



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Employment and Learning

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Inquiry into Careers Education, Information,
Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland:
Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges
Careers Association Briefing

10 April 2013

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for Employment and Learning

Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland: Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association Briefing

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Robin Swann (Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister
Mr David Hilditch
Mr Chris Lyttle
Mr Fra McCann
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Pat Ramsey
Mr Alastair Ross

Witnesses:

Ms Fiona Browne	Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association
Ms Cathy Moore	Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association
Ms Julie Richardson	Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association

The Chairperson: I welcome to the Committee Cathy Moore, chairperson of the Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association (NISCA); Fiona Browne, head of careers at Grosvenor Grammar School; and Julie Richardson, head of careers at Ballyclare High School. Thank you for coming. I am sure that you are aware that we usually allow about 20 minutes to half an hour for a presentation and questions. We assume that members have read the written briefing that you provided, so this is really an opportunity for you to provide any additional information or clarification. With that, I hand over to you.

Ms Cathy Moore (Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association): Thank you for the opportunity to come back to the Committee. We would like to emphasise and pick up on the points that we have made under the terms of reference of the inquiry. I suppose that you can see how wide-ranging the inquiry is now that it has been going on for a number of months. When you start to dig, many more questions emerge. We have provided the report of evidence from our members that we promised. It is purely factual and is based on 104 anonymous responses by NISCA members at its most recent conference. NISCA members deliver careers guidance or education in schools and colleges, mainly schools. You can see that the kind of information that they provided gives quite an accurate view of what is happening in schools and colleges, and the concerns that people delivering careers advice have.

I am aware that you sent out a survey for young people, to which I hope you got a good response because it is quite difficult to get responses on this issue. To enable our members to be honest, the main condition that we placed was that they provide their board area and type of school. That is because once you ask someone to name a school, I am afraid that they do not want to give that level

of information. There is a climate of fear in a lot of schools at the moment because the budgets have been cut so severely that many schools have moved from voluntary to compulsory redundancies, and you can see the effects of that. We asked 24 or 25 questions and calculated the responses as percentages. The key areas that we need to pull out are those that show the result of the budgetary cuts.

Things had been moving on quite positively with careers education, information and guidance (CEIAG) in schools and colleges with the joint strategy of Preparing for Success and the entitlement framework moving towards full implementation in 2013-14. As people were asked to choose alternative qualifications and different pathways earlier, careers education suddenly became really important in schools and colleges. We were delighted by that. However, because the funding for entitlement framework work and area learning communities has been reduced, and because all public services have had cuts, we can see what is happening.

One of the main concerns is that an awful lot of staff — 531 overall — are delivering careers education. Altogether, 302 are delivering career guidance. When a subject is very spread out among staff, there will be a lack of communication and a lack of training. In theory, when a teacher is trained in Northern Ireland, they are trained in the secondary sector for a specialist subject but can teach any other one subject, up to a level below what they have been educated in. Careers education is traditionally farmed out to anybody who has space in their timetable. That is not new. The result is that you have inconsistencies in any school as to how the careers programme is delivered. We are more concerned about the inconsistencies across Northern Ireland in schools and colleges, particularly post-primary schools. If you asked a young person about the careers programme that they received, the answers would vary wildly depending on which school they went to and in which board area.

There is positive news to come out of the survey. A very high percentage of schools and colleges have a dedicated careers room or library — 98% of them — so a lot of good work has been going on. Learning for life and work and careers education are viewed mainly as separate subjects. There can be good support for the careers department from a senior management team in a school. A higher proportion are very supportive or generally supportive as opposed to not supportive.

The key and glaringly negative area is the problem with work-related learning activities in school. You have been very interested in work-related learning because it is supposed to prepare young people for the world of work and to help them to make informed decisions. Work-related learning activities could be bringing employers in to speak to classes or whole year groups. It could be bringing classes or small numbers of students on industry visits. It could be formal work experience, work shadowing or voluntary work. It could also be an activity that involves a lot of employers who will share their expertise on particular career areas. That is where we fall down because of a lack of funding. If you want to bring a group on a visit, it is very expensive to hire a bus. However, it is also a question of a lack of time. In question 17, schools and colleges were asked whether they had adequate financial resources and sufficient staffing for work-related learning activities. In response, 62% did not consider themselves to have adequate financial resources and 63% said that they did not have adequate staffing.

It is down to budgetary and time constraints and how work-related learning is viewed in the school. Work-related learning is a key component of a careers programme. In theory, it is supposed to be mapped across the curriculum. Every area of the curriculum can contribute. For example, the history department could bring in Amnesty International. However, staff are reluctant to take part or are not released from the timetable to plan such events. Business education partnerships (BEPs) are key in that respect. BEPs, which are funded by the Department of Education, are groups of local clusters of schools working with local employers. Some people pointed out that the only way that they feel they can provide work-related learning activities in their school is through BEPs. However, the funding for BEP programmes has been slashed year on year. I do not know how many are active throughout Northern Ireland but there are significantly fewer than used to be the case. Again, they rely on not just the financial budget but on the time for teachers to be released from school to meet employers to get activities running.

Another major concern is training for those delivering careers education in schools and colleges. Questions 24 and 25 relate to that area. As a professional organisation representing those delivering careers education in schools and colleges, we are aware that there has been a high turnover of staff in recent years. When we update our membership lists, we find quite a number of changes in any one year, so we know that there has been a change of personnel. I think that it has been 11 or 12 years

since a qualification for those who want to deliver careers education in schools has been available. Only 38% of respondents have a careers qualification.

Of those 38%, six are further education careers advisers. The further education colleges employ full-time careers advisers, so it is a different role. Ten of the 38% wrote notes into the margin of their response forms to say that they did have a careers qualification but it was attained many years ago and they would appreciate a refresher course or updated qualification. Of those who did not have a careers qualification, 85% said that they would like to have one, so the will is there. A lot of people want to gain accreditation for the work that they are doing and gain more support. The will is also there from principals. In the west Belfast area learning community, our principals have been asking where such a qualification could be gained, because they would like to give status to CEIAG in their school. There was no space for comments, but people scribbled things into the margin to express their concern about how vital and important they felt this was.

So the careers qualification is seen as important. It is quite difficult to deliver a subject across a curriculum and co-ordinate something without some form of training. It may not even need to be a formal qualification, but access to training for teachers or for those delivering work-related learning activities and careers is very inconsistent and varied across Northern Ireland. The education and library boards employed specialists in careers who were able to support all the schools within their area. If someone new came into post, they could contact the board and have a meeting with a careers specialist who would help them implement career programmes in their school and support them along the way. However, with the education and library boards all merging and becoming the Education and Skills Authority (ESA), the careers specialists in the boards are no longer there and, as far as I can see, there is no provision being made in ESA.

That is similar to the STEM — science, technology, engineering and maths — specialists. That sometimes goes hand in hand with careers. Each of the boards also employed a STEM careers specialist who was able to help the schools and colleges implement STEM programmes and awareness activities for the parents of their students, for the students and for their staff. Again, with the move from the boards to ESA, I am not aware of any provision being made specifically for STEM. I am afraid that we are losing an awful lot of expertise. I am also afraid that we are losing the momentum that we had from Preparing for Success and the joint strategy because of financial constraints and a lack of staff. I will ask Fiona and Julie to add anything that I have not covered, because it is a 10-page report and there were 104 respondents to the survey.

Ms Julie Richardson (Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association): The report really backs up the recommendations that we made in the initial submission. Cathy highlighted the issue of the qualification. We also recommended a generic job description and personal specification and said that principals and boards of governors could be held a bit more accountable for CEIAG provision in their schools and that it should be a statutory obligation for schools and colleges to provide CEIAG. If that went hand in hand with ring-fenced funding, it would also be helpful. There was, for example, money for a STEM/CEIAG project offered this year. That ring-fenced funding was quite substantial and was seized on by a lot of schools, including my own. That was done through the area learning communities. When funding like that is available and is ring-fenced for careers, it can make a difference.

The area learning communities are positive things that push forward the careers agenda, along with their career subgroups, where groups of schools work together. In the North Eastern Board area, the careers subgroups are very active in the area learning communities. Also, there is a drive for cross-curricular careers guidance across subjects. Every inspection that is carried out in schools will include careers, which is a driver for change.

I reinforce what Cathy said about the work-related learning opportunities. In schools, there are so many competing interests for limited time and money. Unless there is a statutory obligation, it is difficult for careers to fight its corner among all those interests.

Ms Fiona Browne (Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association): Cathy and Julie have covered everything, so I have nothing further to add just at the moment.

The Chairperson: There was talk about the inconsistency and inspections. Do the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspections not provide consistency in careers guidance across the schools, or is it not an area that they are specialised in?

Ms Richardson: You might or might not have an inspector who is a careers specialist.

The Chairperson: Yes; an inspection is not going to help consistency at all. I am aware of some schools being marked down on careers in ETI inspections.

Ms Richardson: Yes.

The Chairperson: If an inspector is not qualified in careers, they will not have the expertise.

Ms Moore: Yes. However, it has helped to raise the profile of careers. Boards of governors and principals listen to the ETI and have been told that careers will be part of any inspection, regardless of the focus. That has helped to drive the subject within schools, and careers departments have received much more support from their senior management teams and boards of governors. So, in that instance, it has helped the drive in individual schools.

The Chairperson: But not across the board.

Ms Richardson: The ETI produced the quality indicators for assessment against Preparing for Success. I guess that all the inspectors must be aware of that, and I assume that that would produce some consistency of approach. The role of the ETI is to inspect and tell you what needs to be done. As Cathy said, what is really missing is the advice. The curriculum advisory and support service (CASS) that was in the boards has now gone.

The Chairperson: You said that a formal qualification in careers has not been provided for the past 10 years or so. Who provided that and why was it stopped?

Ms Moore: The last one that was available was provided through an amalgamation of the education and library boards and their specialists. Previously, the University of Ulster and Queen's University provided something. It has taken several different forms over many years.

The Chairperson: What was the duration of that course?

Ms Moore: It was roughly a year.

Ms Richardson: Yes. The one that I did was an amalgamation between the North Eastern Education and Library Board and Queen's University. That was about 10 years ago. I think that it lasted a year or possibly two.

Ms Moore: One of the recommendations of Preparing for Success was that a careers qualification should be available for those working in education. I am also aware that the entitlement framework team in the Department of Education has been working on that. I believe that it is developing modules to be delivered, but I do not think that it has sought accreditation yet or been piloted. That has been ongoing for a few years without any update.

The Chairperson: This may be a harsh question. Are those teachers without qualifications who take up careers guidance posts to fulfil their timetable commitments endangering the career prospects of the pupils they are trying to guide?

Ms Moore: That could be.

Ms F Browne: A lot of schools run very strong training programmes, but that will be dependent on heads of careers organising those. We encourage teachers to go to the NISCA conference because there are various training sessions at it. We also encourage staff to go out into industry and get some training in that way. It is very much dependent on schools and heads of careers driving that forward.

The Chairperson: Thank you. We will move to questions from members.

Mr Allister: In addition to the dearth of qualification opportunities, a related matter seems to be the inadequacy of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities. The answer to question 21 is quite startling. It shows that almost half of careers teachers have no access to continuing professional development. Indeed, some of the other answers are even more startling. For example,

someone in the Western Board area said that they were not aware of any CPD in their region. It is a bit of a double whammy: there is the absence of a formal qualification encouragement or facility, and there is also stagnation where there is no CPD.

Ms Moore: Yes. Careers is probably the one area of the curriculum that requires the most CPD. The economy changes, young people change, trends change and qualifications change. We keep up to date professionally and will find things out online, but nothing can replace the opportunity of meeting people in industry, meeting each other and working in clusters. The area learning communities have careers subgroups, and the careers teachers will meet in those. They might provide some CPD for each other through the sharing of knowledge. However, it is dependent on schools allowing teachers out to do that.

Mr Allister: That is very ad hoc; there is no formalised CPD anywhere.

Ms Moore: We run two national conferences and have a very strong attendance. We are the only cross-Northern Ireland body for careers professionals working in schools and colleges. Each year, our two conferences, in May and November, are very well attended.

Mr Lyttle: They are very good.

Ms Moore: We invited Chris to the November conference, which we ran in conjunction with the Department for Employment and Learning's Careers Service for the first time. We had just over 300 delegates. The Minister of Education opened the conference. We had workshops that people could choose from because not everybody has the same CPD needs. We hold that conference twice a year, but teachers may or may not be released to attend it. That is the only cross-Northern Ireland training.

Mr Allister: How does the CPD provision in careers compare with any other subject?

Ms Moore: It is probably about the same.

Mr Allister: So you think that CPD is a problem across the sector?

Ms Moore: It is more of a problem in careers because of the changing nature of the subject.

Mr Allister: Yes, it is constantly evolving. So you are not keeping up to speed with it really.

Ms Richardson: I teach geography as well as being head of careers. I have a degree in geography. Teachers with qualifications in their subject may have less need of CPD for that subject than they would have for careers, in which people are not trained at all.

Mr Allister: You have suggested to us that it can only get worse. You said that you were unaware of any provision for careers in ESA.

Ms Moore: That is correct. We are sliding downhill.

Mr Allister: That will be compounded by the absence of any focus on STEM speciality.

Ms Moore: I could be wrong: there could be provision in ESA for STEM, but, if there is, I am not aware of it.

STEM and careers have an obvious overlap because those who work in careers need to work with labour market information. However, it is also separate. I think that some of the STEM representatives who worked for the curriculum advisory and support service through the boards had previously been engineers, science teachers and so on.

Mr Allister: Where have those people gone?

Ms Richardson: Some of them went to W5. The lady who was in the North Eastern Education and Library Board had been a science teacher. Then, when we had a CASS careers service, she worked

as a field officer. She is now with W5, which runs the STEM Ambassadors programme and various other —

Mr Allister: Does that have the same reach as would have been obtained through the education and library boards?

Ms Moore: They would not be on the end of a phone or able to visit a school specifically to help it to embed a STEM programme.

Mr Allister: Is there no one on the end of a phone now?

Ms Moore: There is one STEM adviser left in the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB).

Mr Allister: OK.

Ms Moore: There may be another adviser, of whom I am unaware, in another board. Michelle Fulton is still employed by BELB and still has the remit of STEM and careers. I do not know what will happen with her role as things merge.

Mr P Ramsey: Cathy, good morning.

Ms Moore: Good morning.

Mr P Ramsey: Your presentation and written submission were very comprehensive. They do not differ greatly from what the Committee has been looking at over recent months on the lack of guidance and inconsistency.

In your paper, you state that schools have noticed a reduced budget for careers and guidance since 2010.

Ms Moore: We chose 2010 because that was really when Preparing for Success made itself felt. The document and strategy were launched in 2009. Suddenly, careers guidance was pushed up the agenda in schools, and we noticed some really good things happening.

Mr P Ramsey: Will you qualify that by telling us by how much the money has been reduced? Will you give us more evidence that would assist the Committee in its inquiry? From where did you get the evidence of a noticeably reduced budget?

Another area that I am very keen to hear about is joined-up thinking. Over recent months, even in our constituencies, we have seen that there is no joined-up thinking between the careers services provided in schools and colleges. Parents still place a high emphasis on getting their sons or daughters to do teaching or law degrees despite there clearly being no jobs for them at the end of that. The new industries in Northern Ireland will be in financial services and ICT. From where is guidance coming into schools to try to motivate our young people towards those degrees?

Finally, you reference children with special needs throughout your submission. There is a post-19 lobby group across Northern Ireland. The parents involved in that believe that children who want to leave school are forgotten, compared with other regions of Britain, for example. There is no hope for those with special needs and learning difficulties. I raise that as chair of the all-party group on learning disability because it is a subject that comes up continually. As a group, they have been failed.

Ms Moore: You have a point. In fact, they may not necessarily be in a special educational needs (SEN) school. There are quite a number of individuals with SEN in the vast majority of mainstream schools. I can give you instances of those who have done extremely well to have stayed on in education until they were 18, managed to progress to a university course and, perhaps, struggled there, or not progressed to a university course. I have found it very difficult to find support for such individuals and their families on their leaving school at 19. What they feel that they can and cannot do is very specific. We are an all-boys school and have quite a number of pupils on the autism spectrum. We try to find work experience placements, and it is a matter of finding employers who are understanding enough to offer a week's work placement to a young person who will react to things differently from what they are used to, if I can put it like that. There is a huge gap.

Ms Richardson: We have special educational needs pupils in our school. It is true across the board that, at each transition, as they move from one Key Stage to the next, there is a transition review with a number of professionals. At those points, a careers teacher will sit in to give guidance on what they should be doing as they progress to the next Key Stage. The University of Ulster organises a very good event for pupils with special educational needs. It looks at all the difficulties and the support that is in place for these pupils as they move from school to university.

Mr P Ramsey: I am not being critical, but I am trying to reconcile the statistics given to me. A child with learning disabilities is four times less likely to go on to full-time employment than a child who does not. So something is failing that group of people. I am trying to determine how we can help and give comfort, particularly to the parents.

Ms Moore: There are some training programmes available for those with specific learning disabilities, but I think that there are certain categories of learning disability and, again, it might depend on where individuals are, geographically, in Northern Ireland. There is a gap, yes.

I want to pick up something that I did not mention. One point that comes through from my talking to young people is that one-to-one career guidance is key, and I am sure that that has been mentioned on a number of occasions by those whom the Committee brought in to provide evidence. A careers programme through each school should include one-to-one career guidance with the Careers Service, usually in year 12. However, there are issues of joined-up thinking between the Department for Employment and Learning's Careers Service and the Department of Education's schools. There can be a them-and-us attitude. I know that the Careers Service has, sometimes, encountered significant problems gaining access to young people in schools, but I am also aware that there is an extremely good menu offered by the Careers Service to any school. That menu could include one-to-one guidance at all transitional stages for all students.

Mr P Ramsey: Does it happen?

Ms Moore: No, although the menu is there, a school may not want it or allow it. However, if you were to take everything on the menu, you would, in theory, probably need a careers adviser to be available to your school three or four full days a week, every week, all year. We have, for example, 175 students in each group who would require one-to-one guidance. That is for all pupils in year 10, year 12 and the transition year of year 14. I am not brilliant at maths, but 175 times three is just shy of 600. How does that work? How can one person do that within any given timetable? We appreciate that the menu offered by the Careers Service is absolutely fantastic, and we are very aware that one-to-one career guidance is key. It can make a lot of difference, but it should not happen on its own. It must be complemented by a good, thorough careers programme in the school, provided by the school.

Ms Richardson: We have two careers advisers linked to the school and 186 pupils in each year group. The advisers do one-to-one interviews with year 12 students, and it takes them about three mornings a week for quite a few months just to get through those. If they were to do that at every transition point, it would take much longer. The rest is done by careers teachers within the school.

Ms F Browne: Careers advisers go around a number of schools.

Ms Moore: They have quite heavy workloads.

The Chairperson: Pat, you made a couple of points about the budget for ICT and engineering.

Mr P Ramsey: The budget question may not be for today, but can you supply any information that clearly identifies a clear budget line reduction either in primary or post-primary schools? Why is priority not being given to ensuring that young people are better prepared to meet industry needs in Northern Ireland going forward?

Ms Richardson: Momentum and e-skills, through their strategy, are very good at putting out the message about careers in software development in Northern Ireland. That message comes into our school regularly. Again, however, there is the factor of pupil and parental choice and the fact that A-level maths and physics, which are difficult subjects, are needed. That also applies to computer science, with many pupils preferring ICT. I suppose that it is the status of careers such as —

Mr P Ramsey: I will finish here, Chair, because I have taken up enough time. There does not seem to be sufficient engagement with parents. Throughout all the presentations that we have received, we have heard that parents still have the choice when it comes to what they want their child to do. It is the parents who need the career guidance rather than the children.

Ms Moore: There are some pockets of very good practice across Northern Ireland. A school will hold a careers day or a careers evening once a year and bring in all the parents with their students. Any time that my school holds any parental event, I make sure that I am there, and I give a presentation and hand out labour market information. I am aware that the Careers Service has just, for the first time, published a new parental guide, which will be sent out to all schools to be passed on to parents. So some information is being provided, but there are only isolated pockets of good practice. There is a problem gaining access to parents.

Ms Richardson: You cannot force them. I give out the information, but they are attracted by the status and pay that go with jobs in medicine and law.

Mr F McCann: As usual, Pat has hogged the meeting. *[Laughter.]* He asked some of the questions that I would have asked.

It also needs to be recognised that a huge number of families have difficulties. They may not be directly tied into careers guidance because of the pressures in family life. It is about how you deal with and involve such families.

I was interested in what you said about the role of boards of governors and principals. Has their role hampered careers guidance or advice in schools, and, if so, how do you get over that?

Pat is right to say that the Committee has heard mixed opinions and advice on the best way to deal with the STEM issue. One of the more interesting points was made by scientists who have gone into schools, especially primary schools. They talked about the enthusiasm that exists in very young children, but said that, within months of their leaving school, that enthusiasm wanes because of the lack of guidance.

If you had a magic wand, what would you do to fix the careers advice circle? Is it about trying to find a proper mechanism to deal with grades? Would you concentrate on primary, would you mix primary with post-primary, or would you prefer the concentration to be on even younger children to try to encourage young people and point them in the direction of careers?

Ms Moore: Preparing for Success was launched with a whole framework of learning intentions based on careers. Those were for children from the age of four to 19. The 11 to 19 age group has been picked up on in many of the post-primary schools, but I am not aware of what is being done in the primary sector with Preparing for Success. I do not know whether primary schools adopted those principles and recommendations or used the framework at all. In theory, they had this huge framework to map what any young person anywhere in Northern Ireland should be learning about and taking part in regarding CEIAG. The theory is fantastic because if someone starts your school at age 11, you will know what they have done between the ages of four and 11, so you can build on that. However, I genuinely do not know whether this framework was adopted in the primary sector. I am also aware of the dearth of proper science on the curriculum in the primary sector.

Really, we are looking at two things: STEM and careers. Sentinus runs some excellent programmes on STEM. They link up with and go into primary schools, but that may happen only once in a primary-school child's life. Your question is what happens after that. I cannot answer for the primary sector and STEM: I do not know whether enough has been done. However, I know that there has been a lot of funding ring-fenced specifically for STEM career activities and STEM activities in the post-primary sector, and those have worked. It has worked very well because it is not a one-off activity; it is something that you will embed into the curriculum, prepare students for and follow up on. I do not know what is happening with funding in education for STEM any more, although some has been available this year.

Mr F McCann: What about the role of the principal and board of governors?

Ms Moore: I was pleasantly surprised by the responses from our members who said that their senior management was generally quite supportive. Had the survey been five or 10 years ago, there would not have been a very positive response, so I think that the fact that ETI has pushed and said that it

would be inspecting this has pushed it up the agenda. Again, that will depend on the board of governors and the principal. As I have said to the Committee before, they have a lot of power: the principal, senior leadership team and the board of governors.

Ms Richardson: They have a lot of responsibility and a lot of competing things to operate.

Ms Moore: Yes, they have a lot of responsibility and a lot of competing things to consider within smaller budgets.

There are some interesting comments: you will see that some members of careers teams are on senior management teams. That works quite well because they will make sure that the careers voice is heard. It has also been recommended that there be a link person on the senior management team in each school for careers and for STEM. I do not know whether each individual school will pick up on that. If someone is making that voice heard at senior management level, there is a much better chance of integration across a school; of getting more support when it comes to time; and of having more of an understanding across a school of what CEIAG and STEM are, why they are important, where they fit in and whose responsibility it is to deliver each of the components.

One of our original recommendations was that boards of governors and principals be held more accountable, which would definitely help. On the positive side, much work is being done and things are getting better, although we have our glaring inconsistencies. However, given all that work and the improvement, we worry about what will happen now: will all of this just fall flat?

Mr F McCann: Where should the concentration of resources rest initially? Should it rest at primary level so that young people can be taken through, or should it be at post-primary level?

Ms Moore: For CEIAG, it would ideally be in the years 11 to 19, because research shows that young people start to explore careers ideas from probably the age of eight. However, it is very vague. The real work for CEIAG happens in the years from 11 to 19. You do what you can and build and build until you get to the key transition points of 14, 16 and 18. You cannot just throw everything that you have at 16-year-olds and say that they can have individual help. It has to be built on. It should certainly start in the primary sector, but specifically for careers, the focus definitely needs to be on the years from 11 to 19. However, STEM is different and should probably be regarded much more seriously in the primary sector. I am sorry; I am talking in cross-purposes between STEM and careers.

Ms F Browne: I feel that the temptation is to ignore the primary sector too much, but that is where you set the drive, ambition and determination in your pupils. It is not even that they have a career in mind, but they may want to be something and to be successful. That is where careers kicks in in primary school, because you are sowing the seeds early so that those children can achieve and do whatever they want. They just need the help to do it, and that drive comes from within them.

The Chairperson: I have a two-year-old who wants to be a fireman or a cowboy. I do not know whether she will be either. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Lyttle: Thank you for your presentation. I commend the Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association's work, and it was great to be at the previous conference. I found that conference extremely helpful and thought that it was fantastic. I am glad that we have conducted the inquiry into careers, because it is clear that, despite a lot of progress being made, there are still a lot of issues, and hopefully our report can support the work that people are doing on the ground. Is there a need to place stronger obligations and/or statutory obligations on school principals and boards of governors for the content of and provision in careers?

Ms F Browne: As soon as you make it statutory, it will have to be done, and that will then ensure that it will be done. It gives it greater status and greater kudos, and it ensures that more progress will be made. So, the answer is yes.

Ms Moore: It is a resounding yes, not just from we three representatives but from anybody who works in this sector or in schools.

Ms Richardson: It is difficult to balance that against the entry requirements for jobs and university, which are higher all the time. Pupils need to get as much teaching time as possible. However, if it were made statutory, that would give it more weight.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation and your time.