



Northern Ireland
Assembly

**COMMITTEE
FOR THE OFFICE OF THE
FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY
FIRST MINISTER**

**OFFICIAL REPORT
(Hansard)**

**Departmental Briefing on the Child
Poverty Strategy**

6 October 2010

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

Departmental briefing on the Child Poverty Strategy

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Danny Kennedy (Chairperson)
Dr Stephen Farry (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Martina Anderson
Mr William Humphrey
Mr Barry McElduff
Mr George Robinson

Witnesses:

Ms Patricia Carey) Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Mr Paul Galway)

The Chairperson:

Good afternoon. You are very welcome. Thank you for your attendance. You are here to provide an update on the Department's work on the child poverty strategy. The evidence session is being recorded by Hansard. We anticipate that you will want to make an opening statement and then leave yourselves available for questions.

Ms Patricia Carey (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):

I am the policy lead on poverty, social inclusion and disability in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). My colleague Paul Galway from our policy division is working

with me on child poverty. We are grateful to the Committee for giving us this opportunity to outline the plans for the child poverty strategy. Ministers were keen for the Committee to be kept fully up to date with what is happening, particularly in the light of the Committee's inquiry into child poverty.

We intend to launch the consultation document in the week commencing 25 October. The Committee will be aware that the Child Poverty Act 2010 came into effect on 25 March 2010 and that it gave us a year to bring forward a child poverty strategy and lay it before the Assembly and the Secretary of State. The same applies to Scotland and England, where the report has to be laid before Parliament. Therefore, we have a very tight timescale within which to develop a strategy, consult fully on it and lay it before the Assembly in March.

The 25 October launch date will allow a minimum consultation period of 10 weeks. We are still hoping for a 12-week consultation, but it will be at least 10 weeks. Ministers have written to their Executive colleagues asking for departmental contributions to the strategy. As you know, OFMDFM is the lead Department, but the Child Poverty Act 2010 makes it clear that each Department must demonstrate what commitment it is making to meet targets.

The overall target is to eradicate poverty by 2020, but a series of three-year strategies set out the map by which this Administration and the UK will do that. The first three-year strategy will contain the actions that we think can be taken forward by this Administration to eradicate poverty as realistically as possible. We are still waiting for Budget announcements, so, although the strategy will be launched in October, it may well not contain all the actions that this Administration will be able to take. OFMDFM and other Departments are still looking at the Programme for Government and spending plans. However, as far as possible, it will address those issues that could be included in the strategy.

Ministers intend to provide the Committee with a draft strategy in time for its meeting on 20 October. Given that there has not been an opportunity to consider the policy options with the Committee because they are still being developed, Ministers have offered to have a meeting with officials post-October to allow the Committee time to look at the content of the strategy and explore the policy detail. I can only talk about process today, because the policy options are still being developed.

We have had quite an extensive pre-consultation. At official level, we issued a document

entitled 'Starting the Discussion' to voluntary and community groups and stakeholders in August. That was aimed at starting the discussion and identifying some of the issues relating to child poverty. It did not cover any particular policy proposals, but we have had quite a good response from a variety of organisations, and we are taking full account of what they have said in working up a strategy that will tackle child poverty. We have also had a series of meetings with stakeholders, mostly children's organisations and groups, with a view to asking them what the key issues are for them and how they think we could best tackle child poverty. I can tell the Committee more about the outcome of that process, if that would be helpful.

There are other requirements under the Act, including that a child poverty commission be established. We are still waiting to hear from our colleagues in the UK Government about exactly what arrangements will be in place. There are still plans to have a child poverty commission, but they have not been finalised yet. The Committee will know that the commission will be required to consider and comment on the strategies from each Administration, and we will be required to take account of what it says. However, given that the commission has not been established yet, that is not possible at this stage.

The strategy will take full account of the Committee's recommendations on child poverty and will address each of the key areas that the Committee identified. As far as the structure of the document is concerned, some of the feedback that we have had so far is that it is crucial to have the child at the centre of the strategy and to look at each stage of the child's development. It should also take into account the skills of the parents and their prospects of getting employment, because that is a key factor in addressing child poverty. Up to now, we have been looking at the strategy more in the context of the building blocks set out in the legislation, which relate to the skills of the parents, healthcare and childcare in almost a departmental functional sense. We will look at the strategy in that way as well, but we will very much take account of the feedback that we have had that the strategy has to be about what the child needs at each stage of its development and about the needs of different groups of children. The focus will be on what the child needs in the early years, what the child needs as he or she progresses through school, particularly in the transition phase from primary to secondary school, and on young people not in employment, education or training. The other main area to look at is what skills the parents need to move into employment and out of poverty. We are hoping to adopt that kind of structured approach.

The consultation document will not cover all potential actions because we have to prioritise and be realistic. The feedback that we have received from stakeholders indicates that the Government doing a relatively few significant things would be far preferable to them saying that they will do everything from day one. The strategy will complement work that we are doing in the children and young people's strategy and will take account of the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

I will now hand over to Paul, who will explain what form the consultation process will take.

Mr Paul Galway (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):

We have taken advice from expert organisations on how to consult effectively and sensitively with children, young people and parents. We have liaised very closely with an organisation called Participation Network to take advice on how to engage effectively with children and young people in the development of this important child poverty strategy.

In line with that, there will also be a children's version of the consultation document. Work on a children's version of the draft strategy and the consultation process will be facilitated and supported by groups that work directly with children. We are currently developing plans to launch the consultation process with children, young people and parents, and we hope to take that forward in the middle of this month.

Children's organisations and parents' organisations will play a key role in the consultation and participation process. As such, we have received a few proposals from organisations that are very keen to engage directly with children and young people on our behalf. Those proposals cover engagement with children and young people from a wide range of backgrounds, including migrant children, young offenders, children and young people who live in areas of deprivation, young parents, and so on. Proposals are currently being evaluated, and it is anticipated that we will receive further proposals during the formal consultation process.

We also intend to hold a number of public events at various locations throughout Northern Ireland, using a model that is very similar to the one used for the consultation on the Commissioner for Older People. The main focus of the consultation document and process will be on children who are most at risk, including Traveller children, children with disabilities, minority ethnic children, children with migrant families and any other vulnerable groups.

The Chairperson:

Thank you very much, Paul. Will the policy issues be resolved before the consultation is launched?

Ms Carey:

Yes.

The Chairperson:

However, you do not expect us to be made aware of those until after the consultation is launched.

Ms Carey:

Ministers intend to give the Committee a copy of the consultation document in time for consideration at the 20 October meeting. I was trying to explain that, with the launch being very shortly after that, the Committee's comments and views will be taken into account subsequently and as part of the whole rolling process.

The Chairperson:

Do the policy discussions — I have to be careful how I phrase this — include the issue of how poverty, particularly child poverty, is measured?

Ms Carey:

Feedback from stakeholders indicates that there is concern that the income-based targets that were adopted in the Child Poverty Act 2010 may not go far enough to really explore properly the causes of poverty and its effects. That could be looked at as part of the strategy and during the consultation period.

The Chairperson:

But not as a policy issue beforehand?

Ms Carey:

Probably not at this stage.

The Chairperson:

Why not?

Ms Carey:

It is mainly because we have a requirement to demonstrate how we meet the targets in the Child Poverty Act 2010 as they have been defined. In developing the Act, there was quite a lot of debate about what those targets should be. To meet the requirements of the Act and to move in a way that is consistent not just with the other Administrations but with what is generally understood to be child poverty and the measures that government use, we will use those targets. That does not preclude people from saying that they are not sufficient. An argument has been advanced by many organisations, including the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children, that we should be looking at a minimum wage to allow people to live a life that is not just above the poverty line. However, at the moment, we are demonstrating what we can do to meet the targets as set out in the Act.

The Chairperson:

I am sorry to pursue the matter, but it is quite important. When the Committee looked at the issue in detail as part of its inquiry, dealing with how poverty is currently measured appeared to be fundamental to a solution. It might be said that, unless and until that is addressed, you might be able to alleviate poverty but you will never be able to properly eradicate it. Unless you go to the very core of the measurement process and the tools that are used, how can you hope to alleviate it much less eradicate it, which was the original intention?

Ms Carey:

In some ways, we are looking at it differently in that we are trying to identify the causes of poverty and its impact, which might in itself take us to a conclusion that the current targets do not really measure that. There is an anomaly in so far as the targets to eradicate poverty by 2020 are income-based and have been set at a UK level, and all of the drivers are at Westminster to do that. The legislation has set out the building blocks, which are a guide to which departmental functions can influence poverty, particularly in the devolved Administrations. However, there is a disconnect between what Departments and this Administration can do and how they can demonstrate whether they have reduced the number of children in poverty. I understand the argument, and if it is the Committee's view that that is something that we should look at, we can reflect that and put proposals to Ministers on that basis before we release the strategy.

The Chairperson:

No doubt other members will comment on that.

You indicated that children will be consulted, and that seems to be a perfectly logical and sensible idea. I can understand that children can inform the consultation on the impact of poverty on their lives. However, is it a bit unfair to ask them to provide the solution as well?

Ms Carey:

In some ways, that is why we have taken advice from the Participation Network and children's organisations. We will encourage the participation of children and consultation with children through working with them. In doing that, we may not end up asking for solutions. However, identifying what the stigma of poverty means for children and identifying the issues that affect them most will help us to identify solutions. It will perhaps be less about asking for solutions and more about hearing what the children have to say. We may ask them whether they think that there are ways that government could deal with the situation, or we may look at what they have said and come up with the solutions ourselves. Given the age range that we are looking at, I imagine that there will be children and young people who will want to help to influence and inform government decisions and who will want to say what they think government should do.

Ms M Anderson:

Thank you for your presentation. Forgive me, Patricia, because this may not be of your making or even a reflection of your opinion, but, listening to what you said, I got the impression that what the Assembly and the Executive are doing is meeting an obligation to produce a child poverty strategy. We are going to do that by 2011, but the strategy might not be worth the paper it is written on when it comes to delivery.

You are relaying to us what you hear from Departments about the Budget and the impact that cuts, should they come, will have on them. The Departments are, therefore, holding back on poverty measures because of the fear of that impact. Here we have a graphic example of cuts that will impact on the most vulnerable, particularly children. That concerns me. The message from this Committee, which has worked very hard on a child poverty inquiry that made a number of recommendations, should be that that is not the approach that we expect Departments to take.

My concern about is that, if we are ticking a box and meeting a requirement, the strategy could be very high level. It could be so high level that it tries to do everything but drives nothing and is not targeted in a way that allows for a measurement of whether we will be able to deliver real change. Those are the areas of concern.

Ms Carey:

In an ideal world, we would not be trying to develop a strategy in these circumstances. When the Act and its requirement to produce a strategy within a year were first envisaged, it was perhaps not envisaged that there would be a change of Government or such a severe economic downturn. The devolved Administrations have to meet a requirement to consult appropriately and within a long timescale, which means taking time out of the policy development process to put together a consultation document.

If I have implied or made it seem that we are preparing the strategy to tick a box, then I must point out that my concern is not about ticking a box; my concern is that, given the timescale, we may not be able to do justice to a child poverty strategy between now and the beginning of the consultation process. That means that we must rely very heavily on the consultation process to explore and get to the bottom of some of the issues.

We have a deadline of 25 March. We have to, and we should, have a long consultation period, but there is also a period after that when there will be scrutiny and when Executive approval will be sought. The timescale was quite difficult and tight to start with. One way of dealing with that would be to not commit ourselves to putting everything into the strategy and leaving it for three years; we might have to build in some kind of mechanism to say that, in the first six months or the first year of the strategy, we will continue to explore the issues and carry out research.

I may not have characterised the position of Departments entirely fairly. It is a fact that the budget decisions have not been made; there is a degree of uncertainty, not just from Departments but from OFMDFM itself, as to what the allocations will be. In those circumstances, I do not think that there is any lack of willingness to commit to eradicating child poverty, but there is uncertainty around what the provision will be; it might not even be as much as it is currently. In that kind of climate, it can be difficult to make decisions. We are still receiving input from Departments, and that process will continue. So, until we have had a chance to have a look at the budget allocations, we cannot really comment on how much the strategy has been affected by the

budget process.

We want to avoid the strategy being a tick-box exercise and being high level. I do not think that there is anyone in our stakeholder group who thinks that OFMDFM is anything other than committed to doing as good a strategy as can be done. The fact that we have been working on not just a legislative requirement but a policy intent to eradicate child poverty is evidence of that.

The issue will be trying to get a balance between what can be measured and what is realistic and giving some insight into how poverty might be tackled over the longer term. Even if the first three-year strategy does not say what we are going to do, if it at least shows an understanding of the issues and some insight into them and can point to future actions that will eventually lead to the eradication of poverty, that would be welcomed. However, I take your point, and we will be mindful of it when developing policy in that area.

The Chairperson:

It sounds a bit like, live, horse, and you will eat grass.

Dr Farry:

To pick up on what Martina asked, to what extent is there a realistic assumption that the next Budget and Programme for Government will take on board the ongoing work on the child poverty strategy? The timing is rather unfortunate. It is probably not so much a case of how we try to protect child poverty measures in a declining financial situation but of looking towards the opportunities that can come from a smarter use of resources.

I will give you one example that is often cited. If a family is vulnerable and there is early intervention through Home-Start, for example, the intervention may cost £500 to £1,000, but if a child is taken into care, the cost is more than £80,000. The difficulty is that the Government have a statutory duty as regards the latter but not the former. However, if we are prepared to think smartly, the balance of resourcing can be front-loaded. How do we get those types of considerations into our Budget thinking at this eleventh hour?

Ms Carey:

We can do it in two ways. First, a great deal of the feedback on the ‘Starting the Discussion’ document and from the stakeholder event of 23 September was about that theme. If you focus on

early years and make interventions early, you can save quite a bit later on, and a number of organisations are doing research to quantify that. It is not exactly an invest to save model on the basis that you have outlined. We know that it costs £200,000 to keep a young person in youth custody, so the figures escalate through a child's life as the degree of intervention increases.

One way to tackle that issue is to reflect that growing body of evidence and opinion in the strategy and to state that that is the thinking. The other way is through the process by which not just the Committee but officials advise Ministers in developing the proposals. I will not go into the policy detail, but the theme of intervention at an early stage will feature and will be recognised, not just because of the evidence from stakeholders but because of the building blocks around which the Act is created.

Graham Allen MP carried out a study on early intervention and the difficulties that can arise for children and parents if educational needs and early care needs are not addressed. The UK Government asked him to set up a group to deal with that. Therefore, there is a growing body of evidence to show that early years intervention is one of the most critical areas to look at in addressing child poverty.

Dr Farry:

You mentioned youth custody. In the documentation, there was no mention of the justice system being an aspect of the strategy. There is clearly a major change in the local architecture. Work may be going on elsewhere to try to pull together interdepartmental working groups on issues such as reduction in offending, prevention of offending and better management of offenders in the community. There is a clear link between poverty and criminality. To what extent will that be brought into the strategy?

Ms Carey:

The Department of Justice must demonstrate what it is doing, and we have been liaising with officials there. Officials from the Department of Justice attended our event, and part of the process was to bring Departments and stakeholders together so that they can explore the issues together. The Department of Justice has been a late addition to the structures here, but we will work with our colleagues there to the same extent as we work with colleagues in other Departments. We hope that, when they bring forward their contribution, some of what you said will be reflected in it.

I have attended events at which the functions of the Justice Department have been explained, and I know that there is great recognition of the fact that the cost of keeping a young person in youth custody is not sustainable, given that that money could be spent on the provision of early years intervention. I also know that a high percentage — something like 70% — of the adult population in prison has a reading age of 11 or under. There are, therefore, cyclical, long-term issues that need to be addressed, and I think that the Justice Department recognises that. It goes back to your point about finding balance. The Department has a duty to carry out the role of government and, if necessary, take young people into custody. At the same time, it must invest money elsewhere rather than spend too much. It is a matter of trying to develop and maintain that balance.

Dr Farry:

I appreciate that I may be reopening an old wound, but I am relatively new to this Committee. The documentation refers to the eradication of child poverty by 2020, which is a target that presumably comes from the UK Child Poverty Act 2010. How exactly will that be measured and defined? I find it difficult to see exactly how that is a realistic target for absolute or relative poverty.

Ms Carey:

The target is to have less than 10% of children living in relative poverty by 2020. The measure for relative income poverty is 60% of the median. In addition, there is to be no more than 5% of children living in absolute poverty by 2020. Absolute poverty is currently measured through a baseline that was set in 1988-89 and which has been uplifted year on year. There has been quite a significant reduction in absolute poverty from that initial baseline. There is also a mixed measure of material deprivation and relative income, which looks at relative income and at whether or not children get holidays, have goods in their house, and so on. The target for that measure is to have no more than 5% of children below that threshold. Those are the kinds of measures that will be used.

It is difficult to demonstrate how the actions that we are taking are reducing or increasing those numbers and to make a direct link between the two. Nevertheless, those targets are there, and we must work towards them. The best way to do that, as the Act sets out, is to look at the things that I talked about earlier, such as interventions, adult literacy and parents' skills. It is

hoped that those will have a direct impact. However, we will also need to have our own targets and measures around those issues; for example, we could look at the number of children getting free school meals and the educational development of children from when they start school.

Mr McElduff:

First, I wish to ask about the time frame for the equality impact assessment that might be carried out on the Budget. Do you think that that will be able to incorporate the targets that the Department set in the strategy? Secondly, you talked about taking advice on the consultation process from expert organisations. What groups will you be talking to in the hard-to-reach category in order to hear about the experience of Travellers, ethnic minorities and migrant workers?

Ms Carey:

On the first question about the equality impact assessment, as you will know, the Equality Commission has published its statement on persistent inequalities, and the whole equality impact process is now focused on impacts and outcomes and on reducing those inequalities. Although there is no specific socio-economic duty to address child poverty under section 75, that duty will be introduced shortly in the UK through the Equality Act 2010. We are now looking at child poverty in that context, and there are persistent inequalities. For example, we know that children from poorer backgrounds are more likely to suffer long-term health issues and that they are more likely to have poorer educational outcomes. We will also look across the nine equality groups to see who is affected more than others. However, we intend to tackle poverty for all the children who fall into the categories that are defined by the legislation and below the 60% median line. That will be our approach to the equality impact of the poverty strategy. There is a requirement to policy-proof the Budget in relation to poverty and social inclusion, so that will take place. However, I cannot comment on how the equality impact assessment of that is being completed because that is not my area of responsibility.

We are relying on networks and groups to help us with the consultation. I met the Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance (CDSA), an organisation that brings together groups across the sector, to explore some of the issues. I met a number of other groups, including the Participation Network, which is funded by OFMDFM, to help us to identify which groups we should involve in the process. As Paul said earlier, we will be putting out a call to groups to let them know that, if they wish to hold an event or be involved in the participation process, we will

pay their basic costs. If they want us to come to their event, we will do that. If not, we are content for them to explore the issues. We are often told that it is better not to have officials sitting with children and exploring the issues; they are better with the people whom they know and trust and with whom they can have an honest conversation. We have not yet identified specific organisations for each of those vulnerable groups, but we will. We have about 300 to 500 groups on our stakeholder list, and all our communications will be sent out to them. I have also spoken to people at conferences, particularly about the Traveller issue, to let them know that we are very keen to talk to people and children in vulnerable groups. So, we are trying to be as inclusive as possible.

Mr Humphrey:

Thank you both very much for your presentation. I represent North Belfast, which has some of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland. A survey that was conducted within the past three years revealed that households in the Shankill had an average income of somewhere in the region of £15,300. There are, of course, particular problems in north and west Belfast, and there are socio-economic problems around interfaces as well. I very much welcome the strategy. I hope that it will deliver some of the solutions that are urgently needed in the community.

Paul, you mentioned that you are working with the Participation Network, and, Patricia, you mentioned children's organisations and stakeholder groups. I am keen to know more about those groups. Are state organisations that are involved in youth work, for example, the Scout Association, the Boys' Brigade, the Girls' Brigade and Guides, being consulted? They are often left out, as are the Churches. That is important. Will you also be working with people in community restorative justice programmes? There is an alternatives group in my area that does good work.

Ms Carey:

The groups that we have talked to so far have mostly been umbrella voluntary organisations, such as Save the Children, Barnardo's, Children in Northern Ireland, Action for Children, the Child Poverty Alliance, the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance. That has been a starting point in the pre-consultation. Our aim is to get to the children themselves and have as wide a representation of children as possible. If we have not thought of all of those groups, we will certainly make sure that we now include them.

We are very conscious of the need to involve the different church groups and the organisations that are linked to them. Some of those groups participate in the Child Poverty Alliance, and we have held a number of meetings with it. We are identifying groups, but, in some ways, part of the process involves others identifying those groups for us or groups identifying themselves. We are working to do that and will follow up on any suggestions.

Mr Humphrey:

The state youth organisations have tens of thousands of members. I would have thought that those organisations would be the first to be consulted. Those groups are made up of children who are being trained to be young leaders in communities, so contact with them is vital.

Patricia, you mentioned that the national Government and other mainland Administrations are also working on strategies, too. How confident are you that they will be joined up across the United Kingdom?

Ms Carey:

The timescale for the Welsh strategy is slightly different to our own as the Welsh have local legislation as well as their responsibilities under the Child Poverty Act 2010. Their strategy will be produced by December, whereas the Scottish and the English are working to the same timetable as us.

The Four Nations Forum on Child Poverty meets quarterly. The forum was very successful, particularly when the legislation was being discussed and brought in, because members were able to work together to identify and address some of the issues. We work very closely with the other Administrations. They face some of the issues that we face in meeting the timetable. Putting robust strategies in place within that timescale will be a challenge.

There are issues around the change in Administration and the process of putting in place the new Government. An awful lot of what happens in Westminster will affect the child poverty figures here, and I am sure members are aware of yesterday's announcement on child benefit. A key issue in developing not just a UK strategy but our own strategy will be getting to grips with the new Government's policy and the impact of that policy.

The Four Nations Forum on Child Poverty is due to meet this month in Belfast. We maintain

good contact with the members of the group at other times, too.

Mr Humphrey:

Is there a deadline for completion of the UK document?

Ms Carey:

The UK document must be laid before Parliament on 25 March. The timescale is the same as ours. The plan was for the UK Government to have consulted on the issue by now, as they, too, want to have a good consultation period. The document has not been released yet, but I can get an update from my colleagues and supply that to the Committee.

Mr G Robinson:

Officials are holding a series of discussions with Departments to explain the requirements of the Act and the ways in which devolved Administrations can contribute to the eradication of child poverty. How far advanced is that process and how sympathetic have the other Departments been?

Ms Carey:

We have one-to-one discussions with the four Departments that we identified as being key — the Department for Employment and Learning, the Department for Social Development, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Department of Education. That is not to say that the other Departments do not have a key role to play, but those four Departments have the greatest influence on the areas that were identified in the legislation as having a particular impact on children and parents. As regards the other Departments, a number of groups, including a child poverty subgroup and a group of children's champions, have met to discuss and explore the issues.

Departments are very sympathetic to the problem and realise the need to eradicate poverty. They realise that that is important not just for the children of today but for the children of tomorrow. The children of today will go on to become parents in the future, and the cycle of poverty will continue if interventions are not made. Evidence shows that children who are in a position of disadvantage when they start school will go on to become unemployed or take up low-paid jobs. They, in turn, will have children who will live in poverty and who will not get the best educational outcomes.

The other argument that is firmly in people's minds is that, if we do not look at addressing child poverty in the long term, the cost to society will be that we will have to pay out a lot of money to deal with issues that arise at a later stage in a child's development. That goes back to Dr Farry's point. We want to start to use some of that money now so that we can stop those behaviours taking place later on.

I know that the Department of Education has just published its early years strategy and that the Department for Employment and Learning is looking at what needs to be done to help young people not in employment, education or training. Departments are very much aware of the issues and are very keen to tackle them.

Ms M Anderson:

As part of your engagement with stakeholders, have you had any communication with the Anti-Poverty Network, particularly those who are working along the border corridor? People in those areas either side of the sheugh — the border — are twice as likely to suffer the effects of poverty. That may be something worth tapping into.

You talked to Barry about the equality impact assessment. Having heard some comments about that, I am concerned that sometimes EQIAs look at how to avoid doing bad things and at what kind of adverse impact a certain programme or policy is going to have on section 75 categories, rather than asking how we can promote doing good things and ensure that the equality of opportunity duty in section 75 is met. In line with the guidance that has been produced about output, we need to see how we can use that tool to change the patterns of the past in that way. I am not so sure that that has been completely inculcated into the mindsets of those who are working in that field.

The Chairperson:

It may be helpful to members if we forward the Hansard transcript of this session to the witnesses so that they can tease out some of the issues that members have raised, including the measurement issue that I raised. Thank you very much, and nice to see you again.