievement awards out of school but that is not being captured within schools. At the moment, a lot of the measuring is done through schools, and we need to improve the dialogue between the learning that takes place out of school and in school. That is something we are working on.

Ross Greer: I would like to come back to the cost of the school day. We have heard numerous examples of the impact of not just the obvious costs—the cost of uniforms, blazers, braiding, appropriate footwear, physical education kit and so on—but also of the smaller costs that are still problematic. For example, on non-uniform days, pupils have to bring collection money.

I am interested in where the decisions are ultimately made on those issues, from the local authorities' perspective. There is mention in the papers around guidance given to headteachers. I am looking for information from you about where the balance is. Who ultimately makes the decision? What is the difference between a local authority instructing schools to make sure that they are poverty-proofed and giving appropriate guidance to headteachers with the intention that the headteachers will, of their own volition, implement it?

Linda Lees: The 1 in 5—raising awareness of child poverty project, which was launched in 2015, used a lot of evidence and research to think about how we can set up focus groups, training programmes and training-for-trainers programmes, and provide support and guidance for schools. We have launched a number of publications, the first of which was "Top Tips for Schools".

The approach involves not only thinking about swap shops and so on but also thinking about how to use language slightly differently so that you are not inadvertently using language that can stigmatise. I do not have the exact figures, but quite a number of our secondary schools and a number of our primary schools have been involved in that training. Many teachers and third sector partners across the city have been involved in conferences. We have delivered a number of train-the-trainers programmes, and I think that about 19 high schools and 57 primary schools have a named person who is responsible for raising awareness in the school and among the staff of child poverty. That publication and "Making Education Equal for All", another 1 in 5 publication, are being linked to other elements of planning, such as children's services plans.

We are ensuring that our schools understand the kind of language to use as well as giving them lots of ideas about what they can do to help reduce the costs of the school day.

Ross Greer: Are you finding that the guidance and support is being consistently implemented in the schools that you are working with? Is there any inconsistency among the 19 and the 57 that you mentioned?

Linda Lees: I am not directly involved in delivering the training. It is being evaluated, but I would say that it is being well used. Anecdotally, there is good feedback and there are some statistics that I do not have in front of me at the moment but can share with you.

Ross Greer: Thank you.

Dr Foley: I thought that Linda Lees's paper on this issue was excellent, and we gave some good guidance on it. It is something that we are looking at.

We have an officer member working group within the council that deals specifically with poverty proofing and the cost of the school day. It involves the trade unions, councillors and officers like me, and it is out of that that several of our initiatives have been launched.

We took an early decision that we were going to deal with period poverty—that was before it was in the programme for government. We have the club 365 initiative, and we have also run a number of other initiatives on a smaller scale. We are looking to launch some training in conjunction with the Child Poverty Action Group, because it is about to bring out a toolkit for dealing with this that is going to involve teachers, pupils and parents in thinking these issues through.

We and the EIS conducted a survey—it was based on an EIS document that I cannot remember the name of—that found that there was a lot of evidence of good practice in schools. Some great things are going on. One school decided to reduce the stigma of poverty by re-branding the use of second-hand uniforms—which can be quite stigmatising—as a sort of green, eco-friendly initiative. We started to pick up small things like that.

North Lanarkshire, we do not need to say, has problems of deprivation across the board. There are teachers who have years of experience in dealing with these things and some people deal with them tremendously well, but they are dealing with them on an ad hoc basis. Through our process, we are trying to get all those examples of good practice together and generalise them across the board.

A lot of people are uncertain about a lot of issues. They deal with the problems every day but, if you think that someone is suffering from hunger, do you necessarily want to refer them to a food bank or a social worker or anything like that? That is a very sensitive thing to do because, clearly,

some people take from that an implication that you are saying that they are not able to look after their children or whatever. Therefore, we need some guidance on teaching the teachers who might be less experienced with these issues how to deal with them. That is partly going to be done by bringing in people such as the Child Poverty Action Group but, as I said, we need to recognise what we already know, even though we do not know that we know it. There are good things happening and we want to get those across to people as much as possible.

John Butcher: To answer Mr Greer's original question, the issue in my local authority area is that, unfortunately, poverty is an everyday part of life. I do not necessarily need to instruct any of my headteachers to be able to be sympathetic to the poverty that exists in their communities. They all know it. They see it every day. They touch it. They smell it. They feel it. They experience it every day. They are aware of the cost of the school day for children and young people. It goes across everything that you talked about, from uniforms to attending trips and whatever else. We try to minimise that and support that in every way that we can. We do not necessarily need to be directive in that regard.

12:15

As is the case in my colleagues' areas, my local authority area has an anti-poverty strategy, which we call the fair for all strategy. It aims to deal with the consequences of poverty for all of North Ayrshire's residents, and it includes economic strategies, work on mental health and wellbeing and partnership work with our integrated health and social care partners. It also includes work that we do around children and young people, and that has led to the development of an innovative children's services plan in North Ayrshire, which we would encourage you to read. It is written from the perspective of young people and it makes a series of promises to those young people and their families about what we can and cannot achieve and what their expectations of us should be. That is an interesting way of approaching the issue.

The issue is not just about producing those documents; it is about transferring the plan into actions, and I think that our schools and our communities are trying really hard to do that. We were the first authority to introduce a strategy to tackle period poverty—all our secondary schools, including our public-private partnership schools, have free sanitary products, and we were the first to do that. We are working hard to do these things.

Linda Lees: Across Edinburgh, a number of teachers were reflecting that they did not necessarily know what information to pass on to parents when they were asking about poverty, so a document with information about financial support and where to go for it has been created. It has been given to every school, and can be handed out to parents. We put a welfare officer into one of our clusters and they have been giving appointments to families within all the schools in that cluster. The 47 families that have been involved in accessing appointments have maximised their income to the tune of around £150,000 across all the families. That is an important piece of information for schools that is having an impact.

Dr Foley: There is a role for other services in our council, with regard to issues such as the financial inclusion side of things. We have done some great work in reducing the number of food bank referrals, which has been cut substantially in the space of a couple of years. That was done by ensuring that, before someone is referred, an attempt is made to try to maximise their income first by making them aware of the benefits that they are entitled to. There is a danger that food banks will become a permanent part of our welfare state, and that is something that a lot of people would like to avoid.

Gillian Martin: I am very interested in what James Foley just said about how North Lanarkshire has tackled period poverty. You perhaps know that I have been campaigning on that ever since I was elected. In my area of Aberdeenshire, we have hidden poverty, and stigmatisation has been mentioned; indeed, all the witnesses have said that teachers and local authorities are keenly aware of that. In my area, poverty is harder to recognise. When it comes to period poverty and the provision of products, how important is that young girls do not have to put themselves out there and ask for products because the products are freely available? I know that that you have prioritised that.

Dr Foley: Absolutely. We are dealing with a double stigma: there is all the stigma around poverty that we know exists already, and then we have the taboo subject of women's reproductive health, which is a major problem as well. For us, it is not just that the products will arrive; we will also introduce education for the schools, for teachers, for parents and for everyone else about how this is normal and not something that should be seen as a problem or as unsanitary or whatever. We want the policy to change attitudes and values as well as provide for the very extreme examples. Obviously, there are extreme examples—you have probably seen the film "I, Daniel Blake", and there was a terrible case in that film that was based on real, reported instances.

Gillian Martin: In North Lanarkshire schools, is it the case that the products are available in the

bathrooms and that people do not have to ask a teacher or a nurse for them?

Dr Foley: One hundred per cent.

Gillian Martin: Have you had any problems with people misusing the service?

Dr Foley: We will introduce the service at the beginning of June. The instruction will be that the products are to be freely available in baskets. We considered other delivery models, such as free vending machines, but we eventually decided that baskets would be the least stigmatising option, particularly for transgender people, for example. We wanted to keep things as open as possible. We 100 per cent do not want to have a situation where people have to go and ask for the products.

John Butcher: We already have these products in all our secondary schools; we have had them for about eight months now. To answer Ms Martin's question, there was some misuse. We went through a significant amount of sanitary products in the first week or two, and then it settled down. There was a novelty value—all children explore things. We have vending machines that are free to use, with a range of sanitary products. As I have said, they are non-stigmatising. The products are in the toilets, and people go and get them when they want them. It has been a terrific success in our schools, and I would encourage other local authorities to do exactly the same thing.

Mary Fee: I wanted to ask about PEF. In our evidence sessions, we have heard some evidence on different uses of PEF, from buying school supplies to the example that we heard this morning of purchasing police officers to patrol the campus, which is not something that we would want to encourage in any way. We also heard this morning that PEF could be used more innovatively for work with other educators and the third sector to help wider learning and raise attainment. Is there any evidence from your local authorities that that is happening? Do you encourage that innovative use of PEF in your authorities? If you do, can you give us examples of where it has worked?

John Butcher: On the issue of the campus officers, which we have heard quite a bit about this morning, I would be the first to say that I think my colleague was referring to my authority, as we have campus officers in some of our schools. I want to clear up some of the—

Mary Fee: Was PEF used to provide those officers?

John Butcher: Some of those schools chose to use part of their PEF to purchase some campus officers; the rest is funded by Police Scotland. That is the schools' choice.

We heard a lot of evidence from the third sector about breaking down barriers and encouraging partnerships, and one key partnership is with Police Scotland. It is about breaking down some of the barriers between Police Scotland, local authorities and children and young people.

Mary Fee: I will interrupt you very briefly. Perhaps in your response you could make it clear how the school evidenced using PEF to provide campus officers as something that would raise attainment, given that that is what PEF is for.

John Butcher: The bottom line is that campus officers do not patrol schools—they do not wander about the school in their uniforms. They are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh's awards—campus officers take some of those clubs—and in the wider achievements that Mr Scott asked a question about earlier. They are involved fully in the life of the school. They encourage young people to be part of the school and to get into school in the morning. They work with parents to break down the barriers between the police and schools, and they encourage parents to send their children to school to get that involvement. There is a long history of campus officers both in Glasgow and in my authority. They are not there to police the schools; they are there to be an absolutely key partner in the schools.

Commander Main, who is the divisional commander in Ayrshire, is working really hard to make policing in Ayrshire trauma informed, which is about understanding adverse childhood experiences. Every police officer in Ayrshire will understand the impact of adverse childhood experiences on children, so when they are working in schools with young people and with their families, they will achieve policing that is more constructive, more engaging and more productive and they will gain intelligence. That is a fundamental part of the importance of the partnership in that initiative.

Mary Fee: I can understand what you say about breaking down barriers, but I genuinely struggle to see how having officers in a school can raise attainment.

The Convener: Can we just concentrate on one aspect of PEF? It seems that headteachers use PEF for all sorts of different things, and it is not for us to pick one that some people might not like.

John Butcher: PEF is used for a whole range of things. The guidance allows headteachers to be innovative, and they should be innovative in how they use their PEF. They can use it in any way they choose that will help them target young people from the lower SIMD deciles who require support to improve attainment and achievement. That has included the wider use of community-based resources; new involvement in community

learning and development; the involvement of youth workers; and buying in school counselling sessions and bringing in additional curricular resources to support health and wellbeing. PEF is used for a plethora of things, but it is all used appropriately by headteachers. They have discretion and choice in using it for their own particular circumstances in their own communities.

Mary Fee: Are there other examples where PEF has been used in an innovative way to raise attainment?

Linda Lees: A number of schools in Edinburgh are using their PEF very innovatively. One example that I am sure our attainment adviser could share with the committee involves a primary school in Wester Hailes where the head has really got to know her community. She has taken a very creative approach by giving her children a wide range of what might be described as middle-class experiences, but she has always tied them back to learning and teaching, and to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The experiences that she brings into her school involve arts and cultural organisations, outdoor learning and counsellors—a whole range of different professionals. Some of that is done in negotiation with the local authority because we sometimes play a quality assurance role in relation to which organisations will really deliver exactly what that headteacher needs. Rather than this being a very binary thing between the school and an outside provider, there is an element of negotiation with the local authority as well. Certainly, the impact on attainment in that school—I do not have the figures, but I am sure they could be provided—has been a very interesting example of using PEF well to bring about very different experiences that can be linked directly to learning and teaching for those children.

Dr Foley: I was brought in specifically to deal with the cost of the school day initiatives. A lot of the PEF initiatives that are fed back to me tend to be relatively small-scale things that are based on such initiatives. For example, headteachers buy in spare uniforms and gym kits, or run small-scale lunch or breakfast clubs. We are undertaking a review, which I will be involved in, of our best examples of best practice when it comes to PEF. I am happy to share that with the committee once it is published.

People have shared with me their anxieties about how exactly schools are allowed to spend PEF, the procurement frameworks and so on—things that exert some psychological pressure. I do not know whether anything can be done about that. I just wanted to share that.

The Convener: On that last point, Dr Foley, the procurement issue has come up quite a lot in relation to all the ways that PEF can be spent. We have been told on a number of occasions that it cannot be used to hire teachers, for example, but the fact is that PEF can be used for that. We were also told that there are obstacles with procurement and that small schools cannot work together to buy in services, but then we were told that they can. It seems that what is stopping those things is not the rules but the guidance from the local authorities. That is the feedback we have been getting. Why is that happening, and why are local authorities working in different ways?

John Butcher: I have heard all those things as well. The fact is that you can get whatever teachers you want using PEF; the difficulty for some authorities is the lack of teachers. You can get PSAs or whatever you want with PEF. There should not be a barrier.

There are some procurement rules around purchasing from the third sector colleagues who gave evidence earlier, for example. That has to be done by procurement. In my own authority, schools are clubbing together to make bids that procurement will support, and procurement is going out of its way to support those bids. Sometimes, that is bit of a slow process, but they are getting to grips with that now.

One of the fundamental issues around PEF that was never considered when it started was that, unlike social work, for example, which has procured services from the third sector for years and years and has relationships with Aberlour, Barnardo's and whatever else, education has no history of procurement. There was an assumption when PEF came in that suddenly all our headteachers would know how to procure. That knowledge does not exist, so it will take a little bit of time to work our way through that. In my own authority, procurement is working hard to support our headteachers. We have given them very little guidance, other than to say, "Be imaginative and get what you think you need to close the attainment gap".

12:30

The Convener: That is interesting to hear. Does anybody else have any comment on that?

Linda Lees: Edinburgh did two things when PEF first came in. First, we looked at equity and raising attainment in learning and teaching, and we brought in speakers such as Sue Ellis to speak about that. Secondly, we looked very carefully at the human resources and procurement issues, and provided guidance and support for headteachers about the things that they were less familiar with. Those were two strands of our work when PEF was introduced.

Liz Smith: We had a very interesting discussion in the informal session this morning about the value of breakfast clubs, because evidence from

early learning is very much that breakfast is the important meal of the day for many youngsters. Would your local authorities be able to provide us with some examples of the success of breakfast clubs? That would be very helpful.

John Butcher: The short answer is yes. It has long been established that having something to eat when you get up in the morning is part of that readiness to learn.

Liz Smith: If we could see the evidence, that would be very helpful. Thank you.

John Butcher: Yes.

The Convener: Thank you for your evidence this morning.

Meeting closed at 12:32.

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