



Northern Ireland
Assembly

**COMMITTEE
FOR EMPLOYMENT
AND LEARNING**

**OFFICIAL REPORT
(Hansard)**

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

22 September 2010

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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AND LEARNING**

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Training (NEETs)**

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mrs Dolores Kelly (Chairperson)
Mr Jonathan Bell (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson
Rev Dr Robert Coulter
Mr Chris Lyttle
Mr David McClarty
Mrs Claire McGill
Mr Pat Ramsey
Ms Sue Ramsey
Mr Peter Weir

Witnesses:

Ms Louise Brennan)	Alternative Education Providers' Forum
Mr Conor Kennedy)	
Ms Mairead McCafferty)	
Ms Pamela Shields)	

The Chairperson (Mrs D Kelly):

You are all very welcome. Thank you for your attendance today. We have a number of briefings

this morning, and we ask witnesses to give a five- or 10-minute overview. That will allow time for members to comment, ask questions or seek clarification. Mairead McCafferty is the programme manager for Integrated Services for Children and Young People. Conor Kennedy is the manager of Open Doors, Louise Brennan is from West Belfast AEPs' Integrated Services for Children and Young People, and Pamela Shields is from Newstart education centre.

Ms Mairead McCafferty (Alternative Education Providers' Forum):

We are aware that you are under pressure for time. You will know that we have met the Committee before, and we have made submissions in relation to the NEETs strategy that the Committee is responsible for taking forward. We are really supportive of that because we have been working not just with young people who are NEET, which is a wonderful label that we have all come up with, but with pre-NEETs for a number of years now. As the Committee will know, we work across the whole of Belfast. We have alternative education centres on the Shankill and in north Belfast, east Belfast and west Belfast.

I do not propose to read the briefing paper word for word; there is nothing as bad as somebody doing that. However, you will be aware that young people who are in alternative education centres are there because they have very complex needs, and, for a variety of reasons that would take too long to go into, they have disengaged from mainstream education or been referred outside the mainstream school system because school does not work for them for lots of different reasons. As a result of all that, those young people will become NEET. This is obviously why the Committee is so concerned: we have 58,000 to 60,000 young people across Northern Ireland who are regarded as not being in education, employment or training.

Part of the work that we have been involved in has been about earlier intervention. We think that it is vital that we focus on pre-NEETs. Predominantly young people who are aged 14 to 16, and increasingly younger than that, are disengaging from school or having difficulty in the school environment, which is why we are being approached to see if we can take in younger children, such as year 10s. We are also mindful of the fact that we need to get into schools to do a lot of preventative work. We need to ensure that we work very closely with community organisations, because very often they can support young people and families in the communities and deal with some of the issues that will ultimately prevent their young people from falling out of the system

and support them to stay in it.

As you know, alternative education provider (AEP) centres work with young people in meeting their needs in a holistic fashion. We have also set up a multidisciplinary approach, which brings in the work of teachers, youth workers, social workers and peer educators. As a result of all the work that we have done, we have developed a reputation for good practice. Therefore, we will get placements from the University of Ulster, Queen's University, St Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College, and we are engaged in developing that whole programme. We believe that we need to educate teachers. I am not saying that teachers need to be educated, but, as a teacher, I hold my hands up and say that we do not get it right all the time. We have to make sure that our teachers are equipped for the real world and that they know how to deal with the young people who present with some of those issues in the classroom, and it is not a shock for them when they meet them in the classroom. We will talk more about that later.

What we want to stress to the Committee is that we have been regarded as a model of good practice not just by the Department of Education but by the Education and Training Inspectorate when they have done their inspections, which they do just like they do with ordinary schools and so on. We are a key partner in developing the NEET strategy. The multidisciplinary integrated approach is what works for these young people. You cannot think of a young person being in a classroom to be educated without understanding the context in which they live their lives. If you do that, they will fail and fall out of the system. If they do not fall out of the system at 14, 15 or 16, they will fall out of it when they go, in theory, into further education, training organisations or, possibly, employment. Our experience is that that happens too much. Obviously, you are well aware of that too.

One of the other things that we wish to stress — I think that we said this the last time that we were up — is the need for interdepartmental working. I know that I am preaching to the converted, because the Employment and Learning Committee is quite progressive in trying to make sure that the relevant Departments all work together. The Department of Education working with the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is vital because, in a sense, you are picking up where sometimes the system has failed. Do not say that I said that outside this

room.

Ms S Ramsey:

It was recorded.

Ms McCafferty:

It is also important to work with the Department of Health; the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment; the Department for Social Development; the Department of Justice, and so on. All of those organisations have a responsibility to ensure that they have a collective vision to address the impact of NEETs.

We also have to look at the issues that lead to those young people becoming NEET in the first place. A major focus for our development — this is some of the work that we do with AEPs through integrated services in west Belfast, and across the Shankill as well — is developing transition support programmes. Over the years, we have identified that, very often, there has been a huge gap in the transition from school into alternative education centres and even post-16. That was part of the reason that we talked to the Committee before: if a young person needs an extra year, or possibly two, with an alternative education centre, we have to have some way of supporting that. Those young people have missed so much of their schooling. By the time that they come to us, they need that extra year or two to make them ready for training organisations or employment. When our young people fall out of school and, in theory, then go to training organisations, they fall out of those as well. It is very important to develop a transition support programme that works for those young people and works with the training organisations, supports the young people for their first six months and tracks their progress after year one, and so on. We are in the process of developing that at the minute.

A lot of the work that we have done gives itself to research. I know that this is a bit of an aside, but action-based or experiential research is vital to make sure that we address a lot of the issues effectively.

The Committee will be aware that the alternative education centres across Belfast take referrals from the Belfast Education and Library Board and, increasingly, from other board areas

outside Belfast. Again, that is testament to the reputation and the good work that is done. We know how to work successfully with those young people, and they gain their qualifications. We also support their families. We are being asked increasingly to take in young people from different board areas. That has been the trend over the past number of years. My colleagues will talk more about that.

We know that the Committee supports the work that we do. We have to make sure that the strategy that the Committee produces is effective in the long term. That can only happen if the relevant Departments buy into it, support it and resource it. There have to be effective ways of monitoring the development and rolling out of such a strategy.

Thank you very much for listening.

The Chairperson:

Thank you very much. You finished by talking about resources, which will be a fairly critical issue in the coming weeks and months. I was not a member of the Committee when you were here before, although I am fairly up to speed with NEETs. A lot of people are telling us the same thing: prevention is better than cure. We are interested in the transition period and the young people who have to catch up. In terms of funding and whether they are entitled to allowances, which would be an incentive for them to participate in such training programmes, and in terms of resources for your own organisation, who are your main funders? That may be an aside, but it is important at this stage.

Ms McCafferty:

It is. Because we have worked with the Department of Education as well as this Committee for years, it has recognised that the provision is basically an alternative to being in school five days a week. In the alternative education centre they receive their education, timetabled to the curriculum, and their provision is second to none. I have to be careful not to run down some of the statutory provision. We in the community centre have a vested interest in our children being successful, so we make sure that they get the best.

The Department of Education funds some but not all places in alternative education centres,

and that is a core issue that we are taking up with that Department, particularly in the AEP review, the release of which is two years late. We are told that it will be published in the autumn; let us hope that it is autumn 2010. However, we also have to ensure that we get other resources from any kind of trusts, foundations, charities, the Big Lottery Fund or wherever. We will go to whoever we have to go to in order resource the work that we do, and that is how we have survived. Certainly with Newstart, it has been going for more than 13 years, and Open Doors is the same. We all depend on a cocktail of funding, and that, in my view, is unacceptable.

I believe that every child has the right to an effective education, which entails lifelong learning. It should be properly resourced; that is one of the issues that we have constantly stressed with the Department of Education. DEL has an obvious responsibility towards over-16s, which we know it will live up to. We are aware that there will be a lot of stresses and pressures in the current economic climate. One of the things that we have done is proving to be value for money. At present, there are 58,000 to 60,000 young people who are NEET across Northern Ireland — I am waiting for exact figures for west Belfast and Shankill from the integrated services programme. We must ensure that we do not replicate the mistakes of the past. If do not start to tackle this now, next year we will have another 60,000, and the year after another 60,000.

Therefore, while we have to focus a lot on the pre-NEETS and preventative work, we also have to work with young people who are already NEET. I know that does not answer your question totally, Mrs Kelly, but we exist on a cocktail of funding and we have to make sure that the funding, wherever it is in the system for that child, is delivered to where that child is being educated, trained and so on, and that is one of the things that we have also highlighted with the Department of Education.

Ms S Ramsey:

I have a couple of points. From the outset, I declare an interest: my father is involved in an alternative education project in greater Belfast. The Chairperson's point about the money and the cocktail of funding is valid, but alternative education should not sell itself short. Although nobody knows what we will face next month, I and others believe that we can actually save money if this is done right. We probably spend more money now because Departments are not talking: we have Health versus Education versus Social Development versus Employment and

Learning, and all of that stuff. It strikes me that if we get the integrated strategy that is needed, we could probably end up saving money. With no disrespect, done properly, that could put some of you out of business.

Ms McCafferty:

Yes.

Ms S Ramsey:

My other point is that, because it is a case of the Employment and Learning Committee versus the Education Committee, there is a concern that the money does not necessarily always follow the child, which, in itself, leads to problems. If the Education Department gives so many thousands of pounds to each child, it does not follow when that child goes into alternative education. We have to find additional money for that project. Those questions need to be answered.

Through integrated services, I am doing a bit of work with parents whose kids have educational needs. Over the past months, I have been struck by the constant battle that parents do not want to be part of: it is the board versus the school; the school versus the board; Education versus Health; this one versus that one; and the parents do not want to know. They just want to see end gains for the child's education. Some of it only needs small amounts of money or focus, or an additional reading class, etc.

The Committee is working towards a proactive strategy. It is not just about DEL; DEL picks up the pieces, but other Departments need to come in. I am interested in what you said about the pre-NEETs strategy. You are right: we are dealing with 50,000 or 60,000 kids this year, next year and the year after. We need to get in and deal with that. We can touch on some of that stuff; the integrated approach and the focus. In fairness, sometimes I think that the community and voluntary sector is further down the line than the officials.

Ms McCafferty:

I do not want to be the one talking all the time; Pamela wants to come in here as well.

You are right: parents are feeling a great deal of frustration. AEP is a big part of the

integrated services programme, and we support the work of the AEPs through that programme. It is very much about an integrated approach and trying to pull the various Departments together on the ground in west Belfast, the Shankill and so on. That is the first strand, and the idea is that it will be rolled out.

Working in an integrated fashion saves money, and that is what everyone needs to hear. It is one of the most effective ways of working. As you said, Sue, it is often not just about throwing piles of money at the issue. It is about a different way of working. If it is done collectively and properly, pulling together the various Departments' responsibilities will entail less investment by each Department. That is one of the things that we have pushed for.

You are right: the pre-NEETs strategy is vital. Alternative education centres across Belfast have been working for upwards of 20 years with young people who have fallen out of the school system for whatever reason. We have developed a model that has been proven to work, and we need to expand that now. The Department of Education, the Committee for Employment and Learning and all the Departments that have a responsibility need to take this forward in a much more effective and concerted fashion. That is how we will start to tackle the issues right across the North of Ireland.

Pamela wants to come in, so I will be quiet. One thing that I will say — one last point — which Sue touched on, is that, in doing the work that we do, we also support families. As you know, a lot of the children who become NEET have learning difficulties; a lot of them do not, but a large number of them do. We are looking at tackling that by providing support for parents to enable them to support their child at home as well as in the school environment. We do a lot of work in schools, out in the community and with parents in their homes. Very often, the parents themselves have poor literacy and numeracy. We help to support them and skill those parents up so that they do not feel that they cannot work and support their own child while he or she is in school. That support is for people of all ages, and it is part of the work that we do through integrated services.

Pamela wants to come in now, so I will pass over to her.

The Chairperson:

Bear in mind that a number of other members also want to ask questions.

Ms Pamela Shields (Alternative Education Providers' Forum):

I will not be as long-winded as Mairead. *[Laughter.]*

Ms McCafferty:

I have been called many things. Thank you, Pamela.

Ms Shields:

I am in the privileged position of having taught in schools for many years and being a senior manager in further education. I was also involved with the Learning and Skills Development Agency in looking at retention rates in Training for Success and other programmes for young people. I am relatively new in the community sector, but I have quickly become passionate about the work that is being done.

Many teachers identify what we call wobbly young children, whom we can see are going to have issues and may drop out of education. Alternative education is not an alternative education; it is complementary to school education. People say that all young people should be educated in schools. However, for many reasons and because of things that have happened in their lives, some young people drop out of the system. You can be guaranteed that, when they drop out of the school system, they will also drop out of any training programmes, which has an ongoing effect on our economy.

The big thing that I have that community AEPs cannot offer is a multidisciplinary team, which includes youth workers, social workers, teachers and counselling services. We can work not only with young people but with a young person within the family. We are actually working with the families. They take the young person from where they are with regards to their education, whether they are at entry level or level 1 in their literacy and numeracy. Through an individual learning programme, they will strive to get the young person, if not to level 2 in essential skills, certainly to a stage where they are at level 1 but are ready to re-engage and move on. When they move on to their training programme or employment they will be able to gain a level 2

qualification, which all adults should be striving for.

The Chairperson:

Thank you. I ask members to keep their questions brief.

Mr Weir:

Thank you for your presentation. Like the Chairperson, I was not here when you previously presented. How dare you accuse us of being progressive? Some of us take that as an insult.

[Laughter.]

To follow up on Sue's point in terms of the integrated approach, one of the things that we are accused of in Northern Ireland — probably quite rightly — is that there is a silo mentality between, and even within, Departments. For example, in the education sector, there is sometimes a situation within the board system whereby if one thing is funded it means that money is moving from one area to another, and there are various disputes in relation to that.

Allied to that, we have heard various bits of evidence that have established that very good things are happening in particular areas, but there is a feeling that it is patchy around Northern Ireland. Can you comment on your experience of rolling out best practice? The extent to which that is done seems to be limited. Finally, you mentioned the need for a degree of tracking of young people. You give the added value in your sector, but can you comment on that in relation to the handover of young people beyond when you are dealing with them?

Ms McCafferty:

You are right that we do tend to think in silos, and government Departments tend to work in silos; obviously except this one, which is progressive. As everybody knows, that has been the experience in Northern Ireland, but, if nothing else, the current economic situation will necessitate and make vital working in an integrated fashion. People are starting to get their heads around the fact that we have to integrate the work and the various strategies. A lot of the NEET work ties in with the child poverty strategy that the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister is currently writing. All of those strategies need to be married up where appropriate.

There is also a silo mentality within the boards. I hope that eventually — how can I put this diplomatically? I have recently been appointed to the Belfast Education and Library Board transition board, so I hope that I can bring some influence to bear on that and that that will then be translated across the other board areas. I know that under the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) there are proposed directorates, one of which will have responsibility for alternative education provision. There is an opportunity to start doing exactly what you have said, Peter: taking the best practice and replicating it in the areas where it needs to be replicated. That is probably a good vehicle for doing that. We cannot lose that opportunity, because we will just continue the mistakes of the past. If and when ESA gets up and running it will be another vehicle for that, but that should not stop us doing it now.

In relation to the tracking, we already do that. In Newstart we have developed a system of progression routes so that the young person is supported in their progression to the next stage. If they are going into further education or a training organisation, that is recorded and tracked at the end of that year. Ongoing support is also provided for that young person, so they maintain a relationship with the alternative education centre, and if there are problems in the training organisation we can support them there.

We have already done small pieces of work with some of the training organisations in different areas in Belfast. That is the kind of thing that can be developed, because we are supporting some of the most marginalised young people, who would be in danger of dropping out of those training organisations. Sometimes they have not gone to school and they go into a training organisation because that is what their friends are doing, but they will drop out by October or November. Some of the programmes that we have done in the past, when resources permitted, involved going in to training organisations to deliver programmes that helped to retain young people. That is the kind of best practice that can be developed and replicated. A lot of it is already there; we just need to be able to do it across the board.

Mr P Ramsey:

Good morning; you are very welcome. I want to acknowledge the important contribution that you are making to the development of young people in west Belfast. Too often, we hear what young people are doing wrong. They can get into a cycle, and we have seen at close hand the

range of problems, such as mental health problems and drug and alcohol abuse, that are coming through. However, a lot of good work is going on.

Peter Weir is quite right. We are looking at models and at best practice to know who is doing it right, how they are doing it right and how they are being funded, so that, at the end of the inquiry, we will be in a much stronger position to try to ensure that an integrated approach and directness are there.

To help the Committee, can you outline how many young people in west Belfast go through this integrated service? I know that I am throwing things out now, but it is something that you can come back to us on. How many young people, as a result of coming through your system, end up securing employment? Is it possible? The information and all those stats are important. How many people went into training? You mentioned direct referrals to your programme from outside agencies. Can we have the stats on who is referring young people to you, where those young people are coming from, and whether they can be identified under the groupings that we talked about, such as mental health or various others?

In delivering an action plan, there is a suggestion that, in west Belfast, we do not have a cross-departmental approach to delivering scenarios and programmes. Will you outline whether that is happening, and, if not, why not? Surely, under neighbourhood renewal, there are programmes to ensure that a much greater degree of resource is targeted towards those areas.

Mr Conor Kennedy (Alternative Education Providers' Forum):

In the whole of Belfast, over 150 young people every year are served through community alternative education projects. All our centres rely on a cocktail of funding, from a community basis upwards. However, we work together, as the AEP Forum, to try to pool our resources as best we can. In the north of the city, Pathways has three sites; in the east of the city, a project on the Ravenhill Road has just been extended into the Short Strand; we operate out of the centre of town; and there are three further centres in the west of the city.

All of us have different capabilities and strengths. In trying to figure out an integrated approach, we work with integrated services in rolling out family support services — social work,

counselling, anything that we can get our hands on to re-engage young people and their families with the notion that educational attainment is the way forward. Even among ourselves, in trying to meet best practice, we have started to look at our strengths and weaknesses as units to see who does what best and where each unit best fits. For example, in our centre, we look at young people outside mainstream education who could sit a full academic course. However, we are slightly weaker on the vocational element. Therefore, in trying to meet the entitlement framework that is rolled out, we have begun a pilot project for the year with the Conway Mill Trust to work with young people who have been referred to it and who could comfortably sit GCSE English and maths. If we have one or two young people from the south or east of the city, where provision is slightly lighter, they can go to Conway and maybe work through an essential skills programme towards a level 1 or level 2. Within the forum, we are trying to pool our resources — *[Inaudible due to mobile phone interference.]*

This is the first year, for example, that Open Doors has secured a space for every young person, either back in mainstream education where they came from, in further education — studying everything from BTECs to three A levels — all the way down to the one or two young people who are working through level 1 and level 2 in training organisations and building up to adult literacy and numeracy.

Ms McCafferty:

I know that you are pressed for time, so I will not be long-winded. Pat mentioned the integrated approach. The integrated services programme works across west Belfast and the Shankill. As part of that, there is a big AEP focus, because we know that we need to be working with the AEPs. Neighbourhood renewal, which Pat also mentioned, is integral to that, because we are doing this through the neighbourhood partnerships. For example, in west Belfast and the Shankill, the programme is rolled out through the west Belfast and Shankill partnerships. We also do that through the neighbourhood renewal areas. In the integrated services that we are delivering on the ground, you see the rolling out of some of the action plans through neighbourhood renewal, so we are taking the need in each of the areas and addressing it.

Mr P Ramsey:

Is there a buy-in from the Departments of Education and Health?

Ms McCafferty:

On our executive in west Belfast and the Shankill and on the project board, there is representation from the Education Department and the Health Department. I would like to see the Department for Employment and Learning represented as well. The integrated services programme has only been going for 18 months, but we have developed a model of good practice.

We can get the details of the model that is specific to alternative education up to the Committee. We will also send the statistics that you asked for within the next week so that you have a comprehensive overview. We will also send details on the funding sources for the young people and on how we track their progression.

Ms Shields:

You are also very welcome to come out to talk to some of our young people.

The Chairperson:

You said that DEL is not part of the board. Is that by invitation, or is it mandatory?

Ms McCafferty:

It predates my time as programme manager for west Belfast. As it was a health action zone initiative originally, it involved education and that is how the situation evolved. However, the involvement needs to be broader. For all the reasons that we have said, it is vital that the Department for Employment and Learning is sent an invitation.

The Chairperson:

Is there an invitation to the Department for Employment and Learning?

Ms McCafferty:

I will bring that up with the project board.

The Chairperson:

Let us know how you get on.

Mr Bell:

Thank you for your presentation. I support the work that you do, having often seen it at first hand in my previous career.

How many of the children who come through the care system do you work with? Do you have links with the likes of the Glenmona Resource Centre, which has a very good education service on site? When I was there with some of my own young people, they could do very well when they were on site, because my partners in the residential services were able to get them up, encourage them along, pick them up if there were family problems and get them in. However, the minute that they stepped outside, the difficulties began.

Ms Shields:

I am just new into it, but of my group of 20 young people last year, two were from care. They have progressed into further education. This year, in my first cohort of 15 young people, two are from care. I do not have statistics, but Mairead may have. We work very much on a key worker system and work with the young people within that. We attend all of their meetings and so on and work to develop an individual learning plan so that they are supported.

Ms Louise Brennan (Alternative Education Providers' Forum):

A big thing that has been identified with most of the young people is the need for transition support. For many of the young people, their emotional intelligence is not as strong as it would have been if they had come from stronger families. We need to build on that and build resilience. So, a cross-departmental programme between Education and DEL would target that type of intervention. Sometimes it is not just academic intervention that is needed; there needs to be a building of the whole person to make him or her ready to be employed or go on to further education.

I am not saying that the young people are damaged, but there needs to be some backward steps to build resilience and create emotional intelligence among some of them, which will allow them to develop into stronger adults. It is a cycle, because that allows those young people to become better parents. It kind of breaks the cycle. Realistically, in economic terms, that is what you need

to do. There is no point in pouring money in and only dealing with an issue as it comes up; you need to break the cycle.

The Chairperson:

It is a holistic approach.

Ms Brennan:

It is where you start to break the cycle.

Ms McCafferty:

In terms of the AEPs across Belfast, each year 5% to 10% are young people from care.

Mr Lyttle:

Thank you for your presentation. This is a major issue across the region, including Belfast and my constituency of East Belfast, and I am familiar with some of the work being done in the Ravenhill area. I echo Pat Ramsey's recognition of the contribution and the request for data to demonstrate improved outcomes. That would be important and useful. You requested further support for the transition into further education, employment and training. Is there an alternative training provision programme, or a need for one?

Ms Brennan:

There is a need for some kind of a bridge. Once young people are post 16, no training organisation has the whole responsibility, and that kind of joint care is needed. No matter where the young person comes from, they should be able to hold on to the link and, in some situations, maybe create a revolving door so that, if things are not working in the training organisation, they can go back and get the skills that they need for it to work in training or further education. There should not be a cut-off point at age 16 when they are sent to a certain place or at age 18 when they are sent to a certain place.

We need to look at a broader approach and create bridges. That was identified during talks with training organisations in the west of the city. They would like to see closer links with either the school or the provider before the young person comes in so that the whole system and the

young person's background is known to them. It is about creating links. We talk about lifelong learning, but we are still talking about it in silos. We need to talk about lifelong learning as one joined-up mechanism.

Ms Shields:

We are piloting a transition programme for our young people this year where they will stay with Newstart, and they will go to a further education college one day a week to do an NVQ in hairdressing. That picks up from the vocational training they had with the AEP course last year. They will have two days a week in a placement where they will be closely monitored — in a small hairdressing salon — and they will have two days in the centre with us where we will develop their level 1 essential skills to level 2 essential skills, build up their resilience programmes, build up their self-confidence and so on. Ideally, we would love to be able to put that pilot programme in place for all of our young people who are not ready to move on to further education, training or employment.

The Chairperson:

No doubt the Committee will be interested in hearing about the outcome of the pilot programme at a later stage.

Mr S Anderson:

Thank you for your presentation. I am also one of the new Assembly members on the Committee; it is a learning curve for me. You talked about early intervention and the need for more work with teachers. How much more work needs to be done? What level are we at at the moment with the teachers and the parents? Does a lot of work need to be done with the schools and the teachers?

Ms McCafferty:

There is an opportunity through continuing professional development (CPD) and early professional development of teachers. I believe that a more holistic picture of the nature of some of the issues that young people are dealing with and the context in which they are living their lives should be integral to the trainee teachers' curriculum. I do not want to criticise the teacher training colleges. However, we have had meetings with Stranmillis and St Mary's, and we had a

meeting yesterday with the head of the school of education in Queen's University for that reason. When I was doing my training practice as a trainee teacher, I was not equipped for the scenario where a young person wanted to get onto a chair and bounce across the room. Sometimes they can be aggressive. I hate saying that because it sends out a picture that all those young people are aggressive. We have young people who have come from mainstream schools because they have been bullied, or because of different reasons, and the schools have not been able to deal with them effectively. It is very difficult to deal with that effectively in a school of 1,000 pupils, and we appreciate that.

The intensive, holistic, multidisciplinary approach works for those young people. A lot of work needs to be done with the teachers, including behaviour management and recognising learning difficulties. That leads into the special educational needs review. There is an opportunity here, as money has been set aside for training teachers within the classroom and also those who are training to be teachers. I always believe that you have to have a parallel approach. It is not just about early intervention; it is about dealing with the existing situation. We have to be more comprehensive in how we deliver that, which is why we have been delivering and starting to expand the programmes that we have delivered for the teacher training colleges. I have to say that they have been very welcoming. They are keen that we go in there and equip their teachers and educate them more effectively.

Ms Shields:

We welcome university students who are studying social work, psychology, teacher training or youth work. Their feedback has been that it has been a very valuable resource.

The Chairperson:

Thank you very much for your attendance today. We look forward to receiving any additional information that you have.

Ms McCafferty:

We will definitely get that to the Committee.

The Chairperson:

Thank you.