



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

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**COMMITTEE  
FOR EMPLOYMENT  
AND LEARNING**

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**OFFICIAL REPORT  
(Hansard)**

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**Inquiry into Young People not in  
Education, Employment or Training  
(NEETs)**

2 June 2010

**NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY**

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**Inquiry into Young People not in Education, Employment or  
Training (NEETs)**

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**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Mrs Dolores Kelly (Chairperson)  
Mr Peter Weir (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Paul Butler  
Mr Trevor Clarke  
Ms Anna Lo  
Mr David McClarty  
Mr Pat Ramsey  
Ms Sue Ramsey

**Witnesses:**

Ms Clare Conlon	)	YouthAction NI
Mr David Guilfoyle	)	Youth Council for Northern Ireland
Mr Sean Madden	)	YouthAction NI
Mr Harry Murphy	)	Artillery Youth Centre

**The Chairperson (Mrs D Kelly):**

We have set aside approximately half an hour for the briefing. I ask the witnesses to make their presentation within five or 10 minutes. That will allow members to ask questions afterwards. I believe that a paper is to be distributed. I welcome David Guilfoyle, Harry Murphy, Sean Madden and Clare Conlon.

**Mr David Guilfoyle (Youth Council for Northern Ireland):**

On behalf of the group, I welcome the Committee's active interest in this matter. We thank you for the opportunity to make our presentation; we know that you have a busy agenda. Therefore, we will try to be succinct and to the point.

As some of you will be aware, the Youth Council is a public body which advises the Department of Education on key issues that affect young people. We also try to promote initiatives to meet young people's needs. Therefore, we are here today because we recognise that young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) need particular support. The most important members of the panel are my three colleagues, rather than me. They all play an active role in that field.

YouthAction is the largest voluntary organisation that is grant-aided by the Youth Council. It has an excellent track record of working with young adults. Clare Conlon is head of training. Sean Madden is now a project worker. Formerly, he was a participant in a range of programmes that are run by YouthAction. Harry Murphy is a former member of the Youth Council. He is now a senior youth worker at the Artillery Youth Centre in Belfast, which is well known for its innovative and effective work with young people.

Without any more ado, Chairperson, I will pass over to them so that they can tell you their stories.

**Ms Clare Conlon (YouthAction NI):**

I will tell you briefly who we are as an organisation; the programmes that we run that are specifically tailored to young people who are classified as NEET; and the approaches that we use in those programmes.

YouthAction Northern Ireland is a regional voluntary youth organisation with a 65-year history of working with young people. All of our work is done with young people in communities to improve their life chances, tackle inequalities that they face, and contribute to their communities.

Since the mid to late 1980s, we have made working with young unemployed people a key

focus of our work. In the early rounds of European funding, we were able to draw down funding successfully for programmes that were specifically tailored to young unemployed people through the European social fund, the Equal programme and the Horizon strand of the European Community employment initiative.

What do we do? We offer a number of bespoke programmes for young unemployed people — those who are classified as core NEET, who face a range of barriers and a number of complex issues in their lives that prevent them from succeeding and achieving in formal education or training programmes.

We offer basic programmes that focus on personal development right through to a level 3 apprenticeship in youth work, which uses youth work methodologies. We offer a range of programmes, all of which, irrespective of to whom they are targeted, are based on youth work approaches and methodologies. Youth workers' skills are fundamental to the success of programmes and positive outcomes for young people.

We have developed those programmes during the past 15 to 20 years. They are all well documented. We write up our models of practice. I have copies of reports for the Committee. The most recent report relates to a programme for young mothers, which was launched by the Minister of Education in February 2010. Therefore, models of best practice exist in the youth sector that have been documented, tested and tried.

The Reach programme is currently funded through the new rounds of funding from the European social fund and the Youth Council for Northern Ireland. It is targeted specifically at young people who have few or no qualifications. Of the 208 young people whom we have worked with during the past year and a half, around 91% have qualifications that are lower than level 2, and 55% have no qualifications at all. That is a startling fact.

The programme is targeted specifically at young people who have few or no qualifications and who face a range of barriers and challenges. It focuses very much on basic personal development. It examines young people's personal life issues. Many of those young people are addicted to drugs, either prescribed or illegal. They have problems that are associated with alcohol and homelessness — a plethora of challenges that are all interlinked. Sean can discuss those issues further. Reach is very flexible and adaptable. We work where young people are at in

that stage of their lives.

Another course that we offer is called Moving On, and is specifically tailored to young mothers and the challenges they face. People talk about young people as if they are a homogenous group, but they are individuals with different needs. Groupings like young mothers have particular needs; so have young men, and we try to respond to each. We offer a young men's volunteering scheme, which lasts for six months and focuses on developing young men's role and status in their communities. That has proved very successful too.

We have delivered a community leadership programme for 20 years. It is an employment and training programme for young leaders who lack the traditional qualifications, confidence and skills to be able to move on into further employment or higher education. That has proven highly successful. It is now recognised by the Department of Employment and Learning as an apprenticeship in youth work.

From Reach programmes for really marginalised young people to the level 3 community leadership programme, we use youth work methodologies and develop the skills that are fundamental to that.

The three Rs of youth work are recruitment, relationship and the response to programmes. They make all the difference. No matter how good or sophisticated a programme is, if we cannot engage or access where young people are at, it will not work. The skills of the youth worker are fundamental to making the programme work for young people, wherever they are, and to giving the time and space to recognise them as individuals and valuing them as young people.

Our approach is as follows. The community leadership programme that we deliver was recently inspected by DETI, and we were given a grade 1. That was down to the way we run the programme and our youth work approach. Pastoral care is highlighted; there is after-support and we take account of the young person in a holistic way. We also take account of the social context in which young people operate. We need to build young people's coping skills and resilience, not just in relation to vocational development, but in their work skills. They must learn to be on time, to be punctual and to take responsibilities in the world of work. That is as important as the vocational core skills that they are developing.

The youth work approach is fundamental: the relationships, the recruitment and a flexible, tailored programme which takes account of where young people are at. The skills of the youth worker are fundamental to success.

**The Chairperson:**

Thank you, Clare.

**Mr Sean Madden (YouthAction NI):**

I work in the training section, with Claire, on the Reach project. I want to start by telling you about my journey: where I came from and how I got involved in YouthAction.

I first became involved in YouthAction at about the age of 18. I would have been termed as a NEET at the time. I had just left school, I had no real interests, and I did not know where I was going to go. My whole life at that time revolved around standing in the park drinking at the weekend, playing football on a Saturday morning and standing waiting for riots on a Sunday afternoon. At the time, it was socially accepted and it was the norm. I lived at an interface in north Belfast. I did not believe that I had any other opportunities or choices. Everyone else around me: my peers and those above me, were doing the same things. I could not see any way out of it, until a youth worker approached me. I did a little volunteering, and the youth worker came to me. He gave me an opportunity; a choice. He said, “You can either go down this route, get a criminal record and you will be stuck for the rest of your life, or you can stick with the volunteering, put your head down and get into it.” Fortunately, I picked the second route.

Around that time, the CLP programme that Claire mentioned started up. I was successful in applying for it. I can say that it changed my life, professionally and personally, 100%. The CLP is a 16-month intensive apprenticeship in youth work. Two days are spent learning youth work skills; that is in-house training. During the other three days, you are out in placement in your own community. I was lucky enough to be placed in my own community of Newington. The main thing for me was that it built up my confidence and self-esteem, not just professionally but personally. It helped me to unlock potential that I did not even realise I had.

The course worked because the people taking it were so skilled. As Clare mentioned, they used the youth work approach of building relationships, supporting and encouraging me and challenging me to take risks. They challenged me to believe and to set goals for what I wanted to

achieve, which was to be a youth worker. The combination of the training and community approach of an organisation such as YouthAction worked for me, 110%. It enabled me to put my practice to the benefit of my own community, which also benefited me no end because I always wanted to give something back to my community.

My current role is with YouthAction on the Reach project, which is a three-tiered, needs-led approach that works with young people from the ages of 16 to 25 who are termed as NEET. I adopt a lot of the approaches that I learned on the CLP. We adopt needs-led programmes in which we try to challenge the issues that the young people face. The three Rs recruitment, relationships and response — are paramount to working successfully with young people who are hard to engage or NEET.

We had worked with around 208 young people until March 2010, and 68% of those people have achieved accredited qualifications to try to get back into the labour market, such as youth work qualifications from the Open College Network (OCN), and they have also received training in first aid and computer and literacy skills. We also work with a lot of homeless young men who have been referred to us by hostels. We have supported those people in moving into independent living and two of them are currently studying youth work at university.

Untold numbers have gone on to secure part-time and full-time employment, and loads have gone on to do further training in more structured programmes. Our programme works with young people who are not ready to move on to such structured programmes. We provide six or 12-week personal development programmes and refer participants to the likes of Springboard or the Prince's Trust, if they are at that stage.

The most important thing that I have learned from working with young people who are termed as NEET is that they do not all face the same issues. However, I always like to use the same youth work approach. It is about building their self-esteem and confidence and addressing needs-led issues. It is also about giving those young people opportunities and helping them to make correct choices in their lives, because a lot of them have simply made bad choices in their lives. The youth work approach definitely helped me to make correct choices in my life, which is why I am so committed and dedicated to helping young people. There will hopefully be time for questions at the end, and anyone who wants to ask me any questions is more than welcome to do so.

**The Chairperson:**

Thanks very much for that, Sean. It was a very honest account of the turning point in your life.

**Mr Guilfoyle:**

I will invite Harry Murphy to give his perspective, after which I will give a quick summary.

**Mr Harry Murphy (Artillery Youth Centre):**

Thanks for having us. I have been a youth worker for 25 years. I started out volunteering with an unemployed group in the 1980s. I have pretty much worked through a whole gamut of projects and programmes, and specialised in work with the 15-to-25 age range. People around the table will be aware of all the schemes that have been used to address that demographic over the years, such as Wider Horizons programmes, and so on.

I am currently involved with the Artillery Youth Centre and the Terry Enright Foundation, and both projects take a very similar youth work approach. Youth work is much misunderstood. It is a profession, but it has been diluted by people who work with young people, assuming that they are doing youth work. Youth work is a particular way of working. We involve young people in decision-making. The young people we work with are called NEETs — they have been called all sorts of things down the years, some of which may not have been pretty — and this Committee is tasked with looking at their needs.

By and large, those young people are looking for the things that we are all looking for, such as belonging, connection, responsibility and an outlet for their talent, whatever that may be. The need for employment is a huge motivating factor for most young people. Regardless of what you may have heard in the media or what your perceptions are, most young people want to belong to something and to lead productive lives. They want to get on with a life that has responsibilities, happiness and love, and all the things we need and want.

Over the years in working with this demographic, I have seen trends come and go in relation to Jobskills programmes and training schemes. A number of years ago, I read about a training provider who was teaching joinery through a training scheme, and he remarked that young people need guidance more than anything else. He could teach them how to hang a door or make tables, but the group of young people he was dealing with, who had left school with minimal



qualifications, had a range of issues, problems and baggage that he was not equipped to deal with. Youth work has a role to play in addressing that, because of its particular approach and the professional skills that it brings.

All the work that I have done over the years has been based on the participation of young people, which essentially means democratising decision-making. Rather than having top-down approaches that do things to young people, we should do things with young people and involve them in decision-making and in planning their own futures. If we do not involve young people in the planning and delivery of training schemes, they will work only sporadically, and the type of young people whose needs we are trying to address today will continue to be left at the margins.

The innate response that Committees such as this or the Government have to the issue is that outcomes must be achieved. That is fair enough, and we all need to see that, but the problem is that the young people who have been failed by the education system will continue to be failed by well-meaning and often clumsy attempts to address that failure. Sometimes, those attempts have worked and sometimes they have not, and we must learn from some of the things that have worked.

Youth work has the capacity to engage, motivate and support young people, particularly the demographic that we are considering today. Our approach is based on a voluntary arrangement with young people going to youth workers because they want to, and not because they have been told to do so by probation officers, training scheme providers, or others. The fundamental nature of that arrangement opens up a more honest relationship between an adult, who can offer guidance and support in an informal setting, and a young person who needs just those things.

The Artillery Youth Centre tries not to work outside of the family setting. I have seen youth work done badly, and sometimes there is almost an arrogance that things can be done outside of the family, which, for good or ill, is the main support mechanism for a young person. Youth work can make a difference when it works with families, young people and a broader community.

To add to what Clare said earlier, the practice, skills and methodology of youth work can complement and enhance a more formal structure. Youth work is not the answer to everything, but it can sit alongside more formal structures in the education or training systems or when a young person enters work. It can offer a guiding role and place a calm hand on a young person's

shoulder.

Finally, I have a few observations that I want to make to the Committee. One of the things that struck me when considering the issue is that there is not one-size-fits-all approach. Indeed, it would be prudent to employ a range and variety of methodologies and use both traditional and non-traditional methods.

Training schemes, modern apprenticeships and investing in apprenticeships are traditional models that can be built upon, but non-traditional support is also needed, which is where youth work can play a fundamental role.

Implicit in the scale and scope of the problem is that an interdepartmental response, perhaps headed by DEL, could be considered. It has been said previously that collaboration between Departments on different approaches, such as bend and spend, can save money. More money was around six months ago; however, ultimately, at a time of cuts, I can see from the outside that bending budgets between Departments could address that issue.

Finally, the Department should consider the viability of supporting a number of innovative pilot projects that seek to use youth work practice to address aspects of NEETs. I have probably not talked enough about the projects in which I am involved, but the information about my type of work is out there if people want to find it. If I could reinforce anything today, it would be that youth work has a role to play. Done well, it is a fantastic tool for working with young people in general and the demographic that we are discussing in particular.

**The Chairperson:**

I must ask the witnesses to be brief to allow time for members' questions.

**Mr Guilfoyle:**

Below the Youth Council's logo is the strapline, "investing in youth work". That investment can be monetary, and the Committee has heard from my colleagues that almost a cocktail of funding has come in. The one characteristic is that it is always short term, which is a problem. The other dimension to investing involves time and commitment. It seems that we have got a time commitment from local groups; youth workers; user organisations, particularly in the voluntary sector, such as YouthAction; public bodies, including education and library boards; and

Departments. We have heard the buzz term, almost clichéd phrase “joined-up”, but our final comment is a plea to the Committee to act as a catalyst to bring about a joined-up approach across government to these young people. I will stop there, Chairperson. Thank you for your time.

**The Chairperson:**

Thank you. The Committee has to receive other presentations today and I want members to have the maximum opportunity to ask questions and pass comment.

We are concentrating here on the cure, what do you see as a possible preventative method? Where did the system fail?

**Mr Guilfoyle:**

That is a big question. As a teacher who became a youth worker, I believe that issues must be addressed in schools. Indeed, the Committee report refers to such a need. There is an increasing degree of co-operation between youth work and schools. I helped the Department to organise a conference last November, at which we brought youth workers and teachers together to see how we could co-operate.

I am keenly aware of initiatives such as full-service schools and extended schools. Therefore, how can youth workers come into schools? How can teachers pick up on youth workers’ approaches? I believe that there is scope for partnerships there. We have a variety of models in which some youth work colleagues in, for example, the North Eastern Education and Library Board, are working with young people who elect to be part of the programmes in which they want to participate during school hours. The characteristics of many of those programmes are similar to those which some of my colleagues have described.

My final point is that some major research funded by the Department and carried out by the Youth Council over a decade ago found that, when it came to the personal and social development of young people, which is crucial, the most significant adult for young people in disadvantaged areas was not a teacher but a youth worker. Therefore, that partnership is very important and the Department recognises the need for closer collaboration between youth work and schools to catch young people early, before they slip through the net later.

**The Chairperson:**

If there is any additional information in support of your points, the Committee Clerk will be happy to receive it and include it in the inquiry report. A number of members have questions.

**Ms Lo:**

I very much agree with what the witnesses, particularly Harry Murphy, have said. In my 20 years in the voluntary sector, I have seen good and bad youth workers.

You made a very important point when you said that you can teach young people skills such as carpentry, but they need guidance and support. However, they also need role models, and youth workers, such as Sean, can provide very good role models for them. I want to hear more about your work with families. Often, youth workers work alone with the young person. When the young person's family is not involved, the work can fall down. Sometimes, it can even cause conflict between the young person and the family. Can you elaborate on how you work with families?

**Mr H Murphy:**

I am based in the New Lodge area, which is in north Belfast. We do a lot of outreach work, which does not necessarily involve going to street corners. It involves going to houses and knocking on doors, talking to parents and young people, and engaging with parents. Over the years, I have found that when youth work is done in isolation of families, it can go wrong, because families play the major role in the guidance and life of young people. Therefore, we tend to involve families in discussions around issues. We try to involve parents in whatever aspect of the work that we can, whether that means sitting down with the young person and deciding what type of training, education or course will suit them. Involving people in decision-making is a big part of what we do. That includes parents and young people, because, if they are not involved in the decisions around their lives, they feel powerless.

**Ms Lo:**

Do you find that they are supportive of you when you try to talk to them about it?

**Mr H Murphy:**

Very much so. Most people just want to be asked. It is a bit like when you are lost in the middle of a town and you ask for directions, 15 people will fall over themselves to help you. We have lost the ability to ask people for assistance. Therefore, we go and ask parents, and they are more than happy for us to do that. In fact, they are actually surprised and relieved that someone is

taking an interest in their children. The typical approach that was used in the past was that someone from an authority would come to a person's door to complain that their child was not working well in school or that they were disruptive or had broken a window, rather than coming to the door to say that they wanted to play a supportive role and to ask whether Sean or Mary wanted to get involved in a particular programme.

**The Chairperson:**

Mind you, if your son Sean broke a window, you might not be too happy.

**Mr P Ramsey:**

You are all very welcome this morning. I was a youth worker many years ago.

**Ms S Ramsey:**

When you were young?

**Mr P Ramsey:**

I was a wee bit younger.

**The Chairperson:**

He is only 25. That is what youth work did to him. *[Laughter.]*

**Mr P Ramsey:**

It is good to see the Youth Council here. I commend and acknowledge the significant contribution that youth workers across Northern Ireland have made in very difficult times during the conflict, with all the difficulties that young people have to face and given that health, well-being and social issues affect so many of them. Well done, and thank you on behalf of so many out there.

The inquiry is looking at best practice. Last week, we went on a fact-finding mission to Wales and Scotland, and we all talked about this great joined-up approach, but it is working in Wales in a more fundamental way than it will ever work here. When it comes to funding, the Youth Service has always been the poor relation, and, in my constituency, I have seen the dramatic and drastic cuts that are going to take place again in the Youth Service. Your opportunity today is to outline to us the benefits of having a better Youth Service. Obviously, your funding greatly

depends on the Department of Education and the education and library boards, who give the money. However, it is terrible that, in the education and library boards, the Youth Service has historically been the poor relation. When it comes to efficiency savings and cutbacks, funding for another youth worker gets taken away, and we see the demise in the structure of the Youth Service.

You said that 270 people now participate in the Youth Works process. How do the young people come your way? For example, what happens in Derry? Does a youth club refer people to the programmes? How does that materialise? How is it that you have so many groups?

You stated that 68% of the 200-odd young people to whom you referred now have accredited qualifications. We need to have that evidence in a more detailed form. We do not need it today, but it is important that we receive that data. I am sure that you appreciate that it is very hard to track the results scientifically and to see that we have an organisation, which has dealt with 200 young people over the past three years, 50% of whom have entered education or have sought meaningful employment. It is very hard to get that information because nobody keeps track of it. The Department is doing its best, but it is having difficulties. Ms Conlon mentioned that models of good practice exist. What are they?

**Ms Conlon:**

It is important that we present the evidence and document it. In respect of your point about how we engage young people, we are creative and we go where there are young people. That may mean going out in the evening; it may mean standing outside Primark on a Monday morning or at the Post Office. We go to wherever we need to go. The first step is to go where young people mostly are, which is in their communities, where they feel safe and confident and where they feel that they have a role. We spend a lot of time, initially, building the relationship with that young person and trying to understand him or her. We deliver programmes in communities. We take the programme to young people, but we also run some of our programmes from our building in the city centre. We try to encourage young people to come into the city centre and to feel that it is their city. We encourage them to be mobile, because if someone is not open to being mobile and to thinking about environments beyond their own, it will impinge on whether they are able to gain employment. We try to encourage mobility in the city as well as bringing programmes to local communities.

We document the fact that 55% of young people who join our programmes have no qualifications. We offer a basic level 1 qualification to some of those young people, but it is the first official piece of paper that they have ever had with their name and an award on it. That is such a big leap for them. We take things in very small, bite-size, measurable steps because there is nothing worse than offering qualifications to a person who feels that he or she will not be able to achieve them. They may think that they will fail because they have been labelled as a failure for their whole life. Achieving a basic level 1 qualification is a significant turning point.

We also offer a youth achievement award scheme. It is not a test, but it is a way of recognising young people's participation in programmes. They set challenges for themselves. It is very much based on their individual challenges. It could be about living on a budget or healthy living, but it is something that affects them personally. It is about recognising that an achievement is not just seen in academic or vocational terms but in a much wider, broader sense.

Many young mothers and lone parents see themselves as failures and think that society sees them as such. We tell them that they are carers, nurses, disciplinarians, that they do DIY around the house, that they live on a budget and that they have a load of skills. It is about helping young people to see that they have a valuable contribution to make and that they are not failures. It is about working with young people to identify their value and their untapped skills.

**Mr P Ramsey:**

Perhaps we can get more information at a later stage.

**The Chairperson:**

The session is being recorded for the Hansard report, so you will be able to look it up on the website and pick up any points on which you want to provide further clarification.

**Ms S Ramsey:**

Thank you. You are welcome, Sean. I want to take the opportunity to commend you. There is a fine line between going down the wrong road and the right road. There but for the grace of God — a lot of us can say that. Well done. I do not wish to patronise you, but I also think that it is harder for a young man at times because of peer pressure.

On the back of what Pat said, and the visit we had to Scotland and Wales, what struck me

during the course of the presentation is that there is a lot of good work being done — I think Harry is right. Some good work is done in private and some is done out in the open. However, there is also some bad work. The issue is about having a long-term strategy, because today's NEETs could be tomorrow's long-term unemployed. I do not know whether you have that information. One of the core objectives of the Youth Council is to facilitate collaboration between youth organisations in all sectors. I do not know if that is being done. I am wary that some people in the community sector might not relate to the Youth Council.

In the course of your presentation, it struck me that there are around 10 or 11 organisations that provide funding for all different parts of youth work. That ranges from the International Fund for Ireland to the EU and from the councils to the education and library boards. Where does it all fit together? We are talking about a joined-up approach, and that needs a proper partnership between government, agencies, the community and voluntary sector, and the community that we represent. Is there a study or a mechanism that would enable us to find out about all the programmes?

I took a note of some of the programmes that you mentioned; there are six or seven programmes that your organisation operates, six or seven that other groups operate, and there are another 100 groups or thereabouts. Can we look at that more wisely? It is not about cutting the pound; it is probably about spending the pound better. Are we wasting money by duplicating resources and because there is no short- medium- or long-term strategy?

What struck me when we were in Scotland was the exit strategy. There is a strategy to deal with some issues, but the key thing is the exit strategy. I do not see that anywhere. I do not know whether we can get that information. Our inquiry is to look at the positives but also to challenge the negatives, to challenge Departments and to try to get movement on the whole issue of NEETs.

**The Chairperson:**

We could ask the Assembly Research and Library Services to find out some of the answers that you do not feel have been given.

**Mr Guilfoyle:**

It is a matter of relationships. We have a good relationship within the Youth Service sector; we work closely with colleagues in the voluntary sector and the education and library boards. We try



our best to work together to be as complementary as we can be. Obviously, as you are well aware, there is a range of groups, so it is a difficult task, and co-ordination takes time. It is another task that people have to add on to a range of tasks. It is still a worthwhile challenge.

The other point that you made, which is a valid one, is about the plethora of programmes that exist. I commend the Committee on the excellent research that it published before Christmas. One could argue that there may be a need for a mapping exercise. What is actually currently happening in this field? We have also been aware of the need to look at good practice. For example, we have visited Wales three times in the last five years to look at other areas of work. It is good to learn what is happening elsewhere. There is a lot of good practice here, so the Committee may wish to look at mapping.

**Ms S Ramsey:**

We also need to find out about the funding, because funding is going into different areas from different organisations, and we need to find out where it is going. I am sure that all public representatives here get tortured every month by organisations whose funding is coming to an end. It may be outreach workers or workers employed by the council. There does not seem to be a joined-up approach to planning. It is not about taking money away, it is about spending that money properly.

**Mr H Murphy:**

I work for an organisation that does not receive any government funding at all. It made a decision early on not to take any government funding. That was simply because it was started up by a group of young people, and it is run and managed by young people. It was set up and was handed the keys to a building and told to do whatever it could. Now, 10 years later, it has a budget of £150,000 a year, it has four full-time workers and seven part-time workers, and it runs services across north Belfast. It is really because of that —

**Ms S Ramsey:**

Who funds it?

**Mr H Murphy:**

It is funded by the Big Lottery, Children in Need and a range of organisations. Some of it is self-funding. One thing struck me as quite sobering. I looked at the education budget and compared

it to the moneys that are available for intervention over the summer to cope with children and young people who are launched on to the street during the two months of the year when the education system closes down. It was not comparing like with like at all. We are talking about millions of pounds against thousands of pounds.

**The Chairperson:**

The Committee will examine how the services are streamlined. However, if one takes the example of the older persons' sector, Age Concern and Help the Aged come together. There has to be a realisation across all sectors, including the community and voluntary sector, that there has to be a rationalisation rather than everyone chasing the same pot of funding. Most of that money goes on overheads and administration.

**Mr S Ramsey:**

It is about people looking outside the box. It is about education.

**The Chairperson:**

It is about willingness as well.

**Ms S Ramsey:**

Yes. It is not about organisations saying that young people are not our problem when they get to a certain age. The Department for Employment and Learning will then say that it is not its problem; the Department for Social Development will have to deal with it. It is about all of that. It strikes me that when organisations are funded through other agencies, that money is not additional money that is going into the communities. The Departments walk away because funding is coming from the Big Lottery. That is not how that money was meant to be used; it was meant to be additional to government funding.

**Mr Guilfoyle:**

Yesterday morning, I met the chairperson of the Building Change Trust. One of the thrusts behind that meeting was to collaborate in a way to make money go further, get more bangs for the bucks and get better impacts. Certainly, the Youth Council recognises that as key. We distribute around £2.5 million to youth voluntary organisations, but we are concerned about how well that is used. We also recognise that the youth sector could lever maybe six times that. You have raised a valid point.

**The Chairperson:**

How much does the Department of Education give to the Youth Council?

**Mr Guilfoyle:**

The Department of Education funds the Youth Council £4 million a year. Of that, around £2.5 million goes out in grant aid. We worked out a year or two ago that, if one was to take every young person in the Youth Service age range in Northern Ireland, which is age four to 25, expenditure by the Department of Education on the Youth Service equates to £1 for each young person a week. I am not saying that schools do not need money, but if that figure were to be compared with the schools' budget, it gives a comparison of the value for money.

**The Chairperson:**

However, not everyone comes into contact with youth clubs and the Youth Council, whereas everyone comes into contact with schools.

**Mr Guilfoyle:**

We reckon that, at any one time, probably around two thirds of young people in Northern Ireland come into contact with youth organisations. That is around 180,000 young people in the Youth Service age range. In the course of their lives, I would guesstimate that at least 80% of young people have, at one stage or another, been a member of a youth organisation.

**The Chairperson:**

I have to draw the presentation to a close. Thank you for attending this morning and for your contributions. If there is anything further that you wish to add, please send it to the Committee Clerk. Your contribution will be included in the inquiry. I hope, Sean, that you are a role model. I am quite sure that you are a role model to many people in your local community.

**Mr Guilfoyle:**

We thank the Committee for its time and wish it all the best in its endeavours.