

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday 3 September 2003
(*Morning*)

Session 2

£5.00

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2003.

Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to the Licensing Division,
Her Majesty's Stationery Office, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ
Fax 01603 723000, which is administering the copyright on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate
Body.

Produced and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by The
Stationery Office Ltd.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office is independent of and separate from the company now
trading as The Stationery Office Ltd, which is responsible for printing and publishing
Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body publications.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 3 September 2003

| | Col. |
|--|-------------|
| INTERESTS | 29 |
| DRAFT EDUCATION (ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING) (SCOTLAND) BILL | 30 |
| PETITION | 51 |
| Early-years Education and Child Care (PE523) | 51 |
| SCHOOL TRANSPORT GUIDELINES | 54 |
| WORK PROGRAMME | 56 |

EDUCATION COMMITTEE **3rd Meeting 2003, Session 2**

CONVENER

*Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab)

Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab)

*Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP)

*Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP)

*Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP)

*Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)

*Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

John Lincoln (Audit Scotland)

David Pia (Audit Scotland)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Susan Duffy

ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

LOCATION

Committee Room 1

Scottish Parliament Education Committee

Wednesday 3 September 2003

(Morning)

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 09:30*]

Interests

The Convener (Robert Brown): Good morning everyone and welcome to the Education Committee's first meeting after the recess. As we are in public session, I ask people to switch off their mobile phones, pagers and anything else that makes nasty noises.

The first item on the agenda is declaration of interests, which will give a starring role to Rosemary Byrne, as everybody else has made their declaration.

Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP): My only relevant interest is membership of the Educational Institute of Scotland.

Draft Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill

09:31

The Convener: The second item of business—the first was very quick—is evidence from Audit Scotland in connection with pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill. We expect the bill to be introduced around late October, but the committee was anxious to hear from witnesses and to get a flavour of the issues involved before it took formal evidence in the autumn.

We are therefore pleased to welcome representatives from Audit Scotland. I invite David Pia and John Lincoln to spend a few minutes giving us an introduction to the approach to and the findings of the inquiry that led to the report "Moving to mainstream"—members have a copy of the report and the summary report. After the introductory remarks, members may ask questions.

David Pia (Audit Scotland): Good morning. I am acting director of performance audit at Audit Scotland. With me is John Lincoln, who is a project manager in Audit Scotland and was the lead officer for the study that led to the report. I will say a few introductory words about the report, after which I will ask John Lincoln to summarise its main findings and recommendations. We will of course be glad to answer questions and to enter into a discussion with the committee about the report's contents.

"Moving to mainstream", which is a joint report by the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission, was published in May 2003. The study examined the potential impact of recent legislation on the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools and looked at how well those children's needs could be met in mainstream schools. The study was carried out in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education.

The report is what we call a baseline report. It provides a detailed examination of the subject and identifies areas for improvement. It contains 42 recommendations for action by councils, national health service bodies and the Scottish Executive. In two to three years' time, Audit Scotland will carry out a follow-up study, which will assess the improvements that those accountable bodies have made.

Like all reports by the Auditor General, the report was laid before the Scottish Parliament for consideration by the Parliament's Audit

Committee. The Audit Committee does not normally inquire further at that stage into subjects that are covered in baseline reports; it waits for the outcome of the follow-up work and then exercises its powers to seek evidence from accountable officers. However, the Audit Committee intends to inquire further into one aspect of the report, which is the analysis of how the Parliament and the Scottish Executive consider the relevant costs when bills and amendments are scrutinised. That is an important procedural point, which is no doubt of interest to members of the committee. However, as the Audit Committee has not yet decided on the exact form of its inquiry, it would not be appropriate for us today to engage in discussion about that matter. We are happy to discuss all other aspects of the report's contents in relation to the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools. I ask my colleague John Lincoln to summarise the report's main findings and conclusions.

John Lincoln (Audit Scotland): The presumption of mainstreaming was introduced by the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 and came into force in August 2003. In addition, the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002 requires councils, over time, to improve access to education for pupils with disabilities. Those are the two main pieces of legislation that will influence mainstreaming.

We considered how many pupils with special educational needs are likely to be educated in mainstream schools in the future. We also looked at how much the changes—to school buildings, for example—are likely to cost and at whether councils and other agencies are in a position to deliver such changes. HMIE undertook to consider how well the needs of children and young people with special educational needs can be met in mainstream schools.

It is worth pointing out at this stage that we did not look at the record-of-needs system when we undertook the study. We knew that the Executive wanted to introduce legislation and was conducting research and consulting on the system, so we decided that it was not worth duplicating that work.

I will outline our main findings. First, we found that there are 44,000 children and young people in Scotland who have special educational needs—that is about one in 20 of the school population. Spending on special educational needs is about £388 million. Most of that considerable expenditure is by education authorities; the remainder comes from social work departments or the NHS or through specific grants from the Scottish Executive.

Secondly, we expect between 2,000 and 5,000 more children to be educated in mainstream schools in future. That represents an increase of about 9 per cent on the current figure and could cost councils an extra £38 million to £121 million per year. The main reason why that estimate is so broad is the difficulty in predicting the number of pupils with special educational needs who will be included in mainstream schools in future and in predicting the changes to school buildings that will be required.

Thirdly, we found that, where pupils and teachers are well supported, all pupils can benefit from the mainstreaming of pupils with special educational needs. However, mainstreaming does not work for every pupil and published attainment information might not fully reflect the success of inclusive schools. Lastly, we found that planning for the change is patchy among councils. NHS bodies are waiting for councils to take the lead.

The report makes 42 recommendations to help councils, the NHS and others to prepare for the changes. I will outline the most important of those recommendations. Councils and NHS bodies should work together to plan for the changes. There is a need to examine mainstreaming options and to consult parents, head teachers and the voluntary sector. Councils must consider the needs of pupils with special educational needs when they build schools or refurbish existing ones. They must also ensure that senior teaching staff have enough time and resources to support pupils with SEN and that all staff are properly trained. The health service must ensure that it has the capacity to meet the needs of pupils with SEN. In particular, it needs to look at therapy services, child and adolescent mental health services and school nursing services. The Scottish Executive and councils should consider together how best to reflect the success of inclusive schools in published attainment information.

We also found that the Parliament needs better information on what bills and amendments might cost. For example, the financial memorandum to the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 was vague and the financial resolution that accompanied the bill was very broad in scope. Critically, the mainstreaming option that was inserted into the bill by amendment at stage 2 was not costed. As we said, the Parliament's Audit Committee is pursuing that point. That is all that we wish to say by way of an opening statement. We will be glad to answer any questions.

The Convener: Thank you. The report contained many interesting insights that will help the committee's work. A number of things certainly struck a chord with me. I will kick off by making one or two points, before throwing open the

discussion to the committee. We have until about half past 10 on this item.

We must look primarily not to the Audit Committee's inquiry, but to the draft Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill as a whole, which will come to the Education Committee. You mentioned the potential effects of the bill, which is obviously in draft form at the moment, but can you give us guidance on the impact of the different definitions involved in the change from the record-of-needs system to the new arrangements? We are particularly interested in pupil numbers and costings.

John Lincoln: We did not look at the potential changes to the record-of-needs system, because we did not want to muddy the waters by issuing a report on that at the same time as the Executive would be publishing draft legislation. However, although the bill will broaden the scope of the definitions—the term “additional support needs” is perhaps broader than “special educational needs”—the needs of those pupils who will be included should have been considered and met in the past, even though that might not have been reflected in the figures.

The Convener: Can you give us guidance on how we might be able to get a handle on the issue as we come to consider the bill? The Parliament imposes on us a duty to do so, but that is a bit like the question, “How long is a piece of string?”

John Lincoln: If the committee wants to consider the cost of changes, it might examine likely staffing changes, the cost of establishing a tribunal system and the number of pupils who would be expected to be involved. The committee might examine the processes now and how they will change as a result of the bill. Through evidence, the committee might try to get a handle on the numbers that are involved and to concentrate on the large numbers.

The Convener: Before I throw the meeting open to committee members, I will touch on public-private partnerships and other capital projects. You were fairly critical of how councils consulted user interests and took account of the need to provide therapy rooms. Will you give us more of a feel for that? How quickly could we get to grips with that? Has any follow-up work been done since the report was produced? Are there priorities for councils' approaches or action that the Scottish Executive can take?

John Lincoln: Since we produced the report, the Executive has published a report on the strategies for building new schools and for school improvements. That contains guidance on the need for consultation processes. It is an overarching strategic document that says how councils should manage the process. Underneath

that, guidance is needed on specifics. The difficult questions are in the detail, such as how big a classroom should be, how big classroom doors should be and what floor surfaces should be used. Guidance is needed on the detailed consideration of what is required for pupils with special educational needs.

The Convener: Is greater flexibility needed over classroom size changes for reduced class sizes, for example? Is the general point that more flexibility is needed and that schools should have more space?

John Lincoln: Space and flexibility relate partly to access for pupils with disabilities. At the moment, the issues that tend to be considered relate more to disability access, whereas many pupils with special needs have sensory impairment—visual or hearing impairment. Their needs, which are perhaps less obvious, must be considered more. In doing that, people with relevant expertise need to be consulted, but when we undertook the study, we found that that consultation was not happening.

Ms Byrne: On the capital projects, have you found in your review of what has been happening that many parents find themselves without choice, because special units and special schools are closing for new-build projects? Have you found that, because of the policy of moving such provision into the main stream, many local authorities are closing the door to parents' opportunities to have a choice of other special educational settings? I am thinking about children with hearing impairments, children with Asperger's syndrome or those on the autistic spectrum and pupils with communication disorders, whom it might not always be possible to include in the main stream. I understand that many parents feel that they have no choices.

09:45

John Lincoln: We have found that mainstreaming does not suit every pupil. Of pupils with the same sort of impairment—visual impairment, for example—some flourished in mainstream schools, while others did not. There needs to be space for pupils who do not flourish in mainstream schools.

We found that parents' choice was not always between a special school and a mainstream school. Parents wanted a school that would meet their child's needs, regardless of whether it was a special school or a mainstream school. Services in mainstream schools need to be built up before there is any closure of special schools, as that will enable parents to see the benefits of mainstream schools. That said, we found that there will always be a role in the system for special schools.

Ms Byrne: A pupil's parents recently had to go to court to get the placing that the pupil required. That is just one case that I am aware of—I am certain that it is not the only such case. It is unfortunate that even though we have a good policy and we encourage mainstreaming, we are closing the door to other options. We need to examine carefully the options that we leave. Although I acknowledge what the witnesses have said, I think that those issues will re-emerge. More parents and pupils will be unhappy about their limited choice.

John Lincoln: We mentioned in the report that councils need to conduct an option appraisal. They must examine their existing resources and those that they will need in the future. To do that, they will need to consult parents, teachers and the voluntary sector on what will be required in the light of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000. When considering their options, councils should conduct an option appraisal and consult with the relevant groups at an early stage.

The Convener: The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002 requires councils to produce strategies. Have you been involved in a survey of those strategies?

John Lincoln: We have not. Our time scale for the research made that very difficult. The deadline for producing replies was March 2003.

The Convener: I did not mean a survey for the purposes of your study—I meant a more general survey. Is Audit Scotland or another body involved in assessing the suitability of the strategies?

John Lincoln: Audit Scotland is not involved in that.

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): I echo the sentiment that the report was extremely helpful in enabling us to understand the present situation and the issues that all the councils and the Parliament face when considering the implications of mainstreaming and the draft Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill.

I was struck by the statistics on page 5 of the report's summary that show the discrepancy between the percentages of the school population in special schools in different authority areas. For example, more than 2.5 per cent of the school population in the Glasgow City Council area is in special schools. The situation in rural authorities is more difficult, although even in some other urban authorities the percentage is much lower. We would expect the figures to come down following the implementation of the new legislation.

Of more concern are the statistics on educational expenditure on children with special educational needs on page 6 of the summary.

Those statistics, which show the cost per pupil, reveal the variation between authorities. For example, in Clackmannanshire, the cost is almost £700 whereas, in East Renfrewshire, it is less than £300.

Obviously, there are concerns about capital costs and PPPs and whether schools will have to be built in order to accommodate mainstreamed pupils. However, with regard to the revenue issues, do you think that, when we are considering legislation, we should examine such discrepancies? Given that one of your recommendations is that the Scottish Executive should ensure that the General Teaching Council considers how all teachers can be equipped to deal with mainstreaming, do you find such discrepancies alarming? Do you expect the mainstreaming legislation that has already been passed and the bill that will be passed shortly to result in a levelling out of that expenditure?

John Lincoln: There are huge variations between councils in expenditure on children and young people in special schools. To a large extent, the reason for that is historical. Special needs pupils in rural areas have always gone to their local schools because of the long travelling time to special schools whereas, in areas where there are special schools—such as Edinburgh and Glasgow, which have a lot of special schools because they were the centres of regional authorities before local government reorganisation—special needs pupils tend to go to those schools.

Fiona Hyslop: Do you expect that situation to change?

John Lincoln: I expect it to change slowly, over time. We do not expect pupils to be taken out of special schools and put into mainstream schools. We expect mainstreaming to happen when pupils go to primary school. Obviously, as the change will take place over some time, there will be a transitional cost arising from having both mainstream and special schools operating in parallel.

Fiona Hyslop: That is an important point, given the concern that Rosemary Byrne raised about choice. You are saying that there would be an evolutionary pattern of change rather than pupils who attend special schools being told to move to mainstream schools.

John Lincoln: On the point about expenditure on children and young people with special educational needs, the chart that you have before you shows the expenditure per pupil based on all pupils, not only those with special educational needs. In other parts of the report, we talk about expenditure on pupils who are assessed as having special educational needs in the school census and we also examine expenditure per pupil with a

record of needs. Basically, there was no relation between the expenditure on those three groups. A council that had a high expenditure per pupil based on all pupils might have a low expenditure when one looks at figures based only on expenditure on pupils with records of needs. The question of expenditure needs to be raised, but information on the number of pupils with special needs—whether the figures are based on a survey of all pupils or only those with records of needs—is inconsistent among councils and that inconsistency makes it difficult to find a pattern. Although certain councils might seem to have high expenditure, it is difficult to get behind the figures. We were not able to tease all those issues out in this report. That is a job for the future.

The Convener: There is a suggestion that a balance might be arrived at, with some of the children with severe physical problems remaining in special schools, while a number of other categories of children shift into the main stream. That is beginning to emerge clearly from the study.

John Lincoln: The legislation came into effect only in August this year. The number of pupils in special schools has not really changed over the past eight years or so. One would expect the balance to change over time and in particular, one would expect the number of pupils with moderate learning difficulties—who make up the majority of pupils—to change. One would expect those pupils to be the first pupils to go into mainstream schools. Educating pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties is more difficult and expensive. Any changes in that area might take longer.

Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP): Would you develop what you said about differences between councils? Is there a need for a road map for the introduction of mainstreaming? It is clear that there are major differences in various council areas—you highlighted those in your report. Is there a requirement for level-playing-field funding so that mainstreaming can be introduced throughout the country relatively fairly? One could envisage some councils going for a minimalist position to start off with in their options appraisal, with one base or feeder primary school for a particular secondary school or one secondary school in the area becoming the base for special needs education as their first step. Other authorities might move forward in a much broader way. Is there a need for a road map? In the report, I did not get a notion anywhere of a time scale for a major culture change. Such a change will not happen overnight, will it?

John Lincoln: That is true—it will not. As the legislation had not been enacted and councils did not have strategies for change, it was difficult for us to examine councils' time scales.

A level playing field would be difficult. It would require us to consider what each council required as well as its resources. There might be scope in some councils to review their school provision and make savings by capital sales, but that scope might not be available in other areas. In such an overall national study, it is difficult to say what a level playing field would be.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): Thank you for your evidence, which has been helpful.

The "Moving to mainstream" report quotes the financial memorandum to the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000:

"there will be few additional costs that arise as a direct result of the Bill. Those that do arise will tend to fall on local authorities."

Given the scale of the problem, is that unrealistic? The report states that the percentage of pupils with special educational needs in the City of Edinburgh Council area is about 11 per cent, whereas only 2 per cent of pupils in the East Dunbartonshire Council area have special educational needs. As there are such huge variations, will there be problems with ensuring that the whole system works smoothly, unless there is additional expenditure?

John Lincoln: The huge variations to which you refer between the percentage of children with special educational needs in the City of Edinburgh Council area and other council areas relate to how the school census is completed. We have pointed out that there needs to be greater scrutiny and more guidance on how forms are completed so that there can be a better and more consistent base for considering such issues.

Fiona Hyslop: Do those figures appear because, for example, in the Lothians, a child is registered as an Edinburgh pupil if they live in West Lothian and travel to Edinburgh for schooling, which affects the spend per council?

John Lincoln: In the study, we examined the number of pupils who travel in and out of each council area and we took account of the expenditure that moved between councils, so the percentages per council of children in special schools should relate to children who live in those council areas.

10:00

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have one short question. In practice, will implementation of the inclusions policy involve targeting schools, or will it apply to all schools?

John Lincoln: Councils can implement the policy in various ways. There is no case law on what constitutes a local school, so it is difficult to

say whether all schools, or one feeder primary school for each secondary school, for example, will need to be adapted for pupils with special needs. Councils might want each primary school to specialise in one type of special educational need. For example, one primary school might specialise in pupils with hearing or visual impairment, and another might specialise in another matter. That might help to reduce the cost of mainstreaming, while providing specialist support for pupils in each school. Councils could take any of those paths, depending on what they considered to be the best way forward.

We point out the differences between having one feeder primary that accommodates all pupils with special needs and a secondary school that provides for all pupils with special needs, and having all primary schools accommodating pupils with special needs and one secondary school accommodating those pupils. A variety of options is available and the costs vary between them. It is up to councils to base decisions on their option appraisals.

David Pia: It is difficult—in fact, it is impossible—for us to conclude which approach is more effective. We can consider the costs of different approaches, but one big difficulty is that people often have different definitions of what they want from the education system. That is manifestly reflected in parental choice. Parents define what they want in different ways.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Do you have anything to add about the speed of implementing the inclusions policy?

John Lincoln: Implementation will happen over a long time scale rather than a short one. Councils need to build up provision and the number of trained teaching and non-teaching staff. That will take time. We have examined the costing for training staff over five years. The time scale for bringing buildings up to standard is probably longer than that. For some pupils with special educational needs—perhaps children with moderate learning difficulties—provision can be made in mainstream schools fairly quickly. However, for pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties, a fairly long period is involved.

It must be taken into account that councils are at different points on the spectrum. Some rural councils are most of the way down the line in implementing the presumption of mainstreaming, whereas some urban councils have a fair way to go. That is a result of the historical position when the legislation came into force and of the fact that special skills tended to be concentrated in urban councils because of the larger populations and the economies of scale in those areas. The situation is different for each council.

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): I want to consider the lessons that we need to learn from the fact that some of those issues were not identified when the legislation was being considered. Obviously, there is an issue relating to the fact that the mainstreaming presumption came in at the end of stage 1 and the parliamentary system did not seem to be able to cope with analysing the financial consequences of that.

Your estimate of the additional cost varies from £38 million to £121 million. We are about to consider a bill that will replace the category of special educational needs with the broader category of additional support needs, which will include pupils with temporary needs arising from bereavement, gifted children, children of asylum seekers and so on. You said that you had not considered the record of needs, but we are considering the replacement of the record of needs with the co-ordinated support plan, which will lead to increased rights for parents and pupils.

What are the questions that we need to ask if we are properly to analyse the costs of such changes to councils and the Scottish Executive, given that there is such a large variation in the estimate of the additional cost to the council in relation to a system that has already been operating for a while?

The Convener: That is the \$64,000 question.

John Lincoln: It is fair to say that the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 was passed by the Parliament at an early stage and that there has been a steep learning curve. Because of that, and the fact that the amendment that brought in the presumption of mainstreaming came in at a late stage, the financial memorandum was fairly vague. That situation has changed now, and the Finance Committee is examining financial memorandums in a lot more detail. That will be helpful and probably means that the issues surrounding the analysing of the cost of the legislation will have been tackled by now. There will still be issues about amendments that are made to the bill at a late stage, but it is up to yourselves to decide how best to deal with that.

Dr Murray: Because I am also on the Finance Committee, I am aware that that responsibility is being taken seriously.

The Education Committee needs to ensure that the Executive has a reasonably firm idea of what it considers to be additional support needs and how widely the net will be cast. Obviously, if a child is identified as having support needs, there will be an expectation that those support needs will be met. That means that this committee has to interrogate the Executive about how well it has analysed the terminology and what plans it has to meet the

expectations that will be raised by the change in the system.

David Pia: First of all, you should be looking for some analysis of the unit cost of various aspects of the work that will be done. Secondly, you will have to make some assumptions about numbers—that is the tricky bit. The best that anyone will be able to do is to produce a range of numbers. The range in our report from £38 million to £121 million reflects the difficulty in predicting the numbers, but there are assumptions that can be made and you should examine quite closely what the implications of making certain assumptions are.

In our report, we go through the issues that go into the making of those assumptions, such as the number of placing requests. As John Lincoln said, the difficulty is the absence of case law. It is impossible to predict what will happen as a result of decisions that are made by local authorities about exclusions from mainstreaming. Nevertheless, some assumptions can be made and the implications of those assumptions could be explored.

The Convener: To what extent are people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and those with specific learning difficulties, picked up? Those disabilities are less obvious than some other disabilities. Did you get a feel for how successful the system was at catching everyone at an early stage? Was that brought into the figures on which you based your analysis?

John Lincoln: We found that children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties would be picked up in the figures only if they had a record of needs. The people to whom we talked said that such pupils tend to get a record of needs and to be picked up only if they are in a special school. We acknowledge that the majority of those pupils are probably in mainstream schools and are probably not picked up by the figures. That is an issue. The new bill might be better at picking up such children through definition.

The Convener: Wendy Alexander might have a question.

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): Elaine Murray covered my point, so I will pass.

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): Equity of funding is one of the big issues. It was mentioned in the context of the range of funding for special educational needs across councils. A parent can have far greater support for their child, depending on where they are in Scotland and on which school their child attends. As well as special schools and mainstream schools, there are national schools that are financed by the Executive. Those schools all have different costs. When that is translated into a cost per pupil, we

find that the supposed choice that parents face is not a fair one. Depending on where someone lives, they could have a far better choice. People do not have equal choice for their children. You do not seem to have given that issue central attention, although I could be missing something.

John Lincoln: In relation to national schools, a resource will always tend to be used by people in the local area. The balance of a decision involves weighing up the travelling time against the facilities that the school provides.

We did not consider issues such as equity of funding. Although the Scottish Executive examined issues to do with deprivation and special educational needs in its review of deprivation, it is very difficult to make a correlation between deprivation and particular special needs with the information that we have. The evidence on social, emotional and behavioural difficulties might go the other way. Autistic pupils might tend to be concentrated in better-off areas. With special educational needs, we are dealing with a range of conditions. It is difficult to obtain good evidence to indicate what the balance of funding should be across councils.

Mr Macintosh: I wonder whether there is room for more work here. One of the arguments that councillors would make is that when working out the financial calculations for educating a child with special educational needs in a mainstream school, that child should count as two children on the school roll, because of the extra costs that are involved. It is difficult to obtain a financial basis for the figures without firm information. Is no such information available, or is it simply that the variation makes things impossible?

John Lincoln: The variation and the lack of information make it difficult to compare funding in councils at a national level. Each council has various methods for distributing resources among schools. We saw good examples of councils being able to take into account the needs of individual pupils when assessing the overall budget for a school. The distribution of resources to reflect need happens locally.

Mr Macintosh: Is there potential for having comparable figures or is that pretty impossible, because the fact that we are talking about such an individualised task means that we will never have standardised figures—figures that we can compare across authorities in Scotland? “Never” is a difficult word to use; perhaps I should have put it to you that it is “unlikely” that we could obtain such figures.

John Lincoln: We examined figures on pupils with records of needs, pupils with individualised educational programmes and pupils whom head teachers had assessed as part of the school

census as having special educational needs. The figures varied so much among councils that it was difficult to do anything with them. In the report, we recommended that the Executive and councils should examine ways to improve the quality of that information. Once that has been done, perhaps we will be able to answer your question, which raises a difficulty.

The Convener: We have a little time, so members could ask more questions, but first, I will ask about a slightly different matter that is important to the bill—the support services from health boards and other such groups. Page 51 of your report says that many therapists thought that they would be taken out of the front line of dealing with children and that they would become

“more advisory and less ‘hands on’.”

The report also suggests that health boards have not got to grips with the issue—for example, strategies are not well developed. We hear about many shortages of psychologists and other such staff. Will you give us more of a flavour of that? The issue is important, if we are to move towards more mainstreaming and the arrangements under the bill.

10:15

John Lincoln: There were shortages of therapists—particularly occupational therapists and physiotherapists—to work with pupils with special needs across the board. The situation with speech and language therapy was not of the same order, because that therapy has a different arrangement, under which councils fund national health service speech and language therapists. The difficulties relate to occupational therapy and physiotherapy. Child and adolescent mental health services were another difficult matter that we identified.

The Convener: Are some of those specialists employed by councils as part of their education services, and some employed by health boards? Does a pattern emerge?

John Lincoln: Physiotherapists and occupational therapists tend to be funded and employed by the health service. In the main, councils fund speech and language therapy, but it is provided by the health service. Councils pay the health service for the speech and language therapy service and they fund that service to varying degrees, so the level of health service speech and language therapy varies among councils.

Because the funding from councils varied, the health service was particularly concerned that speech and language therapy—a national service from the NHS—was provided to different degrees

in different council areas. The health service was concerned that it could provide a better service to some councils.

The Convener: Am I right to say that that therapy is also supplied by voluntary sector organisations, to an extent?

John Lincoln: Yes.

The Convener: Is that significant?

John Lincoln: We did not collect information on speech and language therapy services that are provided by voluntary agencies.

Mr Macintosh: Did you consider management issues? I know that the education service in a local authority does not manage the service that is delivered in schools. If a language therapist or occupational therapist enters a school, that therapist is accountable to a health service manager and not to an education department, which can lead to difficulties. Have you examined that?

John Lincoln: We did not consider that in detail. Speech and language therapists and physiotherapists told us that their ability to do their job depended largely on a school's ethos and its willingness to be flexible and to recognise the contribution that they could make.

Mr Macintosh: Did you ask the schools about management issues?

John Lincoln: We surveyed schools on whether they were happy with the amount of physiotherapy, but did not survey or talk to individual schools about management issues involving physiotherapy.

Ms Byrne: There is so much that I would like to say about the matter. I am greatly concerned about the integration of services, which is the issue that has just been discussed. This is not what I initially set out to say, but I have to add to what has just been said. At the moment, services are patchy throughout the country. In some local authority areas it is difficult to get speech therapists, while in others the problem is getting occupational therapists. In addition, there are too many bosses and managers, because health boards, education authorities and voluntary sectors are all involved.

That brings me to the point that I was going to make. Under the draft Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill the record of needs is going and the co-ordinated support plan is coming in. It seems to me that we are leaving local authorities in a position whereby they will have to make decisions about resourcing—the allocation of places to pupils and where pupils will go—while having a shortage of resources. Further, unlike the record of needs, nothing is embedded

legally. I am not saying that the record of needs was the best thing that we had.

The Convener: Sorry to interrupt, Rosemary, but can you perhaps direct questions to the witness?

Ms Byrne: Yes, I am coming to that. My concern is that there will continue to be a patchy service throughout the country. Was consideration given to bringing together the agencies that supply support to schools—for example, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy—under one umbrella when the moving into mainstream plan was being put together? If that was not considered, why was that? Further, was consideration given to the extra work load that teaching and auxiliary staff would have to take on board?

The McCrone agreement means that there will be less top management and less middle management in some of our schools and it is people from those areas who will process the different meetings, the integration of services, the co-ordinated support plans, the IEPs and so on. It seems to me that we are moving into all that at a difficult time for teaching. I wonder how much of what I referred to has been considered.

John Lincoln: On the issue of patchy as distinct from integrated services, we assessed how good councils' relationships were with health boards and other agencies. Some councils were obviously better than others in that regard. In the best councils we found examples of good practice. For example, in one council there was a manager in charge of children's services and the health board and the education and social work departments jointly funded that post. That person had responsibilities across the board and so was able, for example, to put together a protocol for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders that covered all agencies within the area.

That sort of joint working across particular agencies is the model to look towards. Councils' responsibility for community planning can probably assist joint working because they could have many jointly funded posts. We could consider that as one way forward. I am sure that there are also other ways of better integrating services at a local level.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In your report, you make it clear that there will be increased expenditure on the grounds of capital costs, transitional costs of rationalisation, revenue costs and the costs of providing NHS therapy services. Earlier, you referred to losing special school economies of scale, which are particularly important for NHS services. My question is simple. Given the fact that implementing the bill is going to involve a great deal of expenditure, do you foresee

the policy being carried out in an evolutionary way over a long time?

John Lincoln: Yes, one would imagine that it would be carried out in an evolutionary way rather than through a big bang approach.

Dr Murray: Rosemary Byrne talked about Government initiatives. I am trying to link issues together. In your report, you make the point that the changing children's services fund was perhaps a better, more holistic initiative than some of the initiatives that had gone before. However, there is still an issue about the timing of announcements of new funding, which are often made towards the end of the year rather than at a time when councils can work with them and plan for service development.

Have you had any response from the Scottish Executive on your recommendation that some of the initiatives should be announced at the same time as the grant-aided expenditure announcements are made? Are you also suggesting that they should be part of the general GAE, or are you suggesting that they should still be ring fenced for specific, inclusive policy developments?

John Lincoln: All the councils to which we spoke welcomed the initiatives and the new money, although some of them would have preferred to have had longer to plan for the initiatives. Councils want as long as possible to plan and want initiatives such as those relating to the presumption of mainstreaming to be co-ordinated, so that initiatives in education are matched with initiatives in the health service to support them. We have spoken to the Scottish Executive since it received our report, and it is producing an action plan that involves responding to all the recommendations in the report.

Fiona Hyslop: I have a question on a point of policy. We are going to have to predict the expenditure and ask the Executive to follow the figures through so that it knows exactly how many people will be affected and how many pupils will need support so that the money can follow the pupils. In the report, you make an interesting point about the difference between the number of boys with records of needs and the number of girls with records of needs. One thing that we can predict is the gender distribution and the number of boys and girls who will be affected by the bill. You say that the Executive should research whether the difference in the number of boys and girls identified as having special education needs is the result of genuine differences in the levels of support that are required. Can you explain that in more detail? That will have an impact on the prediction of numbers and expenditure.

John Lincoln: When we compiled the report, we found that two thirds of pupils with special educational needs and records of needs were boys. A similar proportion of pupils with IEPs were boys. There seems to be a preponderance of boys among pupils with special educational needs. The health service people on our advisory groups said that one would expect more boys to have special needs because of specific vulnerabilities and conditions in boys. The question in our minds was: how many more boys would we expect to have special needs? Nobody knew. We want to know whether the current position is correct or whether boys are being over-identified or under-identified in some regards.

One of the Executive's reports suggested that, because boys may be more boisterous, their needs might be identified more easily than those of girls. However, we do not know whether that is the case. We believe that some research should be carried out or that research that has already been done should be examined to establish whether that gender imbalance is correct. The situation at the moment might be acceptable, but we do not know.

The Convener: Thank you—the committee is indebted to you for the time that you have given us this morning and in particular for the report, from which we are sure to draw much interesting information and many lessons. I dare say that we will meet you again in the future, what with one thing and another.

Before we take a short break, are there any issues there that members want to flag up? We will see the *Official Report* in due course, which will feed in to our general work, but there was a lot of good stuff there that we can consider further.

10:30

Ms Alexander: The Executive makes the point that there is no obligation for the financial memorandum to be upgraded as we go along. I do not want to trespass on the remit of the Audit Committee, but that seems to be a terrible structural weakness. We should at least tell the Audit Committee that we would appreciate its taking a view on that at the earliest opportunity. It was suggested that we should expect the Executive to have the capability to cost options and to fine tune that appraisal process. Obviously, there are questions about all the issues that we have discussed, for example who is in and who is out, and common definitions. Given the diversity of provision, the Executive should have the capability of costing the options at authority level.

Our responsibility may be to put on the record to the Executive, in generic terms, that we expect it to have that capability internally and to be willing

to share the associated costs with the authorities. Failure to do so, or unwillingness to model the options, means that the Executive will simply replicate all the problems of the past. What is clear is that the prior regime's resting in best value simply did not deliver the measures that are outlined in paragraph 6 of the report summary. There is only so much that legislation can do. This is partly about processes, and we can compel local authorities to put processes into place only if they have some sense of the associated costs.

We should have early indications of whether the Executive will have that capability in-house, so that as we proceed through stage 3 the parliamentary process is informed of the financial implications.

The Convener: We should be careful about spurious accuracy in this field, because there are many variables. Fiona Hyslop will remember the issues surrounding the Homelessness (Scotland) Bill in the Social Justice Committee in the previous session. The difficulties are understandable to a degree. On the other hand, there is perhaps a feeling that the Executive can go a bit further in giving us guidance.

Ms Alexander: I agree. The answer is not to legislate for something that is about processes. The temptation in committees, because we are responsible for legislation, is to try to legislate for what are essentially good practice or standards. What we are really doing is encouraging the Executive to be capable of telling us how long it will take for processes to be in place and what the cost might be. We will hopefully then exercise a degree of restraint and not try to enshrine in legislation that which is more appropriately held in guidelines, for example.

The Convener: A good bit of that is to do with time scales; for example, how long it will take to adapt buildings, recruit staff and so on. Much of the flavour would come from such information. Are you suggesting formally that we write to the Audit Committee?

Ms Alexander: There are two issues. First, we could write to the Audit Committee to say that the point about an obligation to update the financial memorandum as amendments are agreed to is pertinent. We realise that that is the Audit Committee's area, but it is very important to us and will continue to be so in this case and regarding education bills as a whole. Secondly, we could ask the Executive whether it expects us to resist some of the more ambitious demands of parents who think that money follows legislation. I am not quite sure how that can be done—perhaps it can be done informally through officials. There will be a degree of triangulation throughout the process of getting the legislative framework right, but our level of confidence in the Executive's

proposals will be rooted in part in whether we feel that it has taken criticisms seriously and, in so far as it has the capacity to cost the measures that are likely to emerge, overcome them.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I support very strongly what Wendy Alexander has said. The more the legislation smacks of compulsion, the less successful it will be. If it tunes into a gradual evolutionary process, it will be much more acceptable.

The Convener: I detect that the committee supports that general approach. Do we agree to write to the Audit Committee about the matter? The minister reads or is advised of the *Official Report* of our meetings, so it is not necessary for us to raise the matter with him formally.

Mr Macintosh: I agree whole-heartedly. This is not just about the costing of changes to Government policy or legislation. It strikes me that the lack of transparency in funding special educational needs throughout Scotland is not helpful to anyone. I know from experience that that adds to the frustration that many parents feel. There is huge underlying frustration and there have been many battles between parents and authorities. Too often, those battles relate to what are defined as reasonable expectations for people's children. The fact that it was impossible for Audit Scotland to assess what represents an equitable funding settlement for any child illuminates that.

Although this is a local authority matter, it needs to be driven by the Executive. The Executive should try to produce not a standardised funding formula for Scotland, but an approach—perhaps guidelines—that allows everyone who is involved, especially parents, to assess what is a reasonable expectation for children, what would be a reasonable funding settlement and what choices are available. We must introduce some transparency to the system; it is particularly opaque. The inequities that exist between authorities are compounded by a lack of financial information.

The Convener: I have two observations. First, the report seemed to suggest that the requirement for special needs support was not linked to the usual deprivation factors. It is a unit cost across authorities. That issue is relevant to local authority funding.

Secondly, because it is inevitable that a good deal of the spending will be mainstreamed and inclusive, to sort it out separately might be an artificial exercise. I exclude from that spending on specialised computers and equipment and on certain staff needs. We must seek sensible information rather than spurious accuracy that

does not tell us anything. We will return to many of these issues in due course.

I suspend the meeting for five minutes so that members may have a cup of tea and a comfort break.

10:37

Meeting suspended.

10:48

On resuming—

Petition

Early-years Education and Child Care (PE523)

The Convener: We resume the public part of our meeting. We have finished taking evidence from Audit Scotland.

Item 3 is on petition PE523, on early-years learning, which was submitted by Ms Carol Ball on behalf of UNISON Scotland's nursery nurses working group. The petition, which has been referred to us by the Public Petitions Committee, is fairly ancient now—it is a hangover from the previous Parliament. A fair amount of work was done on it by that committee. The issue today is for us not to deal with the petition as such, but to decide the approach that we will take towards it. We can accept the referral and agree the action that we will take, we can refer the petition back to the Public Petitions Committee and say that we do not have time to deal with it, or we can say that the petition has no merit. That is the range of options that are open to us.

I am conscious of our work programme. We have to concentrate on the draft Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill. In the first instance, I am minded to ask the Executive for an update on where it stands on the petition. The petition goes back to June 2002, and I think that the Executive's response was in October 2002. There has been the election and the new programme for government since then.

Do members feel that the proper way to proceed is to write to the Executive? I am also conscious that in the background there is an industrial dispute on some of the issues that lie behind the petition, the entrails of which we do not want to get into. I anticipate that the committee will wish to examine early-years learning in due course, but time constraints might make that difficult at the moment. Do members have any thoughts on that? Are members happy for us to write to the Executive in the first instance?

Mr Macintosh: There are issues for us to consider, but given our work programme we will not have the opportunity to address them for some time. It is debateable whether the petition would be our priority right now anyway. However, I would like to receive an update from the Executive.

I would also like to receive an update from the Department of Trade and Industry on sector skills councils. The abolition of the national training organisations was supposed to be followed by the

setting up of sector skills councils. I am surprised that a decision has not yet been reached on the Early Years National Training Organisation and the National Training Organisation for Sport, Recreation and Allied Occupations. I would like some information on why a decision has not been reached, and whether a sector skills council is being set up. If so, we have less to worry about. Although the Scottish Executive feeds into the process, I believe that the decision will be taken by the UK Government, so we would have to ask it where the process is at.

The Convener: Yes. We want to take as holistic a view as we can.

Ms Byrne: I would like us to accept the referral and consider further the issues.

The Convener: The issue is whether we do that now or wait for the response from the Executive before taking a final view. We are not saying that the petition is worthless—quite the opposite, because there is much merit to it—but we should probably defer a decision on what to do until we have heard from the Executive. Is that reasonable?

Ms Byrne: Will that take long? The petition has been around for a long time.

The Convener: It has, but I do not think that it will take long to get an Executive response. What is the usual time scale? Is it two or three weeks, or is it longer than that? We would certainly get a response in this early autumn period. Are you happy with that, Fiona?

Fiona Hyslop: Yes. I am keen that we do something with the petition, because at one of our previous meetings we identified that we wanted to examine early child care and the period leading to primary school. We may be able to use the petition as a way of investigating that area. Bearing in mind our work load, we may wish a reporter to monitor the situation. However, in the first instance we must hear from the Executive. I take the same view as Rosemary Byrne; I would like us to do something with the petition because that would inform future work, in particular if we want to examine the three to 18 curriculum, for example.

The Convener: That is crucial. Members may recall that Ian Jenkins produced a report for the Education, Culture and Sport committee, with a view to investigating the matter. There is general sympathy for the committee to do that, but it is a question of fitting it into a suitable slot in our work programme so that we can do it properly and at a time that is most effective. With the addition of Ken Macintosh's suggestion that we write to the DTI, do members agree to ask the Executive for information? Do we have to accept the petition formally? What do we do with the petition in formal terms?

Martin Verity (Clerk): I suggest that at this stage you are agreeing to accept the referral and agreeing on the action that the committee will take. In the light of any response from the Executive, the committee would then decide whether to consider the petition further or to refer it back to the Public Petitions Committee.

The Convener: Would that be acceptable to members?

Members *indicated agreement.*

School Transport Guidelines

10:55

The Convener: Item 4 on our agenda is school transport guidelines, in which Fiona Hyslop is particularly interested. We agreed previously to find out more about the issue. I think that the clerk has more information for us.

Martin Verity: I understand that the guidelines have been issued; however, that did not happen in time for them to be put on the agenda for this meeting. The minister's letter has been circulated to members.

The Convener: I suggest that we have a proper discussion of the issue when we have the guidelines before us. We will put it on the agenda of one of our next meetings.

Fiona Hyslop: I agree with that suggestion, but I am somewhat concerned. The Executive has produced the guidelines only as a result of a petition that came to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee in the previous session. That committee discussed the issue and asked the Executive for guidelines more than a year ago. It is a gross discourtesy that the Executive did not ensure that we were given copies of the guidelines when they were published.

I would like the committee to consider the matter because it has been rumbling on for some time. I am pleased that the guidelines have been published but, without knowing their contents, we cannot discuss them. It is a bit off that although our predecessor committee initiated the change in the guidelines, the Executive did not have the courtesy to give us a copy when they were published.

The Convener: In fairness, the guidelines were issued only three or four days ago, so that point is perhaps not altogether valid. I am also conscious of the sheer volume of guidelines and bits of information that the Executive has to deal with—I saw that during the passage of the Housing (Scotland) Bill. I therefore have some sympathy with the Executive. However, we can discuss the issue at our next meeting or the one after, depending on our work load.

Ms Alexander: When we discuss the issue, whether next week or the week after, I would appreciate a brief accompanying note from the clerks that considers the philosophy underlying school transport. Reduction of congestion of our roads that is caused by parents' taking their kids to school is a fundamental issue. Public transport or school transport offers a safe alternative. Health considerations also arise: if children never walk to school it is not good for their health. Those are

fundamental policy issues and I would like to know what has informed the Executive's thinking for the new guidelines. Would it be possible to have a brief note—from someone who is familiar with the subject—that says whether such concerns were any part of the Executive's considerations? That would be helpful. Factors to do with health, congestion and safety might feature more prominently than they did when the previous guidelines were drawn up.

The Convener: Do you envisage receiving information from the Executive on that?

Ms Alexander: No—from an expert adviser or from the Scottish Parliament information centre. I would like to have a brief note so that we can understand the first principles behind the objectives of the guidelines. We could then discuss whether the guidelines meet those objectives.

The Convener: That seems reasonable.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I would like us to cover the issue of safety. I understand that there is among our young people a higher incidence of accidents than among young people in some other European countries. We should cover that aspect of the guidelines on school transport.

Dr Murray: It is difficult to discuss the guidelines without having seen them. In the light of discussions that took place in the previous session, it would be useful to know more about the costs to local authorities of implementing the guidelines. It is all very well having guidelines but, if local authorities do not have the money to implement them, we will not move any further on.

The Convener: We will provide a note for members—perhaps not for the next meeting but certainly in the immediate future.

Work Programme

11:00

The Convener: The final item is the work programme. In large measure, the programme results from discussions that the committee had at its away day, when we tried to anticipate and fit together matters such as subordinate legislation and the requirements of the Executive. The work programme document has been produced by the clerks in the light of those discussions.

Perhaps Martin Verity will update us on one point. In paragraph 5, the document refers to the civic participation event that the committee is keen to organise, particularly in the light of the sensitive draft Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill.

Martin Verity: A bid would need to go to the Conveners Group. We hope to draft a paper of proposals that could go to the Conveners Group after it is examined by the committee next week.

The Convener: We are trying to resolve technical difficulties, but the committee is keen to organise the event in reasonable time so that we can make use of it in the context of considering the bill.

Is there any disagreement with the content of the paper? Have you any thoughts about it, Rosemary? I am conscious that you were not at the away day.

Ms Byrne: At some point, we need a progress report on the implementation of the McCrone recommendations, which have implications for the draft bill—both in relation to mainstream education and the wider implications in education. It would be useful to know whether the time scales are being met and how the job-sizing exercise impacts on staffing.

The Convener: It is a big issue upon which the committee touched in its discussions at the away day. We were of the view that, at a suitable point, we would want to consider how successful McCrone is and whether there are any problems to address. We do not know whether this is the right time to do that. You mentioned the link to the bill. I would appreciate other thoughts about that. We have problems with doing anything lengthy at this point.

Dr Murray: In the initial stage, we could ask the Executive to give us a written report on progress to date. We could then consider what we have to do after that.

The Convener: My only slight concern about that is whether a brief report—or even a lengthy report—would be suitable for the subject.

Elements of assessment, where we are going and what problems are emerging would be involved. I wonder whether we could get all that together readily at this point.

Fiona Hyslop: We must anticipate the time scale for the roll-out of McCrone. We have a duty and a responsibility to take stock of McCrone. That could take place in the spring—somewhere between January and April might be an appropriate time. It would not be amiss to discuss with the Executive when it expects to be in place certain parts of the programme about which it could reasonably give us a progress report. I have another point to make on the generalities of the paper.

The Convener: It might be sensible to ask the Executive at official level what it is doing to monitor and assess McCrone and to respond to that at a future meeting, with a view to examining the matter later in more detail.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It should fit into the key priorities as you suggest.

Fiona Hyslop: My other point is on curriculum issues 9 and 10, which we discussed at length at the away day. I understand that the Executive will initiate continuing discussion about the three to 18 curriculum in the coming year. We have our national priorities and we have had the national education debate. We have a duty to monitor what will happen as far as the Executive is concerned, but at the same time—this point is not in the paper and I have given a suggested form of wording to the clerks—we should engage in parallel thinking about the longer-term implications of the shape of education and a suitable curriculum for the next 10 to 20 years.

The Convener: That is right; the committee took the view that we should take a dual-track approach to all of that. Perhaps the report of the meeting could take that on board.

When I was looking at the timetable, one thing that struck me was that although the bill is not coming out until the end of October or thereabouts, we are a little bit thin on the number of detailed meetings we can have about it between now and then. There are things that we have to do over the forthcoming weeks and there must be committee meetings to accommodate them. For various reasons to do with budget timetables we cannot readily squash all those meetings into one. However, there might be scope for one of the September meetings to include an evidence-hearing session of some other kind.

I am quite anxious to give a bit of attention to the young people agenda. I wonder whether members might be interested in doing a panel session to get thoughts and contributions from uniformed organisations and the informal youth sector about

their approach, their problems, their contribution and how they relate to mainstream education. It would not be intended as an inquiry, but would be intended to give the committee a bit of information on, and flavour of, those aspects. I am quite keen on that idea. There might be other suggestions but we could probably slot in an hour and a half or a couple of hours on a session of that sort. That would not commit us to a longer-term inquiry at this point.

Mr Macintosh: I am not averse to that idea. If we wanted to take a more focused approach to the subject, we could consider it in the context of our work on antisocial behaviour, not as an alternative to our work on antisocial behaviour, but as consideration of the positive contributions that local authorities and other bodies are making through providing facilities and opportunities for young people.

I am conscious that a lot of work is done for pre-teen children but that when children reach their teenage years there is a drop in the number of things to do. It would be useful to focus on that.

Fiona Hyslop: What seems to be missing is that we wanted to consider the Executive's approach to discipline and behaviour in schools and I thought we were going to try to deal with that fairly early. I suggest that we write to the minister to ask for an update on the Executive's position on behaviour and discipline issues. Perhaps we could then have a balance and recognise that a lot of good work and initiatives are taking place with young people and their organisations. That could be a parallel session to the one that the convener has suggested and it would allow him to do the stocktake that he proposes.

The Convener: School discipline is referred to in paragraph 11 of the work programme paper and we are writing to the minister on that. I suspect that it might not fit into the time we have available before the autumn recess. We have a limited number of meetings before the break. I am not sure how quickly the Executive will be able to reply to that letter, but I assume it will take two or three weeks. I am not sure that it would fit into the timetable but I am not averse to the idea.

Do we have reasonable agreement on the immediate format of the timetable? I should add that we are trying to fix up some visits. What date did we decide?

Martin Verity: We are trying to arrange a visit to a school in Glasgow for the week after next on 17 September. I will confirm that to members.

The Convener: That will be at the time that the committee would normally meet.

Dr Murray: On visits, I thought that we had at the away day given some consideration to the idea

of two or three members' going to different places instead of all the members of the committee going to the same place. We could then report back and we would get a wider spectrum of information.

The Convener: That is the point that I was just about to make. I thought that we were going to visit several schools.

Martin Verity: We think that we have a visit to one school arranged and we are looking into the possibility of another so that more members can go to more facilities at the same time.

The Convener: As it happens, I am not available on that day, so there will be six of you. That might give a reasonable division of three members visiting each of the two schools. That is the kind of format we have in mind. Again, I am relying on my experience on the Social Justice Committee, but that format worked very well for that committee and allowed us to go on a wider range of visits.

Mr Macintosh: There are eight of us so there will be four on each visit.

The Convener: I had the wrong numbers.

Are there any other points on the work programme? Do the clerks need any other formal decisions?

Martin Verity: Can it be assumed that the committee endorses the paper on the work programme?

The Convener: Yes, with the addition of our suggestions.

Meeting closed at 11:10.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

No proofs of the *Official Report* can be supplied. Members who want to suggest corrections for the archive edition should mark them clearly in the daily edition, and send it to the Official Report, 375 High Street, Edinburgh EH99 1SP. Suggested corrections in any other form cannot be accepted.

The deadline for corrections to this edition is:

Friday 12 September 2003

Members who want reprints of their speeches (within one month of the date of publication) may obtain request forms and further details from the Central Distribution Office, the Document Supply Centre or the Official Report.

PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

DAILY EDITIONS

Single copies: £5

Meetings of the Parliament annual subscriptions: £350.00

The archive edition of the *Official Report* of meetings of the Parliament, written answers and public meetings of committees will be published on CD-ROM.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT, compiled by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre, contains details of past and forthcoming business and of the work of committees and gives general information on legislation and other parliamentary activity.

Single copies: £3.75

Special issue price: £5

Annual subscriptions: £150.00

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

Single copies: £3.75

Annual subscriptions: £150.00

Standing orders will be accepted at the Document Supply Centre.

Published in Edinburgh by The Stationery Office Limited and available from:

The Stationery Office Bookshop
71 Lothian Road
Edinburgh EH3 9AZ
0131 228 4181 Fax 0131 622 7017

The Stationery Office Bookshops at:
123 Kingsway, London WC2B 6PQ
Tel 020 7242 6393 Fax 020 7242 6394
68-69 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6AD
Tel 0121 236 9696 Fax 0121 236 9699
33 Wine Street, Bristol BS1 2BQ
Tel 01179 264306 Fax 01179 294515
9-21 Princess Street, Manchester M60 8AS
Tel 0161 834 7201 Fax 0161 833 0634
16 Arthur Street, Belfast BT1 4GD
Tel 028 9023 8451 Fax 028 9023 5401
The Stationery Office Oriel Bookshop,
18-19 High Street, Cardiff CF12BZ
Tel 029 2039 5548 Fax 029 2038 4347

The Stationery Office Scottish Parliament Documentation
Helpline may be able to assist with additional information
on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament,
their availability and cost:

Telephone orders and inquiries
0870 606 5566

Fax orders
0870 606 5588

The Scottish Parliament Shop
George IV Bridge
EH99 1SP
Telephone orders 0131 348 5412

RNID Typetalk calls welcome on
18001 0131 348 5412
Textphone 0131 348 3415

sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

www.scottish.parliament.uk

Accredited Agents
(see Yellow Pages)

and through good booksellers