

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday 8 October 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 8 October 2003

| | Col. |
|--|------|
| ITEM IN PRIVATE | 139 |
| SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION | 140 |
| Teachers' Superannuation (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2003 (SSI 2003/423)..... | 140 |
| YOUTH ORGANISATIONS | 141 |
| SCHOOL TRANSPORT GUIDELINES | 182 |

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

6th 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)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
Mr Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Rosie Kane (Glasgow) (SSP)
David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con)
Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Tom Boyle (The Boys Brigade)
Peter Crory (YMCA Scotland)
Jim Duffy (The Scout Association Scottish Council)
Simon Jaquet (YouthLink Scotland)
Benny Lawrie (Youth Sport Trust)
Christine Marr (Scottish Executive Finance and Central Services Department)
Liz Pitcairn (Girlguiding Scotland)
Allister Short (Youth Scotland)
Robert Watson (Lowland Reserve Forces and Cadets' Association)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Peter McGrath

ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

LOCATION

Committee Room 2

Scottish Parliament

Education Committee

Wednesday 8 October 2003

(Morning)

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 09:34*]

Item in Private

The Convener (Robert Brown): I kick off this meeting of the Education Committee with an apology for starting slightly late. As we are in public session, I ask everyone to switch off their mobile phones and pagers so we do not get any nasty bleeps during the meeting.

We have quite a full agenda. Under item 1, I seek the committee's agreement to take in private item 5, which involves a follow-up paper on our previous consideration of the Scottish Executive's draft budget. The normal practice with items on committee reports is that they are taken in private. Are we agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Subordinate Legislation

Teachers' Superannuation (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2003 (SSI 2003/423)

09:35

The Convener: We move to the second item on the agenda, which is consideration of a piece of subordinate legislation. We are joined for this item by Christine Marr from the Scottish Executive Finance and Central Services Department, who looks a little isolated at the end of the table. The regulations are impenetrable—as always—and I ask Christine to spend a few moments explaining them to us.

Christine Marr (Scottish Executive Finance and Central Services Department): The Treasury funds all public service pensions, including teachers' pensions, and used to pay for increases in teachers' pensions from a separate budget. However, the Scottish teachers' superannuation scheme must now bear the costs of any such increase, which means that it is necessary to increase the rate of employers' contributions. Now that responsibility for bearing the cost of those increases lies with the scheme, the regulations introduce a new accounting procedure.

The Convener: It has been suggested that some outside organisations, such as independent schools, will incur extra costs because of the regulations.

Christine Marr: I understand that that suggestion has been made.

The Convener: Is that an issue?

Christine Marr: No. We have already been providing a free administration service for independent schools.

The Convener: As there are no more questions on this item, I ask the committee whether it wishes to do anything further with the regulations. They have been made under the negative procedure, which means that they will remain in force unless we take positive action to stop them. I do not think that there is any move to do that. Are members agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Youth Organisations

09:37

The Convener: Our third item is an evidence-taking session with youth organisations. We will take evidence from two panels, the first of which will be made up of witnesses from the uniformed organisations. Our second panel will feature witnesses from non-uniformed organisations.

The committee has received submissions from the various organisations. We are grateful for that input and are looking forward to hearing a little bit about your work, your problems and any further contribution that you might be able to make to the work of the Parliament and the Executive.

I assume that the witnesses will want to kick off with some introductory remarks. Who wants to go first?

Tom Boyle (The Boys Brigade): Before this morning's meeting, we agreed that I would speak first.

We welcome this opportunity to give evidence to the committee. Together, our organisations represent some 30,000 volunteers who work in all areas of Scotland. Each volunteer has been recruited, screened and trained to equip them for their voluntary role with young people. I represent the Boys Brigade, in which the volunteer provides the environment and gives time and attention to individuals and groups of boys to enable them to learn and develop as individuals. It is important to stress that volunteers carry out this work not for financial reward or because of moral or legal obligations, but because they want to. The adult-boy partnership is a very important aspect of the Boys Brigade. Both parties are present because they want to be and either can walk away at any time.

Operating in all local council areas, the Boys Brigade offers a friendly and stable environment where boys can meet adults and their peers to work, play and learn together. As individuals, they select the areas of non-formal education that they want to pursue within the various award schemes. Working together, they learn teamwork, become aware of their strengths and weaknesses and develop skills, knowledge and attitudes in a non-threatening environment. The aim of the brigade is that, through a progressive programme, every member should have opportunities, challenges and learning experiences to allow them to develop individually within their peer group. Although most of that valuable work is carried out within units, there is support from battalions and the national organisation that enhances opportunities and provides activities and events that are not available locally.

Boys who are in primary 2 and 3 learn through play. Boys who are in primary 4 and upwards learn about five different areas. They study their community and environment, what they offer them, and their role in the protection of and contribution to both. At senior level, they are taught not just about protecting their environment but about giving service to those who need support.

They all engage in a varied physical programme that advocates a healthy lifestyle and the avoidance of harmful substances, habits and actions that would compromise any healthy lifestyle. They attempt a variety of skills and activities, enabling them to choose the interests that they will follow later in life. Many adults can trace their interests and hobbies to the introduction they received from the BB.

The boys are all given a residential or camping experience and are introduced to a range of adventure activities that might or might not be something they want to carry on with in future. They all participate in worship and Christian education in a programme that is designed by the parent church.

To maintain our relevance in a boy's world, all programmes and materials are updated in a five-yearly cycle. Throughout their experience, the individual is developed personally within his peer group and community. Support is given throughout by volunteer leaders who, while they are working with the boys in their unit, build relationships with many parents through home visits, parents' evenings and annual displays.

Informal leadership training, where boys become group or activity leaders, is introduced at an early stage. Formal leadership training is offered to boys aged 15-plus, and for those aged 16-plus who aspire to BB leadership, there is officer cadet training, which is endorsed by the community education validation and endorsement unit, or CeVe. For all leaders, continuous training and lifelong learning are available and a mandatory five-year retraining programme is operated to update leaders and offer new skills and knowledge.

When the Boys Brigade was founded 120 years ago, it was decided that the word boy should have a capital B. In the computer age, that does not always happen, but the BB is still first for boys, and boys come first.

Liz Pitcairn (Girlguiding Scotland): Despite what my nameplate says, my name is Liz—not Sally—Pitcairn. My executive director is called Sally, but I am Liz.

I am the Scottish chief commissioner for Girlguiding Scotland. That means that I am the unpaid senior volunteer who leads our organisation and chairs the governing body. I will

introduce the committee to our organisation by sharing some highlights and talking about some of the areas in which members might be interested.

First, I will describe girlguiding in the 21st century. We are a robust, modern, progressive and dynamic organisation that has captured the interests of thousands of girls through our recently renewed programme and our very much updated image.

At the heart of all that we do is the girl—hence our new name, “Girlguiding”. To each of our members—there are 64,500 members in Scotland—we offer a wide range of opportunities and activities. We give them a chance to learn new skills and we offer personal self-development. They do all of that in a safe and enjoyable environment. We can offer any girl or young person in Scotland a truly generic youth-work experience in a clearly defined educational programme that can be a lifelong experience.

09:45

Guiding is underpinned by a distinct set of values. At our heart is caring for the individual and for one another as well as caring actively in the community through citizenship. Because we are a worldwide organisation with more than 10 million members, we encourage international and global citizenship. We encourage in our members a deep sense of responsibility to look after one another. Our guiding programme is about learning through sharing and, most important, through doing. We offer informal education in such a way as to equip individuals with lifelong learning and transferable skills.

Senior girls in the movement contribute widely to the consultative framework within Scotland. They are part of the Scottish Youth Parliament and sit on the British Youth Council. They are also involved in many initiatives, such as the take our daughters to work scheme, which is run by Girlguiding UK.

Girlguiding is, of course, totally inclusive. We are open to every faith and ethnic group, irrespective of culture and background. The 3,500 units throughout Scotland meet in every local authority area, so they cover the islands to the Borders. Where geographical distance makes it difficult for girls to meet, we offer the lone scheme through the internet or telephone links.

It is interesting to note that half the women born in Scotland have belonged to guiding at some point in time and that one in three eight-year-old girls is a brownie. Our popularity has never waned, so it is not surprising that we are the largest female voluntary organisation in Scotland and in the UK. As such, I suggest that we play a leading role in the provision of non-formal education. We have an extensive presence in society.

We have chosen to remain a girl-only environment because, although we encourage our girls to join the boys in mixed groups for special events, we have listened to what our members want. They have told us repeatedly that, although they like the boys, they want to retain the opportunity to develop by themselves in their own arena.

Girlguiding is active, alive and very popular, but it can exist only because of our 11,000 volunteers and 1,500 young leaders who give of their time week by week. The combined efforts of that volunteer group produce 1 million voluntary hours per year. That is equivalent to 550 full-time equivalent jobs, with a potential economic output of £16.5 million.

This year, for the first time, we decided in our annual census to gather information on waiting lists, which makes for interesting reading. In Edinburgh alone, we have 700 girls who are waiting to join guiding. In Scotland, we have 4,000 girls waiting. In the UK, the figure is 50,000.

At the moment, our resources cannot meet demand. That is because it is not easy being a volunteer in today's society—I know, because I am one. I am not paid to do the chief commissioner's job or to be a unit guider and care for the girls in a unit every week. It is hard for us females to hold down a job, care for the family, look after the home and run a unit. Our skills and responsibilities are rarely recognised. Sadly, at the moment, our volunteers face more and more compliance issues in a culture of increasing litigation and blame. I need to help my volunteers to equip themselves with training at no cost to them. We need resources to sustain our core programmes and recognition of the value of what we offer to our young people.

The final thought with which I would like to leave the committee is summed up by one aspect of our mission statement, which is to enable girls to reach their potential. Whether a girl comes into guiding for one year or for 10 years, she is challenged with new activities and given the space and opportunity to develop and widen her horizons. Surely that ethos complements and supplements our formal education programme, and leads ultimately to the overall education and development of our young people.

The Convener: Thank you very much. There were some stimulating thoughts in Liz Pitcairn's presentation. Does Jim Duffy want to go next?

Jim Duffy (The Scout Association Scottish Council): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the committee. I am particularly pleased that you have taken such an interest in non-formal education. The Scout Association contributed to the national education debate that took place in

the past year, as did many other organisations that are represented today, but we were disappointed at the relatively small recognition given to the role of non-formal education in the development of our young people in Scotland. Unfortunately, that seems to be reflected in the resourcing of our work too. I am sure that we will come back to that issue.

The Scout Association has operated since 1907. We are already gearing up to our centenary year in 2007. There are more than 37,000 members in Scotland, who are part of a worldwide movement with 28 million members in 216 countries. The international dimension of our work is very important to us and exciting and challenging to the young people with whom we work.

The Scout Association has not stood still. Our programme, uniform and various other aspects of our organisation have changed. Most recently, we introduced a complete new programme following the greatest review of our operational programme since the mid 1960s. MORI tells us that it was the biggest analytical exercise that it has ever undertaken because of the volume of responses that it had to handle from questionnaires that volunteers and young people throughout the United Kingdom completed. Following analysis of the responses, there were focus groups and various other opportunities for discussion and refinement, until we arrived at a new programme. The programme has age ranges of six to eight for our beavers, eight to 10 for cubs, 10 to 14 for scouts, 14 to 18 for explorer scouts and now a top age range of 18 to 25 for our scout network. Young people were to the fore in influencing the shape of that programme. In the final decision making, the weight given to the young people's responses to the design of the programme and to the consultation on the design of uniforms was very strong.

We operate in all 32 local authority areas in Scotland, as Girlguiding Scotland does. We support our 6,600 adult volunteers with a headquarters staff of eight. We supplement those staff with another 10 people who operate at three activity centres throughout the country, where we provide outdoor and environmental education opportunities, not only for our own members, but for many other organisations, such as schools. We are committed to ensuring that the values and strengths of our scout programme are available to as many young people as possible and not simply to our own members. We open up our resources to others, too.

It may surprise some members to learn that the Scout Association is one of the biggest co-educational youth work providers in Scotland. The organisation has been co-educational since 1991. We are increasing the number of girls who participate in our programme, but that is not in

competition with other organisations. We provide an alternative for girls and boys to choose.

We work on the principle that young people lead. The organisation is very much peer led. The patrol system that Baden-Powell introduced from the outset was intended to give young people the opportunity to lead other young people. We have a commitment to a voice for young people that requires us to have youth participation in all our committee structures at headquarters and we encourage our areas and districts throughout Scotland to do likewise.

For several years, we had the Scottish venture scout council, which provided our 15 to 20-year-olds with an opportunity to be part of decision making on policy for their age group and to influence policy for the organisation as a whole in Scotland. The Scottish Youth Parliament adopted that model when it wrote its constitution. Young people have been fairly influential in shaping that body for a youth voice throughout Scotland. The restructuring of our age ranges means that the venture scout council has disappeared and has been replaced by a scout network council that retains an active say for young people and young adults in the organisation's policies.

I will not say much more; my submission raises several issues. I highlight the issue that Liz Pitcairn raised—the crucial role that adult volunteers play. We cannot provide the service without adequately trained volunteers. We need resources to help us to undertake that training and to deal with the fact that demands on volunteers from the compliance agenda and other matters have increased significantly and have affected volunteering. Like Girlguiding Scotland, we have significant waiting lists of young people from throughout the country who want to join our organisation. We have insufficient volunteers to meet demand.

Robert Watson (Lowland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association): I represent three national UK youth organisations—the Sea Cadet Corps, which proudly boasts the longest continuous history of any British youth movement; the Army Cadet Force; and the Air Training Corps. Those organisations are aimed almost entirely at 13 to 18-year-olds, so they deal with a rather older group than the wider scope that Girlguiding Scotland and other organisations cover.

All three organisations are sponsored and funded largely by the Ministry of Defence through the three single services, so I may be fortunate compared with my partners on the panel. However, I stress that the Army Cadet Force is not a junior Army and that the organisations do not have a recruiting role. Each organisation is a national youth movement that the Ministry of Defence sponsors. The organisations take a mix

of boys and girls—young adults. About 27 per cent of our total strength consists of girls. I hasten to say, as an old fellow, that they frequently do much better than the boys, too.

The aim of all three organisations is best summed up as being to inspire young people to succeed in life in the spirit of service to their country and their communities, and to develop in them the qualities of responsible adulthood and good citizenship. That is a mouthful, but that is what we try to do. We do that by generating broad interests, although they are based on nautical, military or aviation backgrounds. Different aspects appeal to different youngsters and different adult leaders. A sea cadet unit often shares premises with an army cadet unit and sometimes units from all three cadet forces share. The forces draw from the same community, but they offer different interests.

10:00

I stress that the activities on offer are not all about flying, sailing or cadets moving through woods with camouflage cream on their faces. Such activities are important to the cadets, but we seek a much broader base of activity. Obviously, those who join the Air Training Corps are interested in aviation and seek the chance to fly. They can go on flying scholarships and obtain a private pilot's licence. We have three gliding centres in Scotland, with 14 gliders. All air cadets can gain a flying qualification.

The Air Training Corps and the Army Cadet Force are, respectively, the largest and second largest operating authorities worldwide for the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. Last year, more than 5,000 such awards were achieved across the three cadet movements and the army cadets gained more than 35 per cent of all the awards that were gained by voluntary youth organisations.

In the past two years, we have taken strongly to the BTEC first diploma in public service. About 1,900 cadets have entered the scheme, 564 have completed it and about 700 are about halfway through the programme. Of the cadets who completed the scheme, 18 gained a distinction and 143 gained a merit, and that was the first time that those levels were awarded nationally. A boy in Newcastle, having started with no qualifications, has now got through to university, which is a great achievement.

All cadets are encouraged to participate in a wide range of organised sports at every level, from novice to international or inter-service level. The sports include soccer, cross-country running, rugby, athletics, hockey and swimming. I am pleased to tell members that the Glasgow and

Lanarkshire battalion of the Army Cadet Force represented Scotland at the force's national soccer competition this year and won the senior and junior titles against the representatives from the south. The same battalion's girls' team won the national hockey competition.

Cadets also qualify in first aid with St. Andrew's Ambulance Association or British Red Cross qualifications. Many also gain adventure-training skills in activities such as rock climbing, canoeing and sailing. A large amount of cadets' time is spent in national and local fundraising and in community work.

Cadets have frequent opportunities for overseas visits, exchanges or expeditions, for most of which the cadets raise the funding. Those who watch the "Robot Wars" television programme should watch this year's final—I am not allowed to give the result in advance—when they will see the Air Training Corps local squadron who are about to go to the world championship.

One aspect that will be particularly interesting for members is our outreach programme, which started in England about nine years ago and which is supported by Home Office funding. The programme's aim is to help crime-vulnerable and socially disadvantaged young people to become better citizens. There are nine criteria for selecting young people for the programme including having been subject to police reprimand or warning, exclusion from school, truanting, behavioural problems, low achievement, lack of self-esteem and being socially excluded.

The programme consists of a discovery day, which is followed by a residential programme of up to three days that is run in partnership with local social work staff, schools and the police. Statistics suggest that, after nine months, there is significant improvement across the selection criteria for 40 per cent of those who have attended. Many of those young people have subsequently joined the cadets, but the aim is not to recruit them. We use our cadets to show youngsters from the same age group and background what they can achieve on the programme. Two Scottish Army Cadet Force units are running such programmes, which are funded by the Home Office. We want to expand the programme, but it is difficult to get money out of England.

I endorse what Liz Pitcairn said earlier about the difficulty of attracting and encouraging leaders because of the problems of health and safety issues in different environments. On the one side we want the nation to be involved and to take more exercise, and for people to challenge themselves. However, on the other hand, health and safety legislation and especially the media persecution that can occur can frighten many potential volunteers. I stress that without

increasing risk, we should find a balance and take some of that responsibility, which applies not only when people are out in the field or on the hills, but in their own hut or training area. That is a huge responsibility, and it frightens a lot of our potential volunteers who would like to do more. We are concerned about that.

The Convener: Thank you. I find it hugely encouraging and inspiring that so much positive and good work is being done. This morning, we want to examine the extent to which you are inhibited from doing what you do as well as you want and from drawing in more people. We also want to examine what we can do in our small way to help. The committee would like to ask a number of questions on different subjects.

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): I am conscious that I am going to ask a question that might attract four responses. I will ask Mr Duffy first. I seek an overall picture. Many of us will have stereotypes of the organisations and their memberships. Different pictures were painted. Liz Pitcairn's organisation has a healthy membership, as does the scouts, but are memberships in decline? What is the membership trend of youth organisations generally?

Jim Duffy: There has been some decline over the past few years, which was one of the issues that focused our minds on restructuring the programmes of the Scout Association. The year just past is the first in which the new programme has had some impact. The encouraging thing for us in our 2003 census is that, for the first time in a number of years, the number of members in the adolescent age group has remained static—it has not declined. That trend is probably being echoed in other organisations. You may find that with YouthLink Scotland and others today.

The decline that we are suffering at the moment is principally in the younger age groups. That is where we have the greatest problems in securing sufficient adult volunteers. We work to certain ratios of young people to adults for safety reasons and for sensible reasons in terms of the effective delivery of programme, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to get adults in to enable us to provide a service for the younger age groups. So there is some encouragement, but there is continuing decline in the younger age groups.

Mr Macintosh: What is behind the success of Girlguiding Scotland? Perhaps historically you are also in decline. I am not sure.

Liz Pitcairn: Traditionally, we are called the guide movement, and that is what we do—we move. That sums up our success. Like the scouts, we renew our programmes. Our slight decline is compatible with demography. We have also targeted our programmes. We have to update

constantly. We have to look at what the girls want and consult them, in the way that Jim Duffy does with the scouts.

Interestingly, we are a few years in advance of the scouts in relation to improved and renewed programmes. Last year, when we took our census figures, for the first time ever the numbers in the adolescent age group, which we targeted, went up. They did not remain static; they went up because we introduced modern, trendy uniforms, we asked the girls what they wanted to do, we took away the more formalised programme, and we introduced the concept of learning at their own levels. We introduced an element of choice. We have always provided choice, but the difference now is that today's young girl has a huge choice of opportunities and activities, so we must make ours exciting.

The greatest enjoyment that our girls get at secondary age is in camping. Guiding and camping have a long history, but girls still want to enjoy the residential and outdoor experiences that we provide. We are renewing our younger membership and we are confident that our numbers will increase—we are not worried about that. I could go into a school tomorrow, run a video targeted at a whole year and have, the next day, a full unit of 30 girls, but I could not provide enough volunteers to take that group.

Mr Macintosh: I will play devil's advocate for a second. You say that your organisation has successfully modernised its image and, although the scouts are just behind you on that, they too are beginning to modernise. Your organisation has 65,000 members and sufficient volunteers to cope with that number, the scouts have enough volunteers to cope with their 35,000 members and the Boys Brigade has enough volunteers to cope with its members. That suggests that the organisations get the number of volunteers that are required to cope with the number of members that they have, which implies that the lack of adult volunteers is not the hurdle or obstacle that you say it is.

Liz Pitcairn: It is an obstacle. There are 4,000 girls in Scotland waiting to join our organisation, which is an awful lot. We are an inclusive organisation, which does not mean simply that we include girls who have special needs, but that we want to go into areas in which guiding can make a difference to young people by offering informal education. However, we cannot do that because we do not have sufficient manpower, even though there is a demand among girls in such areas. I worked as a volunteer in an area in which there was no guiding. Within five years, the organisation there had been developed, but only because we had sufficient volunteers.

We are not content with having 65,000 members. Our mission statement states that we want to develop opportunities for every girl, but to do that we must recruit more adults.

Mr Macintosh: I have a question for Tom Boyle. The Boys Brigade recruits from a diverse section of the population, but I get the impression—that this might be a stereotype—that the organisation is more rooted in working-class communities than are the scouts and guides, which have a more middle-class image. I might be totally wrong, but is that a fair reflection? Does the Boys Brigade actively try to recruit in such communities?

Tom Boyle: That is a fairly traditional view, but the situation has changed considerably in recent years because of problems in inner cities. The Boys Brigade is now stronger in rural areas than it is in inner cities. Many of the problems of leadership that we have heard about apply in inner city areas. The organisation is part of the church and anyone who comes from a city knows that many churches in city centres are remote from housing areas. To address that problem, the Boys Brigade has moved from the areas where the churches are to housing and rural areas where the young people and schools are. That has enabled us to maintain the strength of our organisation, but it has changed the organisation radically. We are becoming an organisation that deals with all levels of society, not just the working class, with which we may traditionally have worked 20 or 30 years ago.

Mr Macintosh: I feel that other uniformed organisations perhaps do not do enough for the groups with which the Boys Brigade is better at working. Is that unfair?

Liz Pitcairn: I would say that that is unfair.

Jim Duffy: I would say likewise. If any of our volunteers or members were listening, they would be riled by the suggestion that the Scout Association is a middle-class organisation. We work with immigrant communities in places such as the Red Road flats and in areas such as Greenock, Renfrew, North Ayrshire and Fife, which include former mining communities. Scouting operates in all local authorities and across the spectrum of society.

10:15

We have particular difficulties in areas of deprivation, where it is more difficult to get funding support from the local communities. Scout groups are embedded in their local communities and depend heavily on the support that comes from those communities when they are fundraising. We have had to address that nationally by putting in place membership-fee abatement schemes for people from less well-off communities. We are

committed to ensuring that scouting provision is available to all and that the financial costs of it are not a barrier to anybody. I would like to dispel the image that scouting is the preserve of Bearsden and other such areas.

The Convener: From the experience of many groups, it is clear that in deprived areas it is sometimes more difficult to get volunteer leaders. There are also all sorts of funding issues, which you have touched on. Is having the right level of resources important in enabling you to develop leadership potential among volunteers to support your activities to the same level as you might get in a more socially balanced area?

Jim Duffy: Yes. An increasing amount of time is spent by people at our headquarters in providing direct support out in the field; that is straining our manpower resources. Patterns of volunteering have changed considerably as work patterns have changed, and people perhaps have less time to commit than they had in the past. They might commit for two hours a month instead of two hours a week, or perhaps a little bit longer than that. There is also a tendency for people to be willing to help but not to lead, which creates issues for us regarding the management of volunteering. We need to address that centrally by providing better support for volunteer management. That has significant resource implications as well.

The Convener: Is it an issue primarily of people coming forward or of the resources that are required to support the people who come forward? Would the second solve the first if the resources were available in greater amounts?

Jim Duffy: The second would solve the first. I will give you an interesting statistic. The Scout Association investigated its volunteering pattern throughout the UK and found that the average length of time for which somebody remains a volunteer in our organisation is just over two years. However, if we discount the people who volunteer for only up to six months, the average length of time for which somebody remains an adult volunteer with us is 16 years. That highlights the fact that, although we do not have a major problem in getting volunteers, we have a problem in resourcing effective induction and training that would keep them involved. Help in that area would be of enormous benefit to the thousands of young people who cannot get involved with the organisation because we do not have sufficient volunteers to support them.

Liz Pitcairn: I support that statement completely and can cite an example of such a programme. At the moment, we are trying to encourage volunteers by offering localised training opportunities throughout Scotland. We have set up a training programme in the form of what we call a star bus—a huge bus that is travelling all round

Scotland, up to the islands of Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles and down to the Borders, offering volunteers the opportunity to be trained on their doorsteps. The cost of that exercise is considerable and we have no financial support for it. We have limited resources within our organisation; therefore, we are dependent on lottery money to make the programme work.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): I declare an interest, as I was a member of the Territorial Army for about 10 years and I am associated with number 603 City of Edinburgh Royal Auxiliary Air Force squadron. I would like to ask two questions. Do you feel that you have sufficient facilities to carry out the activities in which you wish to engage and do you have the opportunities to do so?

Tom Boyle: In some areas, facilities are good and are available to local groups. However, some years ago, following changes in the policy on dealing with schools, many Boys Brigade companies that met in schools stopped meeting because the cheap or free lets were stopped and the companies could no longer afford the cost of meeting in the local schools. The units moved to local churches, but the facilities that the churches could offer were not of a standard that was acceptable to young people and did not allow the same programmes to be offered. Companies that had been strong, which had good bands and a good reputation for their work in their areas, quickly disappeared because they were unable to offer the same activities to boys, having lost the premises on which they met.

The situation is different throughout the country. Some areas are fortunate in still having access to schools and receiving preferential treatment. In big urban areas where churches do not have sufficient hall accommodation, the only alternative is school premises. However, on most occasions those premises are not available or are too expensive for a voluntary organisation to afford.

Jim Duffy: Another rapidly approaching problem relates to insurance. We have many old scout halls around the country. Some of them are beyond their sell-by date; others are in good condition but, because of the nature of their structure—for example, they may be wooden buildings—it is becoming increasingly difficult for us to insure those facilities. Only the other week, I was contacted by a group whose buildings insurance is set to rise from £450 to £1,000 a year. The insurance broker who is dealing with that deals with a lot of voluntary sector issues. They contacted us and told us that it was the tip of the iceberg. A very large number of scout groups' insurance will come up for renewal over the next few months and they will find that they are being asked for premium increases that are in excess of

100 per cent. That will cause real problems locally, and I am not sure how we are going to address that. The real impact has not yet dawned on people, but it is a major problem. Buildings insurance is just one element of insurance. Insurance costs across the board are increasing at a frightening rate.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have one more question. Colonel Robert Watson mentioned community works. I wonder whether there may be greater scope for local authority involvement and support especially when there is support for the local communities through various activities.

Robert Watson: The situation varies enormously throughout the country, and it would be wrong to say that a particular local authority was supportive while another was passive—they are all supportive. Nonetheless, we face different problems in different local areas, as Jim Duffy said.

There are courses in adventure training that are run by local authorities that are very good. Nevertheless, any help in getting more people qualified would be hugely appreciated. That would go some way towards defeating the problem of health and safety requirements, whereby we can take our own family on a hill, but if we take other families, we need one leader for every five or six people if the hill is above a certain height.

We are not necessarily offered a subsidised rate for the use of other resources that are available to local authorities—facilities such as adventure training centres, climbing walls and swimming pools. I realise that this is a sensitive subject, but target rifle shooting—using air rifles and upwards—is a popular exercise among all our cadets, whether male or female and of all services. We have problems if we hire a building or a site from a local authority, as we may not be allowed to have a range or to store weapons, even if they are drill, non-firing weapons.

The problems vary from area to area. A more sensitive approach to the voluntary youth sector would be a huge help, as everything comes down to budgets. That would also help volunteer leaders to offer a wider variety of activities. We talked about the ever-increasing range of opportunities that we are offering the young and the fact that they want to do more. That is where we need resources; they are normally available within the local authority, but they are not always accessible.

Jim Duffy: I am sure that Simon Jaquet will say something about how YouthLink Scotland is working to bring local authorities and the voluntary sector closer together. I do not think that a single local authority in Scotland would say that they do not want to give voluntary youth organisations more resources. The key issue is that, as a

society, we grossly undervalue non-formal education provision and, consequently, we grossly under-resource it. It is not a question of trying to get a little bit more out of local authorities. I am sure that local authorities would tell you that their resources are squeezed to the point that youth work funding becomes the cinderella option.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Would it help if guidance were given to local authorities on best practice in the use of facilities by voluntary organisations and youth organisations? My understanding is that many of the facilities are made readily available when they are free, but perhaps there is not total consistency throughout Scotland. Is that a problem for some of you?

Jim Duffy: There is huge inconsistency, which is complicated further by child protection regulations. I am sure that Simon Jaquet will talk about that later.

Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab): I want to follow up with Mr Watson a point that I was surprised by. We have asked other organisations about the work that they do in some of the more deprived communities. The funding that you get comes from taxpayers. In how many schools in Scotland does the Combined Cadet Force operate?

Robert Watson: I think it is 15.

Rhona Brankin: The paper says 17 and all but one are in the private sector. Why is that, given that taxpayers' money is being used?

Robert Watson: The money from taxpayers is limited; most of the funding comes from the school. For instance, the buildings that we provide for our army cadet force—but not the sea cadets, because they provide their own—are provided by the school. Lord Haldane, a famous Edinburgh lawyer, raised the Territorial Army and formed the University Officer Training Corps and the Junior Training Corps in 1908, which tended to be based in the independent schools. We had volunteer cadet units in those days, which grew up separately. It is sad that Knox Academy in Haddington is our sole state-sector CCF, but we are proud of it. A number of other schools, such as Perth Academy, have an army cadet force detachment within the school, which is called a closed detachment. There is a balance.

Rhona Brankin: Is your organisation seeking to become more inclusive?

Robert Watson: I am slightly on the sidelines of that, because the Combined Cadet Force does not come under my organisation. The CCF is expanding, and more and more detachments—not necessarily in Scotland, but certainly south of the border—are now within the state education sector. To have a Combined Cadet Force detachment in a

school is a headmaster's choice—it is entirely at their wish. It is not something that we can push. We try to locate cadet detachments in areas where a wider grouping of people is coming in.

The mistaken perception about certain organisations being middle class or working class and so on has been discussed. All three of our cadet forces have a wide membership with regard to the male-female balance. For its part, the CCF is governed strictly by the decision of headmasters.

10:30

Rhona Brankin: So if a head teacher decided that they wanted to have a Combined Cadet Force, public money would be available for that.

Robert Watson: Yes, it would be—within the limited amount available for uniforms and that sort of thing.

Rhona Brankin: I should say that I am a Girlguiding ambassador, so I declare an interest.

I know that training is a live issue for all the witnesses. There have been a lot of changes recently. For example, there was the whole business of setting up disclosure systems, and there are many other issues that might give rise to a huge pressure on training, which is the area in which I am particularly interested. Much support has gone into the voluntary sector over the past few years, particularly in developing the volunteer network, which is there to support groups. Are you locking in to that, and are you benefiting from it? How can that network be strengthened?

Jim Duffy: You may be aware that the Education Department provided national voluntary youth organisations with two elements of grant support. One was a core grant for the administration of organisations' headquarters; the second was a smaller sum in the form of a training grant, which was used primarily to support the training and development of volunteer management. That training grant was withdrawn without any notice two years ago and has never been replaced. We were advised that it would be possible to consider active communities money to help to fund training for volunteers, but when children's organisations investigated, they were told that the money was available for adults but not for them. We fell outside the net.

We are aware that, compared with the resources going into the youth work sector, huge resources are going into the development of volunteer centres around the country. However, our organisations do not touch those volunteer centres. We are in touch with Volunteer Development Scotland about that at the moment. The resources do not really impact on our

organisations. It is correct to say that more money has gone into volunteering, but there is not sufficient recognition of the role that organisations such as ours play in developing volunteers, and there is no effective resourcing for that. We have highlighted that issue in the context of the volunteer review that VDS has been undertaking.

The Convener: We might want to return to that issue at the end of the meeting.

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): I, too, wish to ask about funding issues. The witnesses have touched on many areas of cost, including training, accommodation, insurance and facilities. They have mentioned the problems that they have had over grants and the fact that they are reliant on the national lottery. This might not be so relevant to Mr Watson, because there is central Government funding for his organisations, but what are the principal sources of funding for the witnesses' organisations? Are they allocated on an annual basis? How secure are they? Are organisations able to project what their income level will be over the next three years, for example, or is their existence more hand to mouth than that?

Liz Pitcairn: Girlguiding Scotland, like the Scout Association, is self-funding. As far as budget control is concerned, we are not at all dependent on external grants. We are grateful to receive training grants, but they depend on individual local authorities. We require all our members to pay an annual census fee, which covers the cost of programme initiatives, insurance and our headquarters. At the moment, individual counties add to that fee, but the average girl in Scotland is asked to pay from £14 to £18 a year for census.

Dr Murray: Does that deter any potential members?

Liz Pitcairn: That can happen. Traditionally, we have been considered an inclusive organisation that allows girls to enjoy opportunities with limited costs. The fee does not reflect the cost of a year in a unit, because in addition to the census fee, which covers our running costs, we have other costs, such as the rent of our halls, payments to schools for lets and the cost of outdoor activities. Unfortunately, to meet those costs, many of our volunteers who join to work with the girls end up having to fundraise, which is off-putting.

In some pockets of Scotland, local authorities give us training grants to send adults on training courses and to provide support, but the situation varies. We do not take that into account when we consider our long-term budgeting plans.

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): I apologise for being late. I had to take my son, who has just started in the Boys Brigade, and my daughter, who is in the Girls Brigade, to school. When I was younger, I was involved in the brownies and the

guides, and I was a ranger guide, so I declare my interest.

The Convener: It looks like the organisations are responsible for the MSPs.

Fiona Hyslop: I will pursue the issues of accessibility and cost. How much does it cost for a family with two or three children to be involved in uniformed organisations? I will also ask about the experience of school lets. We now have a good number of public-private partnership schools and it is also the Executive's policy to have community schools throughout Scotland. What is the organisations' experience of accessing cheap lets from different schools? That is key. The Boys Brigade representative said that to reach the boys whom it wants to reach, the brigade needs to be where houses and schools, rather than churches, are. Can something be done with the contracts for the new public-private partnerships to ensure accessibility for youth organisations and lets of reasonable cost?

Tom Boyle: In the 1960s, the Boys Brigade decided to move to schools, because church halls could not cope. Schools could provide facilities for many more boys and allow for much better programmes. In general, Boys Brigade meetings happen three, four or five nights a week. Contrary to what many people think, they are not something that happens on Friday night, followed by football on Saturday morning and church on Sunday morning. We have had a major pull-back in the programme that we can offer, because although schools are generous and offer facilities, they are available only one night a week, so we cannot offer the same breadth of programme.

Every Boys Brigade company must pay £150 to the central funds. Thereafter, a sliding scale operates that depends on the number of members. That cost must be passed on to members and the cost can be anything from £10 to £20 per person to meet that funding alone. As Liz Pitcairn said, on top of that, each unit funds its own programme, so much time is spent on fundraising and involving members in fundraising. That is not a bad thing, but leaders are spending time on organising fundraising when they entered the organisation to work with boys and deliver a positive programme to them.

The Convener: Is it fair to say that the training issue is one of the major constraints on being able to get more volunteers in and that that has an impact on the effectiveness of the organisation?

Tom Boyle: We have a training structure of qualified trainers throughout Scotland, all of whom have Scottish vocational qualifications in training, for which they have to pay between £20 and £30. They deliver training to all of the leaders who come into the organisation, supported and

supervised by the Scottish headquarters. Again, many companies of the Boys Brigade have to pay to have their officers trained, as the process has to be self-financing. The financial support that we get for training is extremely small and patchy.

The Convener: Do volunteers in the girl guides and the boy scouts face a similar situation? Do they have to fund training themselves to that degree?

Liz Pitcairn: Yes. I would like to go back to Fiona Hyslop's question and use my situation as an example. I run a guide unit that has 30 girls. I ask their parents to pay £10 a term. As there are three terms a year, each family pays £30. In addition to that, I hold a fundraising coffee morning every year, which raises about £200. That money contributes to the charge for renting the church hall.

If I were in another area and had to work in a school, I would be paying considerably more. There would be a registration fee of approximately £30 a term and a charge of about £30 for every hour that I used a room in the school. The costs vary across the country, but those figures are the average and demonstrate the difference between using church facilities and using schools.

Fiona Hyslop: I know that community organisations have expressed concerns about accessibility to schools in relation to PPP projects. Is it getting harder to get access to schools?

Liz Pitcairn: It is.

Fiona Hyslop: If that is the case, community accessibility will be an issue in relation to the contracts for community involvement as the Government moves towards the concept of community schools.

Robert Watson: Although we are extremely fortunate, I should stress that our sea cadet corps is separate from the main body. Each local corps is a local independent charity with a parent committee; the units raise their own money and pay for the rent of their hall. That is similar to what happens with the other organisations that are present today. However, we also use schools, particularly when we are setting up a new detachment for the army cadet force or the air training corps. That continues until the detachments become viable—we try to get money out of the Ministry of Defence to provide them with a hut.

Although we have been met with enormous enthusiasm from schools—normally from the janitor, who is the key person—the problem is that school buildings are available only during the term. It is difficult to get access to them during the holidays, which is when we would want to engage the members of the organisation. Fortunately, the

cost of the facility is not as big a problem for me as it is for others, but we have difficulty gaining access to school buildings during holidays and more than one night a week.

Fiona Hyslop: The strong message that is coming through is that organisations are concerned about getting new volunteers and finding the resources to pay for them. Do people think that they have to have been in the girl guides, the boy scouts or the Boys Brigade in order to become volunteers? Is that a problem of perception?

Liz Pitcairn: We are proud that many of our volunteers have been girl guides, but many of our volunteers come into the movement from outside. We run vigorous recruitment campaigns every year to attract volunteers. When new volunteers come into the organisation, we have to encourage them to comply with our regulations. They have to undergo basic training.

We have strict, safe procedures to enable the volunteers to work with young people. Our child protection procedures and our checking systems are extremely thorough. For example, for a volunteer to gain their basic qualification to run a unit independently, they have to do first-response training in first aid. They have to pay a minimum of £30 to get that qualification so that they can be responsible, caring adults and promote a good, healthy environment in the units. That can be off-putting for volunteers, who also have to buy uniforms and give up extra time for training. The problem is a cumulative one.

10:45

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): I will muse a little on the money problem and how we resolve it. I take Jim Duffy's point that we undervalue youth work and therefore under-resource it. That is an incredibly important insight, which goes across the board. We should think about the future character of the youth organisations' relationship with the Government in Scotland.

Your organisations are distanced from Government—their autonomy is one thing that has made them successful through the decades. I am not saying that Government should not do its bit, but there are risks with being too close to Government. One of them, about which we have heard today, is the unilateral withdrawal of grants. Many of the organisations that are supported by other parts of the voluntary sector through the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations do not feel that they can do the job that they should do and certainly hold their tongues when they should not because they are directly funded by the Executive. There is an issue for us in that.

You talk about the three main issues: core funding—it is astonishing how lean the organisations' headquarters are, with a staff of four and a half or a staff of eight, for example—voluntary leadership training and the implications of compliance with the burden of regulation. It seems to me that those are issues of operating in a voluntary arena; they are not youth work issues. I leave that thought with you.

The Executive has struggled with those issues for the past four years. The creation of the voluntary issues unit was an attempt to work out how to interact with voluntary organisations and with people who give of their time voluntarily. Every Executive department desired to hold on to its area so that, for example, rural voluntary organisations would have to be funded by the Environment and Rural Affairs Department, a housing organisation would have to be funded by the Development Department and a youth organisation would have to be funded by the Education Department.

I do not think that we will resolve the issue today. However, I wonder whether, precisely because of your intensely voluntary nature, you would be better in the medium term to have a relationship with the voluntary issues unit so that you get support on core funding, leadership training and regulation. It must be soul destroying for you to see millions of pounds going into volunteering when you have a track record of 100 years in youth work but are trying to persuade the Education Department to give you tuppence ha'penny. The Education Department staff are not bad people, but they simply do not work in a framework of voluntary activity. Those who run the Education Department think—

The Convener: Will you let the witnesses answer, Wendy?

Ms Alexander: Sorry.

Perhaps you should try to reconstruct your relationship with Government completely and not relate youth work to education but see yourselves first and foremost as organisations that use volunteers and whose future relationship with Government is therefore more appropriately with the voluntary issues unit, which would allow you to access money for volunteering. That would be a high-risk strategy and I wonder whether you have discussed it among yourselves. I do not expect an answer today but, as I listen, I think that that seems a more effective way of being supportive over the next decade. Money would not be withdrawn after two years and there would be some understanding of core funding for headquarters, compliance issues and volunteers.

After that long preamble, my question is whether there has been any discussion about how you interface most effectively with the Executive.

Jim Duffy: That discussion will increase through the support of YouthLink as a national youth agency, which is a key intermediary between organisations and the Executive. It is fair to say that we are all alive to the issues of support for volunteering versus support for education. We see ourselves primarily as education organisations; we do not want to lose that focus, because we are talking about the education of young people. It would be nice to hive the matter across and say that it is a volunteer issue and therefore someone else's responsibility. However, that would detract from the key understanding that non-formal education is an integral part of the educational development of young people. We have to keep that in mind.

We are always alive to discussions about our relationship with the Executive and we will take every opportunity that we can to develop a constructive relationship. There are issues about strategic partnerships and who the Executive regards as strategic partners in the education of young people. There should be more dialogue about that.

The Convener: I am conscious of the time; we have given the panel a good run. Are there any other burning questions? I am conscious that Adam Ingram has not had a shot because he came in so late, but I will give him the first shot next time.

Rhona Brankin: Earlier, we asked about school lets. Fiona Hyslop asked whether school lets had gone up only in new schools or across the board.

Liz Pitcairn: I am sorry but I cannot be explicit about that without prior information. The general view that I hear when talking to my volunteers is that lets have increased across the board.

Jim Duffy: I can be specific because I was asked that question by a journalist some time ago. Six months ago, I could not find any scout group operating in a private finance initiative school. However, I cannot give you any further information.

The Convener: I suspect that there might be a number of things about which we will want to come back to you. We have had a good insight into the work of the uniformed youth organisations and we are grateful for that. I would have liked to follow up Colonel Watson's comments about the outreach organisation and the links with youth crime.

I thank the witnesses for their attendance. The committee is indebted to you for your input and wishes you all success with your important work.

We will now take a break for a couple of minutes.

10:52

Meeting suspended.

10:59

On resuming—

The Convener: I am conscious that we ran slightly over time with the previous panel, although the session was worth while. No doubt some of the issues that were raised will be reflected in the evidence that we will hear from our panel of representatives from the informal, non-uniformed youth organisations.

Allister Short (Youth Scotland): We welcome the opportunity to take part in this meeting. I, too, am conscious of the time, so I will keep my comments brief, especially as we have sent out background notes.

Youth Scotland is the largest non-uniformed voluntary youth organisation in Scotland. It is represented in every local authority area and has a current membership of 685 youth clubs or groups. Mr Macintosh made a point about the stereotypical image of a youth group being all table tennis and coffee bars. Youth groups have moved on considerably—Euan Robson made a similar point when he visited one of our projects to comment on our work on the youth achievement awards.

One of the key points of our work, especially in relation to the youth achievement awards, is that we acknowledge that some young people do not achieve within formal education. Who fails whom is a bigger argument, but young people can spend 11 years at school and walk away with very little. Youth Scotland aims to help to redress that by working with young people and inspiring them to decide what their interests are. We focus on what they are good at and start where they are.

We also work with them on the development of their life and social skills, which many industrialists claim a lot of young people lack. I am talking about such things as confidence, negotiation skills and values development. That is the backbone of a lot of youth work. It is important to consider how to deliver such skills more widely. We should be considering the tried and tested methods rather than going for something shiny and new.

Our organisation is relatively young compared to some of the others. It has been around since 1933 and believes that the backbone of youth work is youth groups. Let me provide some context—37 per cent of the youth groups that are members of Youth Scotland have an income of less than £500 a year and 50 per cent of the rest have an income of less than £1,000 a year. Those limited resources give Youth Scotland a mandate to work at a national level. Youth Scotland has a

headquarters staff of six, with 10 locally based staff in places such as Shetland and the Western Isles.

It is fair to say that we have a good relationship with local authorities and have several service-level agreements to help to deliver youth work. Such partnerships are coming together and beginning to work for young people. As I said, I am conscious of the time, so I will finish at that point and pass to one of my colleagues.

Peter Crory (YMCA Scotland): YMCA Scotland is similar to Youth Scotland because it works with young people who might fail, or who struggle with issues. Our target age range is 13 to 25. We are trying to reach young people who might be 12, 13 or 14 when they start to experiment and to forge the attitudes that they will carry throughout adolescence and that will shape how they emerge as adults. The average stay with YMCA Scotland might be several years and the generations that we have worked with allow us to work with families, often intensively.

If schooling is about providing a knowledge base for young people, the YMCA focuses on providing young people with the ability to use that knowledge in the context of a job and in the context of being constructive members of society. We provide them with self-esteem and confidence so that they can engage and hold down a job, and with interpersonal and communication skills so that they can work in a team. Those are the critical things that the informal education sector provides to complement the formal sector.

The YMCA has a big international side; we provide a lot of best-practice work in whatever struggle young people are involved with, including refugees and asylum seekers and drugs.

Three things puzzle me slightly. First, we all sign up to the fact that we need to commit to young people in the long term—over a period of years—rather than to go in and out of their lives when there is a crisis, but a lot of the funding that the YMCA comes across requires innovation and is short term; it lasts for 18 months, two years or, if we are really lucky, three years. I generalise, but the funding does not seem to recognise existing good practice; it wants something new all the time. We are very bad at saying that a practice really works. Even though our monitoring and evaluation can prove that it works, we cannot revisit that practice and use it again.

Secondly, we all sign up to the prevention argument and agree that it is far better, and makes more sense money-wise, for us to engage with young people at an early stage, when they might be experimenting or considering various courses of action, which usually involve following their peers. However, it seems that in Scotland we

cannot find the money to put into mainstream work with young people—what I would call generic youth work. We cannot find the money to engage the young people whom we might perceive as normal kids in the mainstream youth clubs throughout the towns and villages in Scotland, which would help to ensure that they do not become young people with struggles. It seems that it is easier to get funding for young people who struggle. We really need to address the funding of mainstream, generic youth work.

Thirdly, if we all sign up to and accept that the youth work and the informal education that the committee is hearing about this morning are vital components of the education of young people in Scotland, why do the youth organisations commonly feel undervalued? We genuinely feel that we are under-resourced and that we struggle to provide support to volunteers, to deliver on-going programmes and to cover our core costs. Those are my three points.

The Convener: You made some powerful points. I hope that your appearance before the Parliament's Education Committee will go some distance towards preventing your feeling undervalued.

Benny Lawrie (Youth Sport Trust): Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the committee. I work with the Youth Sport Trust, which is a slightly different kind of organisation from the other organisations that have spoken to the committee today.

The trust is a charity that is based down in Loughborough. Its main focus and mission is to improve the quality of opportunities for young people in physical education, sport and physical activity, both during school curriculum time and in the communities around schools. We do not have our own youth groups; we work through partnership a great deal. We always work with other organisations to deliver our mission. We do that through a group of programmes called the TOP programmes, the key focus of which is training. The other main elements are the development of resources that are appropriate to the age of the child and big bags of equipment, which are often the carrot to get into head teachers' schools. Training, resources and support structures are what we are about.

We are an inclusive organisation, so the programmes are designed to be inclusive of all children. We work on the concept of integration. We are working up an inclusion module from feedback from our current programmes in Scotland, which we hope to pilot here, before sending it back down south to be used there.

Over the past three years, my main focus has been the TOP play and sport programmes, in

which sportscotland has been my key partner. I am the only officer for the Youth Sport Trust in Scotland. I work closely with sportscotland to deliver the TOP play and sport programmes in all the primary schools in Scotland. We have now reached 1,400 of those schools, so we are a good way through the programme. The training involves all the primary class teachers in the schools. It has been a long and hard road to get where we are, particularly with the McCrone settlement and changes in teacher time, but the feedback has been incredibly positive. Rolling the programme out is becoming easier, as people come to know about it.

We also aim training at surrounding communities. Many issues relating to volunteers have emerged for us, too, through our partners. We try to identify volunteers to run after-school clubs and have worked with local guide organisations and youth groups, for example. We want to improve and increase young people's level of physical activity.

I want to turn to key issues for us. We have tried to roll out the programme, but the issue now is how we should build on what we are doing. Continuing support for volunteers and class teachers was mentioned earlier. Physical education specialists are our lead trainers in the programme, but many local authorities do not have them. How should we follow up on the initial training that we have delivered? How can we ensure that enthusiasm for the programme continues and that volunteers are properly supported in the community?

We are beginning to link the programme much more closely into the emerging active schools network, which sportscotland is developing, and we are finding evidence that where we have an active primary school co-ordinator who supports volunteers after school, the programme is much more effective.

Inclusion areas have been mentioned. I can give some lovely examples, one of which is the Raploch area in Stirling where parents who have never picked up a football or a rugby ball in their lives are now running after-school clubs, although only with the support of the active school co-ordinator. Such work could not happen with new volunteers without such support. We are looking at linking in such support.

Another key issue that has emerged is that it is all very well for young people to have such opportunities, but we are still not attracting young people who do not participate. How should we target them? I feel strongly about the matter. I have had meetings with Youth Scotland and boys' and girls' clubs, as they often work with such young people. However, all my funding currently goes through the local authority. Again, I

emphasise that more direct funding to youth organisations is needed. Perhaps we could work with them with our programme.

On our other programmes, I am beginning to work a great deal on leadership. We have a TOP link programme, which is aimed at secondary pupils, and we are working through school sports co-ordinators to deliver that programme. I hope to work with some youth groups to widen the programme. We are also beginning to work with the girls in sport programme, which involves work with secondary schools, considers provision for girls in physical education and challenges some of that provision.

Simon Jaquet (YouthLink Scotland): YouthLink Scotland welcomes the opportunity to enter into discussions with the committee.

We want to emphasise learning, rather than education. In that context, we welcome the debate about youth work. It is worth reminding ourselves that young people spend only 18 per cent of their time in schools. I hope that they learn there, but there are significant opportunities for learning in other parts of their lives. A brief aphorism that a colleague of mine is wont to quote is that attendance at schools is compulsory, but learning is optional. Youth work brings voluntary opportunities for young people to learn.

YouthLink Scotland is the national youth agency for Scotland. In that sense, we are in a slightly different position from most other organisations from which the committee has heard today. I want to try to pull together some key themes that have emerged from discussions so far.

Our membership includes local authorities and the voluntary sector. Some 29 of the 32 local authorities are full members of YouthLink Scotland, as are 46 national voluntary youth organisations. We describe ourselves as a one-stop shop for youth work in Scotland, with access to the voluntary and statutory sector.

It is worth reflecting on where young people are in 2003. Recently, we commissioned a MORI survey, entitled "Being Young in Scotland". We will officially release the findings of that survey later this month, but some of those findings bear scrutiny and inform today's debate.

First, when we asked young people to tell us what it means to be an active citizen and gave them a number of options, 80 per cent said that it meant respecting other people. We felt that that was a heartfelt plea for respect from young people, given that some recent public discourse has had the involuntary effect of demonising them. Moreover, when we asked whether they would be prepared to volunteer, about 70 per cent of them said that they would be. Again, young people seem to be flying in the face of a public stereotype and are keen to put something back into society.

Many people have touched on aspects of youth work. A report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education has suggested that such work has three critical and defining characteristics. First, as Jim Duffy and other witnesses have pointed out, it is educational. Secondly, the voluntary engagement of young people is critical to the enterprise. For example, although young people have to go to school, they do not have to undertake youth work activities. Thirdly, youth work contains a measure of adult intervention.

11:15

People often wonder about the benefits of youth work. After all, according to the unhelpful historical stereotype, it is all about ping-pong, pool, coffee bars and so on. We feel that there are three levels of benefit. First, the clear benefits to young people are perhaps best summed up in the phrase "social and emotional competence". Such activity helps to develop those areas. Secondly, it benefits adults significantly. I will say some more about the total number of adults in Scotland who are involved in youth work. Finally, if young people and adults in communities are benefiting from undertaking such voluntary activity, that benefits society in terms of the development of social capital, social cohesion and so on. It is one of the few areas where young people and adults in communities regularly come together on a voluntary basis.

It is interesting to note that, in research that we recently conducted, young people had some very positive things to say about their experience of youth work. First, they said that it complements formal education and works alongside what goes on in schools. Secondly, they said that it offers opportunities to take responsibility, take the initiative and participate in the democratic process. Thirdly, they identified the building of trust relationships with adults as a key feature of such activity.

People sometimes ask how big youth work is in Scotland. We recently conducted some research into that for the Scottish Executive. Although I cannot provide the full figures right now, I think that some of the top-line figures are quite instructive. For example, a third of a million young people between five and 25 are engaged in youth work in Scotland, which effectively represents one in four of the youth population over that age span. However, the distribution is not evenly spread and is weighted towards the younger age group. This society is not good at engaging with 18 to 25-year-olds on a voluntary basis.

Furthermore, there are 40,000 youth workers in Scotland. I should put that in context by pointing out that there are about 45,000 teachers. I grant that they are not operating on the same basis; after all, teachers work a 35-hour week while

youth workers in many cases work two, three, four, five or six hours a week. However, it still shows that a significant number of adults engage regularly with young people on a weekly basis in communities the length and breadth of Scotland. If we add together all the Duke of Edinburgh award groups, the Youth Scotland groups, the sportscotland groups and all the other groups, we find that there are 8,000 groups or units of activity.

In our recent research, we asked the local authorities and the national voluntary youth organisations to tell us the critical issues that face them. I am pleased to be able to say that, after the evidence that the committee received this morning, that list will contain no surprises. Indeed, Wendy Alexander picked up on them. First, everyone agrees that funding is critical. However, the problem is not only that there is not enough funding; funding mechanisms, the sustainability of funding and a number of other factors are also important.

The second critical issue is work force development which, as far as the voluntary sector is concerned, centres on the recruitment and retention of volunteers.

The third critical issue is compliance and regulation. Organisations are wondering how to implement effectively some measures that have recently been introduced, particularly those in the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003. Although there is a desire and a commitment to implement such measures, the organisations realise that they present certain obstacles—not the least of which are financial—that have to be overcome. The fourth critical issue is access to and the quality of facilities.

In the partnership agreement, the Scottish Executive made a commitment to a national youth work strategy in this parliamentary session. We welcome that and look forward to being active players in the development and implementation of that strategy. It will be the first ever national youth work strategy in Scotland, which is extremely good news.

Colleagues may or may not be aware of the European white paper on youth that came out a couple of years ago. Such things can sometimes seem remote from Scotland. Without going into the details, the key themes of the paper—youth participation, youth information, youth volunteering and so on—are central to the debate in Scotland. There are European themes that we would sign up to.

We would like to offer any help that we can to the committee—for example, organising site visits or offering access to organisations. The recently constituted policy forum—the first ever Scottish youth policy forum—brings together local

authorities, the voluntary sector and a number of other Government agencies. If information on the forum would help the debate, we would be happy to provide it.

The Convener: That has been a useful introduction. I am conscious that the term “youth work” covers a wider range of groups than just the uniformed organisations. I sense that youth work is patchy: there are some very good projects, but also projects in which groups have not reached their full potential, perhaps because of resource implications. What are the development problems? Are there national standards on how to do youth work? Is the balance between volunteers and professional people right? Issues arise over the sustainability of groups and over their continued ability to provide a meaningful experience for people.

Peter Crory: Those are insightful comments. An organisation such as the YMCA will start in a community in response to need. Parents will come together and volunteers will join and those people will be able to constitute a YMCA, or a different group, and get things running. I was in Stornoway last week, where I met Allister Short. Like a number of other YMCAs, the YMCA in Stornoway is purely volunteer-led and we have so many people coming through the doors that the volunteers cannot cope. All they can do is police the place, if you will excuse the term. If I generalise horribly, the next stage—and we must remember that there is a particular client group of young people—will be that the volunteers back off, saying, “I didn’t sign up for every Friday night just to take abuse.” Again, please excuse the term. We would then lose volunteers over a couple of years for various known reasons. The professionalisation of youth work is an issue, certainly for me. However, if we could put a key worker in—with a remit to train and support the volunteers, to co-ordinate things, to find out the core costs of the organisation and the centre, to provide child protection, and to do all the other things that make youth work more complicated—that might be a way of sustaining the organisation. We have to consider the funding opportunities to pay for a key worker and the core costs. The main difficulty at the moment is that funding is short term.

Simon Jaquet: Occupational standards for youth work have been developed by Paolo, the national training organisation, which is in the process of transferring to the Learning and Skills Council. As Wendy Alexander suggested earlier, there is a tension between the traditional role of the voluntary sector and the more modern role that is developing. Part of that more modern role is in delivering public services. Traditionally, youth work in communities has come about because parents and other members of the community have said

that they need something for their young people to do, and young people have agreed. Collective enterprises have started at grass-roots level and worked up. In a world in which the Scottish Executive and others want to maintain quality standards in the delivery of public services, a tension arises. There are no easy answers. A debate needs to be had. We would be loth to lose what we have. We do not want anything to prohibit grass-roots activity that leads to community activity; but, equally, we want people to operate reliably and to acceptable standards.

The Convener: What I am trying to get at is whether there is a significant issue in terms of trying to build the quality of youth work across Scotland. Is it just a matter of filling gaps and providing additional support as opposed to a more significant issue?

Simon Jaquet: That is absolutely at the heart of what YouthLink Scotland is about. In its new role, it is trying to work together across the voluntary and statutory sectors on many of the issues that have already been aired this morning, such as access to facilities, how the public sector can work to support the voluntary sector and indeed how the voluntary sector can work to contribute to what is done through local authorities. That is central to the debate that we are involved in.

Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP): Some messages keep being repeated. In particular, I want to pick up on Peter Crory's remarks. Youth work has clearly been historically under-resourced. That continues to be the case, and there does not appear to be any systematic approach to youth work in this country. For example, we do not seem to have a target for giving every young person access to a range of opportunities outwith the school environment. As elected members we have all heard our communities complain that it is little wonder that youth is alienated, as there are no facilities for young people and nothing for them to do. What models should we be considering for building a systematic approach to facilitating our young people's personal development and community involvement?

Peter Crory: I will give you a personal response, which concerns a project that the YMCA is trying to roll out across Scotland and is piloting in three areas this year. In a sense, it is a comment on the community planning exercise. Community planning is coming via local authorities in some areas with a centralised committee trying to assess community needs, but there is a different, bottom-up way of doing things. We are trying to pull together any partner agencies that have an interest in young people, including community education, social work and the police, to see whether together we can assess the needs of our community.

A couple of weeks ago I heard from the social work manager in one local authority area that that authority had just completed a children's strategy for social work, but the consultation that they had held outside of the general health world was practically nil. That really took me aback, and yet those involved decided to sign up to writing a youth strategy along with the YMCA and other partners according to a very localised plan. In a local community where there are territorial needs, the young people sometimes feel that that is their community and that they will not cross a boundary. We need to respond to those needs locally, and that is how the YMCA works.

Mr Ingram: That is the way that it has worked traditionally, is it not? As Simon Jaquet mentioned, that is something that arises at grassroots level and you try to fill the gap, but surely we should be looking at the situation in a more strategic way. Perhaps we could learn from other countries that are doing a better job and giving their young people the opportunities to develop that we are talking about this morning.

Simon Jaquet: I can give a couple of examples from elsewhere in the UK that I think would bear scrutiny, although whether they work better or not is probably for others to decide. In England, just before Christmas last year, a document called "Transforming Youth Work: Resourcing Excellent Youth Services" was launched by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. That document gave, for the first time in the UK, a definition of what an adequate and sufficient youth service should be. Clearly, the document related only to England, but it was a brave attempt to say what young people require in communities, what level of service there should be, how it should be developed, monitored and inspected, and what courses of action might be taken if recommendations are not effectively implemented.

That document would bear scrutiny and I encourage committee members to look at it. I should have brought along a copy of that report today, but I can certainly supply members with a copy. The one criticism that I make of the report is that it is weak on the role of the voluntary sector. It is a 36 page document, but there is only one page on the voluntary sector. I urge the committee, if it goes down the route of following up that model, to consider the critical role of the voluntary sector.

The other model in the UK is "Extending Entitlement: supporting young people in Wales". That report would certainly also bear scrutiny. An extensive policy discussion led to the publication of the report two or three years ago; it was published some time before the English one. It is based on the entitlement model and covers what entitlements young people have to training, leisure facilities, education, career progression and so on.

I reiterate that the national youth work strategy—we are not sure at this stage what its timing will be—presents us with a major opportunity: we need to grasp it with both hands in this country.

11:30

The Convener: Am I right in saying that the Executive is currently undertaking a review of youth work? Are you involved in that?

Simon Jaquet: Yes. We have undertaken for the Executive a major exercise in mapping the youth work sector in Scotland. That work is now formally with the minister. The initial findings are being released today to local authorities and national voluntary organisations that are participating. It is not yet a public document, but it is a major piece of work that we believe will inform thinking about how youth work in Scotland should progress.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have heard this morning about benefits to the community from the community work in which youth organisations are involved. Could guidance usefully be given by the minister to local authorities with regard to consistency of support and provision of and access to school facilities throughout Scotland?

Allister Short: We discussed during the break the issue of consistent use of school facilities. We would generally welcome that. There can be a cost implication of reduced lets or of being able to access facilities as and when required. One of the issues that were discussed was that in many schools—the situation may be affected by devolved school management and so on—a group of adults may pay £30 to use school facilities for an hour and a group of young people may pay a lower rate of £5 an hour. Young people have sometimes lost out because of that notion of cost.

It would be great to have consistent use of school facilities, but there is a finite budget so there would need to be further discussion if something else would be lost as a result of Lord James's suggestion being introduced. Access to facilities is a key issue.

Simon Jaquet: It would be interesting to explore the possibility of free school lets being made available to constituted voluntary youth organisations throughout Scotland. Local authorities would say that there is an opportunity cost, but we think that there is potentially an opportunity gain through the involvement of young people and adults in the school family. It would have potential implications for school boards, parent-teacher associations and so on if young people and adults were brought into the school at times of the day other than the period between 9 o'clock and 3.30. There are potentially major gains

to be had, albeit that there might be a small financial loss.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If your case is accepted in principle, would a good way forward be for the minister to issue guidance to local authorities? Ministers can do that and have done so repeatedly in the past.

Simon Jaquet: The debate probably needs to happen in the context of the national youth work strategy. We would in due course certainly welcome guidance from the minister on how youth work should be delivered across the board. That would include guidance on youth facilities.

Rhona Brankin: I will ask about your relationship with schools in general. That strikes me as being an important interface for giving youngsters information about what is available because nearly all youngsters attend school regularly. What is your relationship with schools? What role is there for schools in helping to engage youngsters outwith school hours?

Allister Short: The rolling out of the new community school initiative is welcome as it puts youth work on a much firmer footing within the education system. Historically, I do not think that such information was given out, although it could be argued that the school teacher who helped out at the local youth club in the evening would impart that information. Youth-work staff or community education staff are based within the school in new community schools. That has been a positive step forward and we hope that that will continue.

Dr Murray: I was interested to hear more about youth sport. We do not always acknowledge sufficiently the huge number of volunteers who are involved in sport. An enormous part of the voluntary sector works in sport. Initiatives such as the TOP programmes have been extremely valuable, as has the work that you have done with local authorities. I am pleased to see your emphasis on trying to get girls involved in physical activity, which was one of the recommendations of the physical activity task force. The level of physical activity among young women is declining, so it is important that that work is being done.

I was interested to read YouthLink Scotland's annual report. On page 9, it states:

"policy makers (let alone the general public) appear to have little or no understanding of youth work's unique contribution to young people's development."

It also says:

"This says as much about youth work's persistent failure to articulate its own purpose and practice".

How would that best be done? I know that that is a huge question. There has been a long and creditable history of youth work, both through the organisations from which we heard earlier and

through the YMCA and the voluntary sector. Why is there so little recognition, in the public perception, of the value of the work that you do? How can that dialogue best be progressed if we are to improve the relationships in youth work between the public sector, the Government and the voluntary sector?

Simon Jaquet: I am not sure, but things can always improve. We are addressing the need for awareness at several levels. We are doing that in settings such as this, with elected members, and in the public domain, through the press and media. For example, we have been fairly vociferous in the debate about the antisocial behaviour strategy in trying to ensure that young people's views are heard in the public debate. We also need to address awareness at local level and we are developing local partnerships between the voluntary and statutory sectors. Both sides can benefit from that through sharing information, awareness of what is going on, resources and expertise. It will be a critical element of the national youth work strategy in due course.

Benny Lawrie: I reinforce that. I work directly with local authorities' education and leisure departments, and I spend a lot of time promoting the fact that there are youth organisations out there with which they could link. It is incredible that the departments do not make those contacts with the people who are working with the young people. There is a lot of work to be done in promoting youth work, as Simon Jaquet said, and in ensuring that resources are shared and used effectively. There is often a lack of awareness that organisations exist locally; building local infrastructures and networks is very important.

Simon Jaquet: This afternoon, for the first time, the chief officers of the national voluntary youth organisations will meet the local authorities' managers with responsibility for local youth work. About 40 to 50 people from both sectors will take part in a meeting that YouthLink Scotland has convened. To give you a flavour of what is on the agenda, I will mention some of the issues that are going to be addressed. The first is child protection and the ways in which both sectors can work together effectively to ensure the protection of children. Young people's involvement in the community planning process is clearly central to that, as is the role of dialogue youth and other such initiatives. There will also be some debate about the mapping of youth work in Scotland, to which I have already alluded.

That meeting is a first—it is a major step in bringing those sectors together and creating a forum in which dialogue can take place. We find often that it is the same young people who are involved, whether they are attending a local authority youth club, the guides, the scouts or the YMCA. We need to get our act together.

Dr Murray: The other problem is perceptions among young people. In the debate on the antisocial behaviour strategy, we have heard from young people that the fact that there is nothing to do is the cause of antisocial behaviour. However, you guys are all out there providing things to do. Benny Lawrie touched briefly on the issue of people who do not participate, so there is a need to engage the children and young people who do not perceive that you are there and can offer them the sort of support or activities that they want.

Simon Jaquet: Historically, youth work has been good at reaching out. There have always been outreach work, detached youth work and youth workers on the streets engaging with hard-to-reach young people. The YMCA and Youth Scotland might want to cite some examples. One of youth work's functions has been to touch and affect the lives of young people who have dropped out of school or institutions, who are unemployed or who are socially excluded in different ways.

Peter Crory: We could give many examples from the YMCA that show how we are not building bound, but go out to those who do not attend any other provision. One of our newest groups to emerge will be in Bathgate, where a group of young people will constitute themselves as a YMCA group without any four walls around them. They will engage with their peers on the streets without any agenda of bringing people into a youth centre. Those folks have chosen to socialise on the streets. Yes, there is the whole youth nuisance issue, but that results from people's perceiving behaviour as antisocial. In Paisley, which is Wendy Alexander's constituency, the YMCA comes together with many other agencies to go out on to the streets. More and more, that is becoming a pattern in some areas.

The Convener: Are there organisational issues with local authorities in the way that there are with the Scottish Executive, as was mentioned earlier? For example, there has been a move from community education to youth services and groupings of that kind. Is there a difficulty of focus with some local authorities because of structural changes at the local authority end?

Allister Short: Some difficulties arise from the target-driven nature of local authority work. As Peter Crory and I have already discussed, we need to try to achieve a universal youth work provision perhaps to the point of saying what every young person is entitled to. Perhaps the national youth work strategy will help to tease that out.

In much of our work with local authorities, we find that we deal with many young people who would not define themselves as disadvantaged or at risk. They are simply growing up—it is called adolescence. There is an issue about how we

engage with those young people. Because we are not able to put a label on them, we find that the required support and resources are not available. The issue is not just about financial resources; the local authorities cannot give the focus and support to address the issue because of the targeted nature of youth work. I think that we need to reconsider whether there should be universal provision that every young person deserves.

Fiona Hyslop: I am struck how, in this debate about a national youth strategy, the work that most effectively meets the needs of the individual is that which is decentralised and local to communities. It seems that youth work, while not hanging in the wind, is almost completely separate from all the formalised structures of funding sources.

I am also struck by some of our perceptions, such as how we always think of young people in a school or in a building. I am interested, therefore, in the Bathgate group that you mentioned. Unfortunately, as well as having a fixed view of how funding works, we stereotype young people and put them in boxes and expect them to behave in a certain way. However, the successful projects seem to be those that are more flexible. How can we marry that flexibility and choice for young people with a funding and governmental structure that is target driven while still keeping up to date with the needs of the young people?

The national youth strategy is perhaps in danger of becoming too top-down, whereas you seem to be saying that the most successful projects are those that are in tune with the young people. How do we make such projects democratically accountable so that politicians—either councillors or MSPs—can ensure that the work that you carry out provides value for the public purse? It seems to me that there is a conflicting agenda. How do we get to the root of that issue?

Peter Crory: If I may give an initial reaction to that, I believe that we need to sign up to a national youth strategy. The groups that are in front of the committee today very much come together with local authorities through YouthLink Scotland, but there is a big challenge on how that moves forward. For me, the issue comes back to the need for a local agenda. My view is that Scottish Executive funding should work for our communities by going through local authorities. We need a local community plan. That is great but—given the nature of young people and the territoriality that I mentioned to Adam Ingram—we need to see whether we can make that even more localised. I think that we can make that happen.

However, throughout the country the YMCA is concerned that a number of the funding structures—such as the better neighbourhood services fund and the sure start initiative—that are given as chunks to local authorities to give out are

being swallowed up. For the people at the grass-roots level in the community and voluntary sectors, it is very difficult to get access to those funding structures. It would be good if the structures worked properly and if they fed the money through those channels, because that would give a broader base. We would be able to respond to whatever needs arose by using the funds in a local context. The structures could work, but at the moment things get stifled as funds try to make their way through those channels.

Simon Jaquet: The knack will be to ensure that, when the national youth work strategy emerges, it is informed by a bottom-up process. It should not be a top-down imposed set of strictures and guidelines. We are certainly keen to ensure that we bring in the grass-roots views and the aspirations of young people, youth workers, parents and others. We might be able to do that through the local authorities or through the voluntary organisations.

Allister Short: The key issue is not how young people engage with community planning, but how community planning engages with young people. The issue is bringing it back down again, in the loosest sense of the words. Those who work with young people are expected to contribute to the plan, but surely the purpose of the plan is to make life better for young people. I think that we need to bring it back down again and keep it there.

The Convener: I have a couple of quick points. One is about information. We have the uniformed organisations and the variety of different bodies that you represent. How well does information about what is available get down to the average young person on the street or in the school? Could more be done in that regard, or is it not a problem?

11:45

Simon Jaquet: It probably is a problem, but there are two sides to that. The matter is to do with those who provide services being more public and raising awareness about what is available. It is about, for example, encouraging a situation in schools where the doors are open to voluntary organisations to come in and have a role in access and citizenship programmes. It also means opening the eyes of young people to the fact that there are organisations in their vicinity that they might wish to get involved with or volunteer for. It is very much a two-sided process, in terms of supply and demand.

Rhona Brankin: I am interested in your definition of youth work and in locating it within lifelong learning. I was on the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee in the previous session; we examined the whole area of lifelong

learning and the possibility—and in some cases the benefit—of having what can be described as bite-size chunks of learning. That might involve some sort of accreditation, which could link youngsters back to more formal education. We recognised the importance of the informal learning that goes on out there in the community. Do you have any thoughts on how links can best be made?

Simon Jaquet: I have a couple of quick thoughts, then I will ask Allister Short to say something, because he runs a particular scheme through his organisation.

First, lifelong learning is a critical area, not least because—as was mentioned earlier—employers are looking increasingly for what are called, erroneously in some ways, soft skills rather than hard skills. Soft skills are to do with interaction, whether that means leading teams, taking the initiative or relating to others. Those skills are hard to learn, but once someone has them they are pretty strong. Youth work does that supremely well.

A research project of ours, which was funded by the Scottish Executive and delivered by the University of Strathclyde and the Prince's Trust, slightly reformulated what youth work is about. It used the phrase

“the development of social and emotional competence”.

In a way, it gives a new piece of terminology to something that has been around—as we have heard today—for 150 years. However, that terminology makes sense today.

In addition, a number of schemes formally recognise young people's achievement. Allister Short is involved with the youth achievement awards, which it may be worth saying something about.

Allister Short: The youth achievement awards are about focusing on what young people are into. A lot of people come along to youth groups and get involved in issue-based work, peer education and exchanges. The amount of learning that they do is enormous. The youth achievement awards develop a structure that allows them to measure their participation and monitor their progression. In addition, it is peer assessed, so young people assess one another, which is probably the hardest market to crack into. That allows young people to take on increased levels of responsibility, but in an area of work that interests and excites them. That may be issue-based work, exchanges or organising things for the younger members in the youth group.

That goes back to the point that came out of the MORI poll work about young people getting involved in volunteering. The awards are

accredited through ASDAN—the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network. Young people progress through bronze, silver and gold up to platinum level. It is about leadership and personal development plans. We have worked with eight local authorities, which have all signed up as operating agencies for the awards.

HMIE inspections have said that more must be done to recognise young people's achievements. I believe that young people are achieving masses. The youth achievement awards are just one of many ways of recognising young people's achievements. Young people can be told that working for an award is worth while because they can add it to their curriculum vitae. However, the award is not just a product; young people also gain something from the process of achieving the award.

The Convener: I am conscious of the time, so I suggest that, unless members have burning questions, we will end this evidence-taking session. Some matters can be followed up afterwards, if members wish.

Rhona Brankin: I have a quick question on attracting and retaining adult volunteers for youth groups. Can adult volunteers take accredited courses as part of their training? Are there bite-sized chunks of learning that adults can be encouraged to take up? Can that learning be viewed as a positive route for their own personal development?

Allister Short: Courses are run in certain places but, as volunteers often carve out two hours a week or so from family and other commitments, it is difficult to ask them to do more. Much of the training work that we do with volunteers is functional, such as training in managing challenging behaviour, developing new programmes, supporting young people and child protection. Local authorities tell us that they want more training programmes, particularly for part-time workers who might want to do more.

Benny Lawrie: We have been doing a lot of work on volunteer training. The first level of training in sport for trainers is the national governing body awards, which can be intense and take a long time. I spoke earlier about the TOPS club in Stirling. We asked the volunteers, who were parents from a deprived area, to do six hours of general training before we would allow them to run the TOPS club. They did that by taking bite-sized, two-hour chunks of training in a particular sport. We worked with the governing body awards schemes to develop that training and now seven—I think—of our 40 volunteers have gone on to do a full governing body award. However, it has taken two years to get them to that stage of confidence. I hope to expand that training by getting other sports' governing bodies to break down their training into bite-sized chunks for new volunteers.

Simon Jaquet: All major national voluntary organisations and all local authorities provide training for volunteers and part-timers. However, the delivery of the training varies—as may the quality, but that is not for me to say. Training is not coherent nationally. However, we are exploring the support that we could give, for example to a volunteer or part-timer within a local authority who moves to another area and wants to volunteer to work with the scouts or the guides. We are exploring the extent to which they could take a passport of qualifications with them. That happens to some extent already. However, it would make sense for someone who had been through the guides' or scouts' extensive training programmes, which have been developed over a number of years, to be qualified to work in a different setting or organisation. We continue to work on that idea.

The Convener: I am conscious that we have only scratched the surface of some issues. Nevertheless, I believe that the session has been an important and helpful exercise in getting a feel for what is going on in youth organisations. I am grateful to the different organisations for coming along this morning. One of the useful ideas that I want to follow up is the idea from Allister Short's written submission of alcohol-free cafes. We might want to come back to the witnesses on certain issues, and might build doing so into our work programme. I thank the witnesses for their attendance. The committee is indebted to them for their help.

I draw to members' attention that we initially scheduled a discussion about how we would progress the young people issue. I suggest that we put that discussion on the agenda for our meeting on 29 October, which is likely to have a light agenda. We can have a proper discussion around the issue because we will have the *Official Report* of today's meeting. In the meantime, the clerk will ask the Executive for information on the time scale for its youth strategy development work. It was indicated to me that there might be a report in February or so, and it would be worth while finding out about that. We will also consider a paper on our work programme in due course, so we might want to consider whether we should follow up and take on board anything from today's evidence session. Do members agree to my suggestion for the meeting of 29 October?

Members indicated agreement.

School Transport Guidelines

11:54

The Convener: We return to the Scottish Executive's revised school transport guidelines. We have already had a fairly thorough discussion of some of the issues. I invite Fiona Hyslop to kick off.

Fiona Hyslop: I am conscious that the guidelines were produced in response to our predecessor committee's inquiry on the matter. That followed two petitions, which were specifically about issues of personal safety and the volume of cars on rural roads. The paper that we received at our previous meeting covers the issues to an extent. It focuses on the need for more flexibility, but that is an issue of common sense. It emerged from the guidelines and from speaking to officials that there is no funding mechanism or additional funding to help to improve school transport. All that has really happened is that guidelines have been updated with that suggestion of more flexibility.

I was struck by the contributions of colleagues, and it is clear that there is more to the issue than simply personal safety. The question is whether we keep a watching brief or whether we might want to examine the matter with regard to legislation. The committee should either stick to the traditional view, which involves 1-mile, 2-mile and 3-mile radiuses governing access to school transport, or it should take a more holistic view, together with colleagues on the Local Government and Transport Committee.

We should perhaps consider whether school transport in modern times is a wider issue. The situation has changed so considerably since the first pieces of legislation in the area were put together that we should take a wider look at the matter. We should consider how people live their lives and what current school transport arrangements are. In Glasgow, the number of schools is being rationalised considerably, which will perhaps have an impact. Rhona Brankin spoke about green schools and yellow-bus piloting. I think that we need to keep a watching brief on such issues, although it will be up to colleagues how far we pursue them. The guidelines have addressed my concerns on the matter of personal safety, even if they are not as strong as I would like them to be.

Our previous discussion demonstrated that there is more to the matter than the simple updating of guidelines. There are more fundamental issues at stake. Should the committee appoint a reporter on the subject? Should we monitor it? Should we take a stand on it? If the committee could tackle school

transport, that would be a major contribution to both education and the environment.

The Convener: There was a clear perception of departmentalitis last week. There seemed to be no appreciation, at least on the part of the officials from whom we heard, about the interrelation with transport for disabled people or with green transport plans, for example. We could well pursue the issue.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The issue is extremely important. Anything to do with the safety of children has to be given top priority. I wonder whether it might be appropriate for us to make decisions on the matter once we have received the answers that we requested from the Executive. The Executive was going to write to us on a number of issues. I wonder if the clerk could send a gentle reminder that we are awaiting the Executive's further evidence. There were some questions that the Executive was not able to answer when we discussed the subject previously.

The Convener: Ken Macintosh has had to leave the meeting, but he left me a note that, in many ways, echoes some of Lord James's concerns. Among other things, he asks whether the guidelines can be amended to take account of and provide an incentive for local authorities to reduce the volume of school-run traffic. He also mentions a need for greater transparency in the guidelines and for greater equity and fairness across Scotland on charging.

Rhona Brankin: The issue also links into planning. It will be difficult to change things, but it seems that there has not been the cross-cutting thinking that is required. The committee could try to tie things together in a more holistic way.

The Convener: Would it be reasonable if I, as convener, were to write to the Executive on the matter, referring to our meeting today and drawing some of the issues to its attention? I could ask the Executive whether it is investigating the issues further. We will see whether a response can be brought to the committee later. Some of the issues are narrow, but some of them are broader and on-going. Clearly, we should move away from what could be described as the traditional, fairly narrow approach if we are to take some of the issues that have been raised into account. I dare say that the ministers are aware of many of those matters, but it would be helpful to know what their thinking is in that context.

Dr Murray: We should also seek clarification on the statutory requirement on local authorities to provide transport, as last week's evidence was unclear. The officials seemed to think that the 2-mile and 3-mile limits relate only to attendance, not to the provision of transport.

The Convener: The officials made it clear that that is the case.

Dr Murray: All the local authorities with which I have dealt believe that the limits are a statutory requirement.

The Convener: The guidance is reasonably clear that the limits are not statutory.

Dr Murray: Local authorities do not seem to understand that.

The Convener: They use the limits as the basis for providing transport; I do not think that the issue is important practically. Certainly, the limits were arrived at as a by-blow from the attendance issue, rather than from a direct view about school transport requirements.

12:00

Dr Murray: I am not sure what local authorities are required to do. Is legislative change necessary or can the basis on which transport is provided be changed through alternative guidance?

The Convener: Do members want to write formally to the minister on some of those issues? The Executive officials took away issues that we wanted to know more about, but there are also issues about targets and reducing the clutter of vehicles at school gates. Rhona Brankin's point about yellow buses was also relevant. The clerk, Martin Verity, has a note of most of the issues that we have raised and we have the *Official Report* of the previous meeting. We will pursue the matter and decide what to do when we receive a reply, which could conceivably come at the end of the month.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I presume that, if the minister sends a comprehensive reply, it will include the replies that the officials would wish to give.

The Convener: That is right.

Rhona Brankin: Could we include a question on whether transport plans are required when new schools are built?

The Convener: The letter will include issues that were raised in members' questions at the previous meeting, which were pretty thorough.

Fiona Hyslop: I assume that the letter will ask the minister about his policy and aims on the issue and whether the guidelines are a holding measure or the end of the review. If they were the end of the review, we would be concerned; if they were part of an on-going process, we would be happier.

The Convener: I will circulate to members a draft letter to ensure that all members' interests are comprehended in it.

Rhona Brankin: We should say that we welcome the Executive's response, but that we felt that it raised wider issues.

12:03

Meeting continued in private until 12:33.

The Convener: We will draw attention to the fact that the issue has perhaps not received a broad examination for a while. Do members agree that we should write such a letter?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Once Martin Verity has put his letter-writing skills to good effect, we will circulate the letter.

Following the decision made earlier, we now move into private session to consider agenda item 5, which is on the committee's response to the budget.

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 17 October 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
0870 606 5566 Fax 0870 606 5588

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