

Committee for Employment and Learning

Summary of Responses and Evidence to the Committee's Consultation on the Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and the Transfer of its Functions

Together with the Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee
Relating to the Summary, the Minutes of Evidence and Correspondence

Ordered by Committee for Employment and Learning to be printed 9 May 2012
Report: NIA 51/11-15 Committee for Employment and Learning

Membership and Powers

Powers

The Committee for Employment and Learning is a Statutory Departmental Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Belfast Agreement, Section 29 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and under Standing Order 48 of the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Committee has a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department for Employment and Learning and has a role in the initiation of legislation.

The Committee has power to:

- consider and advise on Departmental budgets and annual plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- approve relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee stage of relevant primary legislation;
- call for persons and papers;
- initiate inquiries and make reports; and
- consider and advise on matters brought to the Committee by the Minister for Employment and Learning.

Membership

The Committee has eleven members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, with a quorum of five. The membership of the Committee during the current mandate has been as follows:

- Mr Basil McCrea (Chairperson)
- Mr Thomas Buchanan (Deputy Chairman)
- Mr Jim Allister
- Mr Sammy Douglas
- Ms Michelle Gildernew
- Mr Chris Lyttle
- Mr Fra McCann¹
- Mr Barry McElduff
- Mr David McIlveen
- Mr Pat Ramsey
- Mr Alastair Ross

1 Mr Fra McCann replaced Mrs Sandra Overend on 6 February 2012

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List of Abbreviations used in the Report

AEPF	Alternative Educations Provider's Forum
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CCEA	The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
CEF	Construction Employers Federation
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
DAS	Disablement Advisory Service
DES	Disability Employment Service
DETI	Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment
DSD	Department for Social Development
FALNI	Forum for Adult Learning Northern Ireland
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
IoD	Institute of Directors
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
LRA	Labour Relations Agency
NASUWT	National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NIACRO	Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NICCY	The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
NIPSA	Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
NISCA	Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association
OCN	Open College Network Northern Ireland
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
QUB	Queen's University Belfast
UU	University of Ulster
UCU	University and College Union
USEL	Ulster Supported Employment
UTU	Ulster Teacher's Union
U3A	University of the Third Age

Executive Summary

1. Throughout its existence, the Committee for Employment and Learning has worked closely with the Department in undertaking its statutory responsibility to consider and advise on matters of policy and legislation. The Committee has become familiar not only with the issues that have arisen, but also with the organisations which are intrinsically linked to the resolution of these issues.
2. It was highly appropriate, therefore, that the Committee should offer all stakeholders, including Departmental staff, an opportunity to express their views on the dissolution and transfer of functions of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). A summary of this stakeholder evidence has been summarised and the key themes identified.
3. The majority of respondents to the Committee consultation expressed the opinion that all or some of the current functions of DEL should be transferred to the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment; a significant number of respondents also identified aspects of DEL which could be effectively aligned with the Department of Education (DE).
4. The functions which were most often perceived as being appropriate to move to the Department of Education were Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE). Both Stranmillis University College and St Mary's University College expressed the view that they thought that they would benefit from being an integral part of the Department of Education. Similarly, some stakeholders were of the opinion that DE could offer a continuum of lifelong learning, encompassing both adults and young people, if HE and FE were transferred from DEL back to the Department of Education.
5. Both Queen's University, Belfast, (QUB) and the University of Ulster (UU) agreed that the Teacher Education function could be properly administered by DE, in the same way that the Department for Health and Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) commissions and funds the training of doctors and nurses, without the entire HE sector moving to DE.
6. The Colleges of Further Education believed that their primary function was to support the economy through the provision of skills and training, and the more appropriate focus for FE would be towards employment rather than education. Colleges NI, together with a number of other stakeholders, expressed the opinion that FE had previously been the "Cinderella" service of education and were apprehensive that this situation may be repeated if Further Education reverted to DE.
7. The unions were divided in their views: the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) and the University and College Union supported the transfer of HE and FE to the Department of Education, whereas the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) expressed reservations about this.
8. Representatives of business and industry strongly supported the transfer of DEL functions relating to skills and employment to the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Industry (DETI). The Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association (NISCA) also thought that the Careers Services would be better placed with DETI to be more closely associated with information on the labour market.
9. A number of community and voluntary organisations, which engage in vocational training with both young people and adults, opted for DEL functions to be transferred to DETI. This would maintain the focus, which they said they had worked hard to establish, on job opportunities and the social economy. The Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) dissented from this view, however, and expressed reservations that DETI was not primarily focussed on people who have been socially excluded and marginalised.
10. One option that had not been specifically suggested by the Committee in its consultation was the creation of a new Department for the Economy. This was favoured by a number of stakeholders; some respondents also felt that DEL should not be subsumed into DETI,

but rather merged to create a new entity. The notion of a new start, exemplified by a new name, was proposed as a way of ensuring that the Programme for Government focus on the economy would be delivered by a department which integrated skills and training, as well as job creation and employment relations.

11. The transfer of the Job Centre functions to the Department for Social Development was discussed by a number of stakeholders. With the exception of the Law Centre NI, this option was not seen as beneficial to job seekers and the association with benefits was perceived as off-putting to people who wish to access the employment service. Organisations working with the disabled were particularly emphatic that the Disability Employment Service should not be moved to DSD.
12. The Law Centre NI justified its stance that consideration should be given to transferring the job seeking function to DSD by referring to the impact of Welfare Reform legislation and the need for a seamless administration of universal credit. The Law Centre also cited the corresponding department in Great Britain, the Department for Work and Pensions, which covers both the jobs and benefits function.
13. Some representatives of the Higher and Further Education institutions believed that FE and HE should be transferred to the same department – preferably an economic department – as they are intrinsically linked. Colleges NI argued that, although FE Colleges provide only 20% of the higher education in Northern Ireland, this is vital to deliver a meaningful range of qualifications.
14. Concerns were expressed by a number of stakeholders regarding the importance of the continuity of the existing provision and the relationships which have been built up with DEL officials. This was particularly evident in evidence given by representatives from the community and voluntary sector, with the work of the Disability Employment Service being especially valued, but the Law Centre NI and the Labour Relations Agency (LRA) also was concerned that the specialism, expertise, knowledge and relationships within DEL should not be lost when the Department was dissolved. Invest NI also paid tribute to the personal leadership from DEL officials which had contributed to the success of the organisation.
15. Some stakeholders thought that, regardless of the department to which DEL's functions were transferred, it was of paramount importance that there was joined-up thinking and working between departments to address issues such as young people not in employment, education or training (so-called NEETs). Concerns were also raised regarding the linkages between the demand and supply of skills. Invest NI believed that an opportunity for a mismatch may occur if policy for delivering skills lay with one department and the responsibility for delivering it lay with another, and this also had budgetary implications.
16. Mencap also suggested that equality screening should be carried out to assess the impact of any transfer of functions on the Section 75 groups, especially on disabled people, so that the existing support for employment opportunities and career guidance would not be removed.
17. The results of consultation carried out with Department for Employment and Learning staff mirrored the views of key stakeholders to a large extent. The overwhelming majority of staff, including the senior management team, believe that their job function would be best aligned with the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment. The effectiveness of combining skills policy with the responsibility for delivery within a single department was echoed by both staff and management.
18. Job Centre staff almost unanimously believed that their role – of getting people into work – was more closely aligned with DETI than DSD. The Careers Service saw a different role within two departments, whereby all-age guidance fitted better with DETI and advice for young people within DE. Staff within the Office of Industrial Tribunals and the Fair Employment Tribunals supported a move of their job function to the Department for Justice.

Introduction

19. On 10 January 2012 the First Minister and deputy First Minister issued proposals relating to the election of the Justice Minister for consideration by each of the political parties. These proposals also included plans for reducing the number of government departments from twelve to eleven by transferring the functions of the Department for Employment and Learning principally to the Department of Education and to the Department for Enterprise Trade and Investment. The First Minister and deputy First Minister asked for responses and further proposals to be submitted to them by 5pm on Monday 16 January 2012.

20. The First Minister and deputy First Minister then announced on 18 January 2012 that no alternative viable proposals had been put forward by the various political parties. The Ministers agreed to seek approval from the Executive to extend the current arrangements for the Department of Justice beyond May 2012 and to write to the Secretary of State to ask him to introduce legislation at Westminster to ensure that the tenure of the Justice Minister is consistent with that of other Ministers. The Ministers also agreed to seek views from key stakeholders and interested parties on how the functions exercised by the Department of Employment and Learning should be transferred to other departments in the most appropriate manner.

Committee Scrutiny

Committee meeting 11 January 2012

21. The Committee discussed the implications for the future if the Department for Employment and Learning were to be dissolved at its meeting on 11 January 2012.

Committee meeting 18 January 2012

22. At its meeting on 18 January 2012 the Committee agreed that it would await the outcome of the consultation with the political parties before reviewing the impact that any proposals would have on its scrutiny of the Department. Members further agreed that they would reconsider the briefings which had already been scheduled on its forward work programme, in view of the proposed dissolution and transfer of functions of the Department for Employment and Learning.

Committee meeting 25 January 2012

23. The Committee returned to this issue at its meeting on 25 January 2012, when it was agreed that a consultation document should be circulated to key stakeholders, requesting their comments on the proposed dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning by 9 February 2012. A list of stakeholders initially consulted is at Appendix 5.
24. The consultation document asked stakeholders to indicate with which Department – the Department of Education, or the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment – the functions and purpose of their organisation would most closely align. The document also asked for any relevant views and concerns, with particular reference to any past experiences that would influence their preference. A copy of the consultation document is at Appendix 5.

Committee meeting 15 February 2012

25. At its meeting on 15 February 2012 the Committee considered various responses to the consultation. The Committee agreed that it would extend the consultation period in order to seek responses from additional stakeholders and to gain a wider perspective on the issue. A list of further stakeholders consulted can be found at Appendix 5.
26. The Committee also agreed to write to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister requesting clarification on the proposed dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). The Committee sought information on the likely time scale for the relevant legislation to be introduced to abolish DEL and to transfer the functions it currently exercises to other departments; the Committee also asked for an indication of the date when this legislation would be introduced to the Assembly. The Committee further requested information on the outcome of any consultation carried out by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to add to its consideration. An acknowledgement of this correspondence was received on 24 February 2012.
27. The Committee also discussed how the transfer of functions had been accomplished in equivalent government departments in other jurisdictions, including the Republic of Ireland. Members then agreed to request a paper from Assembly Research and Information Service on this topic – the paper is attached at Appendix 5.
28. The Committee received a briefing from Dr Bill McGinnis, the Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills, who defined the main aims of the Department as promoting learning and skills, preparing people for work and supporting the economy. He discussed the four options that he felt could deliver on these aims, and identified the transfer of the functions of DEL in their entirety into a new Department for the Economy as his preferred option.
29. He supported this by detailing how DEL's existing strong connection with the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and Invest Northern Ireland (INI) contributes towards

the creation of jobs and the development of skills to support these jobs. He also thought that the inclusion of higher and further education would provide a new economy-focused department with the necessary tools to deliver on skills.

30. The Committee then received a briefing from Colleges NI where the representatives again expressed a preference for Further Education (FE) to be aligned with a new department where the focus was on economic priorities, in line with the aims defined in the 2006 policy, "Further Education Means Business".
31. Colleges NI detailed the strong relationships they already enjoy with post-primary schools, but they felt that these relationships would not be enhanced by transferring the further education functions of DEL to the Department of Education. The representatives also believed that it was imperative for FE and Higher Education (HE) to remain within the same department to provide a balance and range of higher education qualifications and progression routes.

Committee meeting 29 February 2012

32. The Committee considered the consultation responses at its meeting on 29 February 2012, and agreed to hold an event in April 2012 to obtain further oral evidence from stakeholders.
33. At this meeting Queen's University, Belfast and the University of Ulster presented a joint briefing on the views of both universities. The Universities agreed that HE and FE should move either to DETI, or to a new central Economy Department. The representatives believed that the role of the universities is to support economic development in the Programme for Government through the provision of graduate level skills and research activities.

Committee meeting 14 March 2012

34. At its meeting on 14 March 2012, the Committee discussed the arrangements for the stakeholder event in April, and agreed the format it should follow to maximise the input from the participants. The Committee also agreed to forward a list of all stakeholders consulted, and a summary of their responses, to the Committee for the Office of the First and deputy First Minister which was conducting its own consultation on the redistribution of the responsibilities of the Department for Employment.

Stakeholder evidence forum 18 April 2012

35. The Committee offered an opportunity to all organisations that had responded to the consultation to expand further on their response during an intensive stakeholder forum held on 18 April 2012. Twenty-two respondents accepted this invitation and engaged with the Committee in a series of short, informal briefing sessions which were recorded by Hansard.
36. The recurrent themes, which had emerged from the written responses, were clearly articulated at this forum and highlighted the core issues considered during the Committee's review of the transfer of the functions of DEL.

Committee meeting 25 April 2012

37. At its meeting on 25 April 2012 the Committee agreed to seek the views of DEL staff on the proposed dissolution and transfer of functions of the Department.

Committee meetings 2 May and 9 May 2012

38. At its meetings of 2 May and 9 May 2012 the Committee considered the draft summary of responses and evidence to the Committee's consultation on the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and the transfer of its functions, and agreed that it should be issued to all MLAs in advance of the plenary debate.

Consultation Responses

39. The Committee wrote to 74 key stakeholders to seek their views on how the functions of DEL should be transferred to other government departments. Twenty-nine organisations responded to the formal consultation request; one organisation, Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL), also submitted a briefing paper expressing its concerns about the dissolution of DEL, and this has been included in the table below (See Appendix 3 for the full text of these responses).

40. The consultees were asked,

“Given the functions and purpose of your organisation and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?”

41. The responses were analysed to indicate how the aspects of each organisation’s remit that are currently managed by DEL would be best aligned with the existing functions of DE and DETI. The findings are summarised on the Table below:

Respondent Organisation	DEL functions which have been identified for alignment with:		
	DE	DETI	Other
Action on Hearing Loss	Post-primary, special education, community learning; Higher and further education (specifically the training of lip-reading specialists)	Employment Advice Service	
Alternative Education Provider’s Forum (AEPF)	Alternative Education for 14-16 year olds		
Confederation of British Industry (CBI)		All DEL functions (including FE & HE)	
Colleges NI		HE & FE	
Construction Employers Federation (CEF)	Skills development	Facilitating Employment opportunities	
Disability Action		Disability Employment Service; Vocational training (through Training for Success)	
Forum for Adult Learning NI (FALNI)			No single department to address adult learning: DHSSPS, DARD, DSD and DCAL should also be included as well as DE and DETI

Respondent Organisation	DEL functions which have been identified for alignment with:		
	DE	DETI	Other
Include Youth			No single department to address NEETS but one department (not specified) must take lead
Institute of Directors (IoD)	Careers Service	HE & FE	
Invest NI		HE & FE	
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)			Holding response, pending consultation with members
Labour Relations Agency (LRA)		Employment relations	
Law Centre NI	Essential Skills	Employment Law; migrant workers' rights within dedicated section only	Migrant workers' rights may also go to OFMDFM ; Jobs and Benefits to DSD
Mencap		All functions providing support for the learning-disabled: FE, HE & Employment Services	
National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)	HE & FE		
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO)		Training and Employability Functions	
Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY)			No comment on which department
Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)			No comment on which department, but all functions should transfer to one department
Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association (NISCA)	HE & FE	Careers Service	
Open College Network Northern Ireland (OCN)	Wider learning sector	Skills training/ part of FE	
Orchardville Society		Whole Department	
Parkanaur College		Whole Department	

Respondent Organisation	DEL functions which have been identified for alignment with:		
	DE	DETI	Other
Queen's University Belfast and University of Ulster- Joint Response		HE	
St. Mary's University College Belfast	HE		
Stranmillis University College Belfast	Teacher Education; and Early Childhood Studies and Health & Leisure degrees		
Ulster Teachers' Union	HE & FE		Employment rights to OFMDFM
Ulster Supported Employment (USEL)		Disability Employment Service	
University and College Union (UCU)	HE & FE		Tribunals to DoJ
University of the Third Age (U3A)			Lifelong Learning to align with HE & FE, no specific Department indicated

Consideration of Evidence

Common themes

42. Stakeholders were asked to indicate with which Department (DE or DETI) their sector would be best aligned, and their responses, together with oral evidence given to the Committee during its stakeholder forum on 18 April 2012, have been summarised below.
43. In addition to the identification of the most appropriate Department, some stakeholders suggested that an entirely new department – a Department for the Economy - should be created. A number of stakeholders also discussed the transfer of DEL functions currently exercised within Jobs and Benefits Centres to the Department for Social Development (DSD).
44. Regardless of which Department these functions were transferred to, the preservation of the link between Higher and Further Education, and the importance of maintaining the continuity of existing provision and relationships established with DEL, was a common theme expressed by a range of stakeholders.
45. A number of other concerns were raised: the need for joined-up government across the departments, the danger of separating policy and delivery into different departments, and the fear that transferring to an unfamiliar department would bring its own difficulties.
46. Stakeholder evidence on these themes is summarised below:

DEL functions to be transferred to the Department of Education

47. Both of the teacher training colleges strongly supported the transfer of this function to DE.
48. **Stranmillis University College, Belfast**, made its position is very clear. *“We feel very strongly that, because all our major policy drivers emanate from and are initiated by the Department of Education (DE), that is our natural home. In fact, we feel that, with much of our current work, we sometimes do not make the progress that we would like because of our not being firmly located in that Department. When we review our key programmes in teacher education, we benchmark them against all the key policies with which the Committee is familiar, such as the literacy and numeracy strategy and Every School a Good School. That seems to be completely natural.*
49. *We could potentially lose sight of something that is very important to Northern Ireland. Stranmillis caters for people who wish to work in settings from early childhood through to post-primary education. Therefore, we really should be held up as exemplary in addressing the 0-6 early years strategy as well as primary and post-primary teacher education qualifications. If we narrow the debate and use the language of teacher education versus diversified courses, we will be asking the wrong questions and will likely lead ourselves into a cul-de-sac. That is an incredibly important point, and it is one of the reasons why we would emphasise the point about our home Department.”*
50. The same points were reiterated by **St Mary’s University College, Belfast**, *“We should seek a best-fit solution where the local higher education sector could be aligned to a Department and where the core business is either economic development or the education of people and related services. I understand the arguments for both, but the position at St Mary’s that has been agreed by our governing body is that we believe that higher education in Northern Ireland is best served by an alignment with the Department of Education... the nature of higher education suggests that, at its core, is learning and teaching and the student experience, and that is best aligned with a Department of Education rather than with a Department that is focused on economic development”*
51. The Principal of the College also expressed his opinion that the move of Higher Education to the Department of Education in Northern Ireland would facilitate the *“potential for collaborative work with the administration of higher education in other jurisdictions. I am*

looking at what goes on in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Dublin, and, in those three places, higher education is part of a bigger administration of all education."

52. St Mary's University College, while believing that "Northern Ireland could benefit from an integration of all aspects of learning and teaching and from all aspects of education being in one Department", admitted that "there were experiences in the past where perhaps higher education was in what could be described as a Cinderella situation... If we were to arrive at an outcome that the higher education sector in Northern Ireland was in the Department of Education, we would be fully cognisant of the fact that it should not and cannot be a Cinderella area. Ultimately, it is down to those in the sector, and a scrutiny Committee will be in place, to ensure that higher education has its proper place."
53. The trade unions representing teachers and lecturers were emphatic in their support for further and higher education to move to DE. **The Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU)** stated in its written submission that, "It would be the view of UTU that the proper place for the siting of the education functions of the Department for Employment and Learning would be the Department of Education."
54. **The University and College Union (UCU)** made its position clear when representatives briefed the Committee. "It is the UCU's passion and commitment for education, for lifelong learning, for womb-to-tomb or cradle-to-grave education for all citizens that is reflected in our vision for further and higher education to sit within the Department of Education... The question is where further and higher education should be positioned within the Executive that governs Northern Ireland. Clearly, we believe that it should be in the Department of Education. Why? It is about taking further and higher education and placing it at the mercy of a private/business sector, which, by its very nature, exists to serve its own interests... We believe that the harnessing of our further education colleges to the economy has already been tried and has been found to be flawed."
55. "Universities and further education colleges are at the core of society. We represent, as I mentioned, 4,000 lecturers. Our members are educators, not business people. Although UCU fully understands and appreciates the vital role that further and higher education play in driving forward a vibrant economy that we all aspire to in Northern Ireland, our concern is that the shifting emphasis away from education and on to the business/private sector could have an adverse impact in the long term. This is a very real and genuine concern for UCU and for our members. The Department of Education shares the mission of educators to impart knowledge and encourage learning by students so that they can obtain qualifications, develop skills and gather experience to equip them to progress in their chosen careers and as citizens."
56. **The Alternative Education Providers Forum (AEP)** works with both DEL and DE, but opted for a transfer of the functions with which they engage to DE. "We would like to be aligned with the Department of Education, on the basis that we currently work mainly with 14- to 16-year-olds who have, for whatever reason, fallen out of mainstream education. We operate with a small 16-plus group, which may be extended under the 14-19 strategy... We have found that, once we transfer those young people into further education or training organisations, the support services that we bring have not found a continuation."
57. "...it is about creating stable young people who are able to go into work and continue in work. There does seem to be a time lapse; we do need that extra time with them to allow them to develop. I am not entirely sure that within the workforce would be the best way for them, but in education, within a zone where they can feel confident and comfortable, is. A lot of these young people have horrendous family situations. It is not just as cut and dried as give them a job and they will be fine; a lot of other work has to be done as well. That could be housed more cleverly within the Education Department rather than DETI."
58. **The Open College Network** expressed the idea of a continuum of lifelong learning that could be best developed if both higher and further education were to be transferred to the Department of Education. "The opportunity for us to establish ourselves on a clear path for

learning for life, which is inclusive from the cradle to the grave and recognises the opportunities, for example, in family learning, and moves through primary and post-primary education and into adult life, is significant."

59. **The Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association (NICSA)** echoed this view, "... we believe that, in the Department of Education, there is learning at all ages and, therefore, post-16 education and higher education should probably be allied with the same Department for the continuity of young people. Learning takes place in many different environments and throughout life and, therefore, should stay with the Department of Education." **The Institute of Directors** also agreed that "teacher training and careers advice lie more naturally with the Department of Education."
60. **Queen's University, Belfast**, and the **University of Ulster** were in agreement that their main links with the Department of Education lay in the area of teacher training, but they did not believe that this justified the transfer of higher education in its entirety to the Department of Education.
61. Professor Richard Barnett, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ulster, told the Committee that, "At the moment, teacher training is a halfway house in that the Department of Education commissions the numbers that we supply, but it is funded by DEL. It is not so clear-cut. It is an issue of linking the skills and requirements there to workforce planning, although I think that that is fraught with dangers. At the moment, the Department of Education is involved in commissioning the numbers of teacher training places in the same way as the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety commissions the numbers of nurses... it could be the case that the Education Department will follow the model that we have with the Health Department, whereby it commissions and funds places. Perhaps DE should commission and fund. At the moment, it commissions but does not fund."
62. Professor Sir Peter Gregson, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ulster, added that, "...the two university colleges are academically integrated with Queen's. There is no difficulty with them being academically integrated with Queen's and being funded either in the current way or in the way proposed by (UU). We have those mechanisms in the health arena already."
63. Professor Barnett outlined other areas where the University worked with the Department of Education. "The main dealings of the universities with DE are indirect. As I said, DE says how many places it requires for PGCE courses, and we provide those places, although they are funded by DEL. We offer teacher training for the further education sector as well. There are no dealings with DE on that; it is done directly with DEL. That is the link between the further education sector and the University of Ulster. Our other link with DE is through our school of education, and it involves educational policy issues. Through our school of languages, work is being done on the language agenda and the language review, for instance."
64. QUB referred to the "very close relationship with the Department, the inspectorate, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), other bodies, school principals and career teachers around the entitlement framework and the processes of change within the school system" but rejected the concept of the whole higher education function being transferred to DE. "There are clearly different options. Higher education is an end in itself, when you think about individuals, and it is a means to an end, when you think about delivering for the Programme for Government and so forth. Secondly, the synergies that we have tried to refer to in our response to the Committee cover the innovation thread that I have already mentioned and the international thread. One of the things about the Department for Employment and Learning and the universities and the way in which they are linked with DETI is that we are all working for Northern Ireland by working beyond Northern Ireland. When DETI sends missions overseas, the universities are well represented on them because we are an integral part of that important element when it comes to foreign direct investment (FDI) or selling or developing a company overseas. Internationalisation is as central to the universities' mission as it is to that of DETI. The third point is that we, as institutions, are also responsible for leveraging

the Government block grant. The Queen's University block grant from the Department for Employment and Learning is currently £110 million, and our turnover is £300 million.

65. **Colleges NI**, representing all six colleges of further education in Northern Ireland, were not in favour of moving from DEL to DE. *"We would probably take issue with the idea that somehow there is some type of ideological conflict between education on the one hand and skills and training on the other hand. I would certainly argue against that. ...Everything that we have tried to argue with you this morning is about saying that those are not two conflicting issues; they are part of the same thing. We deliver our support for the economy and our part in upskilling and reskilling the potential working population by offering a range of vocationally related educational programmes."*
66. In contrast to the stated position of the teaching unions, the **Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)** expressed reservations about the transfer of further and higher education to the Department of Education, based on the experience of their members when this had previously been the case. *"The further and higher education sector was the Cinderella service of education ... our members in the further and higher education sector believe that they have had a better opportunity to propagate what should happen in further education as part of a separate Department rather than as part of the Department of Education"*
67. **Mr Bill McGinnis, the Skills Adviser for Northern Ireland**, voiced similar concerns for the future of further education within the Department of Education. *"I suspect that HE will look after itself; it can finance itself, to some degree, with a bit of support. However, I am worried that FE would become the Cinderella of education once more, because it must be the main driver for the technical and professional skills required for the industries of the future."*
68. **The Employment Services Board** also felt that further and higher education would be better placed if it remained outside the Department of Education. *"For us, one of the pitfalls of putting the FE and HE sectors under the Department of Education's control is that we could undo the progress that has been made to date, despite the fact that we still have a lot further to go. There is also a greater need for the preparation for work side, or the employability services side, to be far better aligned with those involved in job creation, namely the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and Invest NI."*
69. **Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO)**, which engages with young offenders, was concerned that the Department of Education would not be best placed to assist young people with difficulties. *There is also the question of where responsibility for young adults not in education, employment or training (NEET) will be located in future arrangements. Let us be honest; the reason why they are not in education, employment or training in the first place is because they have been failed by mainstream education provision. At least, that is the argument that NIACRO would advocate. Concerns regarding the transfer of functions to the Department of Education include swamping, because of the way that the Department operates culturally, its academic mainstream focus and its history of exclusion. There is enough turmoil over selection without increasing the burden, and we argue that, whatever Department the elements of DEL's current functions are transferred to, they need to be ring-fenced and resources need to be placed on a par with other agencies."*
70. **Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL)** believed that the focus on employability, which is of prime importance to this organisation, would not be compatible with the statutory duty of the Department of Education. *"In terms of the Further and Higher Education system which DEL currently has the remit for, these institutions provide skills and qualifications for the employment market. As this is not the prime statutory directive of DE it is possible that the focus on skills and accreditations and the preparation for the world of work could be reduced."*
- DEL functions to be transferred to the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment**
71. A number of representatives of business and industry supported the transfer of DEL functions relating to skills and employment to the Department for Enterprise Trade and Investment.
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72. Nigel Smyth, Director of the **CBI in Northern Ireland**, stated his views unequivocally in support of DETI. *“We believe that the core functions in DEL should be transferred to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). The four key functions of DEL are, therefore, unambiguously linked with economic development. We believe that their effectiveness will be enhanced through closer integration with DETI. That clearly extends to the roles that FE and HE play in developing and promoting knowledge transfer, innovation and product process development, as well as in skills. I think that there would be a disappointment in the business community if those functions were to be transferred to the Department of Education. The move to DETI came forward from the independent review of economic policy two years ago, when, on the back of that, there was a strong view of support for the creation of one Department of the economy —possibly a Department of the economy and skills.”*
73. Mike Mullan, representing the **CBI Employment and Skills Committee**, told the Committee. *“I want to see skills at the heart of job creation; I want to see colleges at the centre of skills; and I think that colleges and skills need to be part of the economy. I am saying that the drive and the vehicle is to put colleges into the economy. We feel that the focus of skills development and further and higher education should be preparing young people with the skills they need to move into the workforce, to add value to employers and to take their place in the workforce in order to drive forward economic development and growth. Economic development is obviously the primary focus of DETI, and we feel, therefore, that there is a good fit between DETI and DEL.”*
74. **The Institute of Directors (IoD)** highlighted the concerns of business that skills should be centralised within the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment. *“Our especial concern about the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is that its aim is to support the economy, and we feel that, if the Department is to be dissolved, its functions mainly belong with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). The particular concern that we have come across is in relation to leadership and management development, where you find the functions in both DETI, through Invest Northern Ireland, and DEL. Often, businesses do not know which one they are going to. They do not know whether they are eligible for support from one or the other, so we feel that the natural home for those skills and, indeed, for other skills, lies in DETI. Further education and higher education, which are other functions of DEL, have made exceptional efforts over the past number of years to align themselves with business, and all the skills that are being developed through those sectors would naturally lie with DETI as well.”*
75. **The Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association (NICSA)** referred to its work with the Careers Service Northern Ireland, which currently sits with the Department for Employment and Learning. *“It has very strong, long-standing partnerships with further education colleges and statutory education. We have a concern about where that would lie in the scheme of things upon dissolution, and we want to ensure that the partnerships will continue to be strong with the schools. However, we believe that the work that the Careers Service does would fit very well and be allied with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) because of the labour market information...Anything that lies within economics and the labour market information fits in very well with DETI, and, therefore, we feel that the Careers Service would be well aligned there.”*
76. A number of voluntary organisations, particularly those engaged with people with disabilities, also considered that the functions of DEL were more closely aligned with DETI, and that a closer involvement with DETI would be beneficial to their sector.
77. Representatives from **Mencap** believed that *“the Department’s function should move as a whole to one Department, preferably the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), because of the link with the economy and the link between work and inclusion. A key role of specialist agencies in supporting people with a learning disability into college and into work needs to be recognised and funded in the new structure or structures.”*
78. **The Orchardville Society** concurred with a move to DETI. *“We feel that, if the Department is to be dissolved, the best fit for us —as an organisation, not as a sector, as I referred to in my*
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letter — would be the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). Our reasoning for that is several-fold. First, we are working mostly with adults. We are usually dealing with people whom education has failed, so we are trying to fill a gap and move forward. The Department for Employment and Learning has offered programmes and facilities that have filled that gap accordingly. Secondly, through the type of interfaces that we do and the interventions that we offer, we already have relationships with DETI because we use social economy as an intervention. The community and voluntary sector, in our type of work, is being continually encouraged to look at social economy as a way forward for the creation of employment in Northern Ireland and inward investment. It seems that, if we are creating jobs and upskilling people, that should sit in that area.”

79. Although Parkanaur College :acknowledged that the Department of Education was appreciative and supportive of its activities, the College still believed that DETI would be the most appropriate Department for the transfer of DEL functions. “Because we are in that small niche, we feel that DETI will provide us with the best outcome and the best support. That is where we will get the links to the workforce and to placement providers and the opportunities for jobs in the community, and that is where the employment will be. It is about where these young people, who have real and difficult challenges in life, find themselves: they have come through the education system — perhaps the majority of their life has been spent there — and that is often where it ends. We need to make that transition, and we feel that DETI will help us to do that to the best of our ability and help us to hit the outcomes, most importantly, for the people who find themselves in that position.”
80. This rationale was echoed by **Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL)** “(DETI) would be, in our view, the most appropriate fit for DEL and DES and ultimately USEL. This department is focussed on employment creation and economic growth. As DEL takes responsibility for skilling people for work, and helping people from all areas of NI to seek and find appropriate employment the fit is so natural it seems almost beyond the need to further justify.”
81. **NIACRO**, however, had reservations. “There are concerns regarding the transfer of functions to DETI. Culturally, DETI is tuned into attracting blue-chip businesses. It is not orientated towards people who have been socially excluded or marginalised, and, therefore, resources need to be ring-fenced on a par with other agencies.”

Amalgamation of DEL and DETI to form a new Department for the Economy

82. A number of stakeholders put forward a third option, whereby both the functions of DEL and DETI would be transferred into an entirely new department focussed on the promotion of the economy and employment.
83. This view was expressed clearly by **Bill McGinnis (Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills)**. “I am an adviser, not a civil servant. I am a businessman and run my business daily. I feel that what is best for the economy is the creation of a new Department...I think that the new Department should be called the Department for the economy, as that would show a fairly major change. It could be the Department for the economy and employment, or whatever you want to call it. There must be a new name; it cannot remain as DETI .I do not know what legislation that would involve, because I do not know the details, but it should have a separate name.”
84. **The University of Ulster** agreed that, “Given the priority in the Programme for Government, it seems that HE and FE should be with a central economy Department...There may be other functions from other Departments that would fit in a Department for the economy. That needs to be looked at as a whole, or, at least, when you get rid of DEL, you need to think where you are headed to in the longer term so that you are not diverted from the longer-term target.”
85. **Invest NI**, a non-departmental public body under the oversight of DETI, also acknowledged that, “Unashamedly, we are very keen to have a fair part of the Department for Employment and Learning reassigned to either a new Department of the economy or to DETI.”

86. Representatives of the Labour Relations Agency explained that it would be more advantageous to create a new Department for the economy because “...good employment relations relate directly to one of the key problems of the Northern Ireland economy, which is our lower rate of productivity compared with the UK economy as a whole. Better employment relations raises productivity and higher productivity can be built only on good employment relations. Therefore, employment relations has an organic connection with the economy, and we take the view that, if DEL were to be abolished, employment relations should go the Department that, in the future, will have responsibility for the economy. Currently, employment relations, as you know, is brigaded with higher and further education, but we feel that there is no natural affinity with higher and further education. We see ourselves quite closely aligned with the economy. I think that we would be uncomfortable, for example, with a transfer to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment as presently named, because we believe that the focus on employment and the economy may be lost.
87. We are essentially saying that wherever the economy goes, employment relations should go too. We have three primary concerns:
- the loss of focus on employment in the situation of being put into a much larger Department;
 - the possible loss of expertise that rests in DEL on employment relations; and
 - the possible diminishing of our relationships with officials through any reorganisation”.
88. **Colleges NI**, representing the six regional Colleges of Further Education, stated that, “In summary, we are saying that we want to be aligned with a new Department —call it the Department of the economy or whatever you want, but the economy has to be the key driver, and we are key to delivering on that —while ensuring that there are strong links and protocols or whatever with the Department of Education.”
89. **NIPSA** also affirmed that “... it is our considered view that, if DEL is to be abolished, it should transfer in its entirety. It should not be subsumed into DETI but should be merged with DETI into a new Department, which ... should be called something like the Department of the economy and employment, because of the close interrelated links between the economy and employment”.
- The Transfer of all Job Centre functions to the Department for Social Development**
90. The proposal that the jobseeking function currently exercised by DEL within Jobs and Benefits Centres should be transferred to the Department for Social Development (DSD) was discussed by several stakeholders.
91. **The Law Centre NI** favoured this proposal. “Because of the shift to universal credit, which is a significant change to our current arrangements, we are suggesting that consideration needs to be given to whether or not the jobs and benefits function should be transferred to DSD, and we think that there are reasons why it should. Essentially, because of the importance of the policy on welfare reform and the centrality of the new work-seeking arrangements, we suggest that that work should be handled by a single Department. In a sense, I suppose that this is about achieving a seamless co-ordination of what could be the biggest change to the welfare state. Therefore, our preference is for that function to move to DSD”.
92. No other stakeholder supported transferring functions to the Department for Social Development, but a number of respondents, particularly those in the voluntary sector, were very much opposed to this.
93. **Disability Action** expressed the view that “the work of people in the Social Security Agency is about ensuring entitlement and delivery of service, tackling fraud and error and all of those things. In a culture where people with disabilities already receive passive views, where we are thought of as fairly non-contributing and as not having much to give, that interface between benefit entitlement and ability and wish to work becomes very confused. If you are talking

about the disability employment service and the employment service in total in the Department for Employment and Learning, then they work with those who are furthest from the labour market and who face the greatest barriers. We think it would be absolutely detrimental if the employment service including the disability employment service is moved to (DSD)”

94. **The Orchardville Society** compared the existing aims and objectives of DEL and DSD in this way: “... if we go higher than that to a strategic level and look at how each Department currently measures its outcomes, we will see that one is not about getting people into jobs. The way in which they measure what they do is very different, and I am not sure if that match would sit well together. To put employment with jobs and benefits, at a strategic level, could give the wrong message and create a fear factor among people...I feel less favourable towards seeing the likes of the disablement advisory service (DAS) aligned, at a strategic level, with DSD. I have been working in the community and voluntary sector for 20 years. The sector’s engagement with DSD is the least engagement, believe it or not, although we all know that getting people into employment will take people out of poverty and deprivation. The assistance has come from the Department for Employment and Learning through a disability advisory service and through Invest NI.”
95. **Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL)** believes that “If DEL, or specifically the employment service of DEL, were to move under DSD we believe, even with the best will and intention, there is a risk that the overarching focus will be on benefits and focus on economic activity could be reduced”.
96. **The Employment Services Board** articulated the notion, which was also expressed by other stakeholders, that the DEL job-seeking function had been adversely impacted by being moved to combined Jobs and Benefits Centres. “...before co-location, people were engaged with DEL through the job centres —people did go into the job centres, so DEL always had a reputation for helping —but, once job centres were co-located with the other services, they became more part of the system. That was probably more detrimental to the Department than anything else over the past 10 or 15 years, because it put people completely off engaging with it if they did not have to. That is why the work that we do is so important, because we are dealing mostly with the people who will not, unless they absolutely have to, go into a jobs and benefits office.”
97. The trade union representing Job Centre staff, **NIPSA**, also believed that the identification of employment needs and opportunities should not be perceived as being confined to benefit claimants, but that this function had a much wider application. “Over the past couple of years, a lot of work has been done in the Department to say that the focus needs to move away from merely fulfilling benefit conditionality, which is what seems to be happening in the jobs and benefits offices, towards doing more qualitative work with employers. There is a very strong feeling among staff, particularly our members who have transferred from DSD into DEL, that they are getting the chance to see that. Instead of doing quantitative work based around fulfilling benefit needs, they are now doing quality work to help to skill people and get them out into the economy.”

Maintenance of all Further and Higher Education within one department

98. Queen’s University Belfast, St Mary’s University College and Colleges NI all voiced some views on whether higher education and further education should be transferred together to one department.
99. **QUB** said in evidence that “It is for further education and higher education to remain linked and to be linked in a Department that is focused on economic development and the Programme for Government, whether it is DETI or any other Department to which you might want them to belong.”
100. Professor Finn the Principal of **St Mary’s University College** said “I will conclude on the possibility of initial teacher education or teacher education somehow findings its way into one Department and the rest of higher education into another, should that be considered. It is a

scenario where, because they specialise in teacher education, the two university colleges would, perhaps, be with DE, and the rest of HE in DETI, if that were proposed. There is an obvious link between teacher education and the Department of Education. There is a very obvious link with regard to the training and education of teachers along a continuum from initial through to continuing professional development, but it has to be fully understood that, in this country and in virtually every country in the world, initial teacher education is firmly embedded in the higher education sector. St Mary's, Stranmillis and Queen's, etc, are part of the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers. Teachers are educated in a university, higher education context. I say that because, if there was to be some thoughts around aligning teacher education with DE and HE elsewhere, it would have to be very carefully managed... so that integral elements of the higher education sector do not find themselves isolated from mainstream higher education. "

101. **Colleges NI** highlighted the statistic that "20% of all HE provision to indigenous students studying within Northern Ireland" is provided through Further Education colleges.
102. Representatives from the Colleges NI went on to say, "That is a minority of higher education provision, but it is a very significant minority. It is also an important minority, because it provides the balance in the range of higher education available. As well as delivering degree-level courses, we deliver a lot of sub-degree level qualifications. We deliver higher national certificates and diplomas, which are very clearly work-related, and foundation degrees, which are related to vocations. All those, as well as being qualifications in themselves, allow progression into our universities and can be topped up to honours degrees. We would argue very strongly that we are not detached from the universities and that government should view higher education as a single provision provided by the universities and colleges and governed by one coherent strategy."

Importance of the continuity of existing provision and relationships

103. A number of stakeholders raised concerns regarding the loss of specialism, expertise, knowledge and relationships that had been built up.
104. **The Law Centre** expressed its concerns that specialism and expertise within DEL are not lost after the dissolution of DEL. "We would be very concerned to ensure that the existing specialism and expertise that have been built up in the current Department and that flow from it are not lost. The value of advice at an early stage in employment law matters for employees and employers cannot be overestimated; it can have a knock-on effect on whether a case goes any further or goes properly forward. We would be concerned to ensure that there is no loss of specialism and expertise."
105. **Action on Hearing Loss** were concerned that there may be a loss in the relationships and expertise that has been built up. "We have a very positive relationship with DEL on the sign language interpreting work and on the access to work scheme. If the work starts to be separated, we do not want to lose the relationships or the expertise that has been built up or the momentum that has been started."
106. **Include Youth** indicated its unease that there may be a loss of knowledge in the process. "Although we recognise that key DEL staff will transfer to other Departments, taking with them their current responsibilities, there will inevitably be a loss of knowledge in the process... It will be critical that the continuity of focus and provision is maintained during the transfer of DEL's powers and the subsequent bedding-in period. There will be a need to quickly build the knowledge and skills of any new staff who are tasked with working on the issue of young people who are NEET. The focus must be evident in the relevant Department or Departments across all levels, including at ministerial level."
107. **Colleges Northern Ireland** wanted reassurance that there would be no slowing of the momentum the relationships that have been built. "we do not want any slowing of momentum in the relationships that we have been able to build, particularly with business and industry, because they have had a significant influence on not just what we do but how we do it. We will

be able to keep that momentum going if we are seen to be still aligned with the Department where economic priorities are defined.”

108. **Mencap** wants to ensure that specialist support is maintained and how any change will impact on people with a learning disability. *“Our concern about the functions being transferred to DE is that there was no mention of special educational needs within its targets in the Programme for Government. DE already has a big area of responsibility for children with a learning disability, and our concern is that, if it gets more functions, people with a learning disability will continue to be invisible within that Department. I understand that you could say the same for DETI, in that it does not have experience of working with people with a learning disability. I suppose that you could go either way.*
109. *Our main concern is that the specialist support is maintained, no matter which Department it goes to, and that any links that DEL has been able to develop with the voluntary and community sector continue; for example, with the disability liaison group.*
110. *We are anxious about how any change would impact on people with a learning disability, especially when you have got used to a system. Change can be difficult. We hope that, whatever Department takes on the functions, it will see it as an opportunity to improve on what is already there and to ensure that there is no detrimental effect on any of the groups that are represented within that.*
111. *The knowledge, expertise and relationships that the voluntary sector has built up with DEL should not be lost whichever Department it falls to. We can build on that and not lose the expertise that we have invested in.”*
112. Brian McAreavey CITI, BELFAST representing the **Confederation of British Industry (CBI)** gave an example of working closely with DETI and DEL on skills development. *“As a private sector employer, we are known very well by DETI and DEL. There are lots of examples of our having worked closely with both of them on skills development. We meet them regularly and at all levels. They talk our language and understand our business and business needs. They also understand what employers like us need from Northern Ireland plc in order to be competitive in what is a very global marketplace for jobs. Those relationships and that level of understanding have been built up over years. We simply do not have the same network of relationships with the Department of Education.”*
113. **The Labour Relations Agency (LRA)** is concerned that due to the size of their budget they may be placed in the minor league of public bodies and also that there may be a loss of expertise on employment relations with the dissolution of DEL. *“We have three primary concerns. First, we fear that there would be a loss of focus at ministerial and departmental level on employment relations. Among other things, that could have consequences for our modest budget, which is currently £3.5 million annually and places us in the minor league of public bodies. There is a tendency in government circles, especially in these times of more limited public resources, to equate importance with the size of your budget. Therefore, there is a danger that we would be regarded as an even smaller fish in a bigger pool. Our second area of concern is about the loss of expertise on employment relations that has been built up in the Department for Employment and Learning. Thirdly, we are concerned about the possible diminution in the relationship that we have built up with departmental officials. The mutually beneficial relationship that has been created has been good for employment relations and, consequently, the economy.”*
114. **Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO)** are concerned regarding the loss of intra- and interdepartmental working and loss of momentum. *“We have some concerns for the future. Should the decision be taken to abolish DEL, we would be concerned about the loss of intra- and interdepartmental working, DEL being only one of the Departments that recognises and acts on its responsibility in delivering a safer society. We would also be concerned about the loss of momentum with regards to the gains recently achieved, because there is likely to be a loss in the short-to-medium term. The cultural*

re-alignment or the likely swamping that will take place is a concern. By that I mean that the dominant culture in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), we would argue, is attracting investment, and the Department of Education provides mainstream academic provision to the exclusion of vocational courses and essential skills for adults."

115. **Invest Northern Ireland (INI)** raised an issue regarding personal leadership by individuals in departments which helps lead to success. "It has taken us quite a number of years to get to where we are with DEL. If you do not mind, I will go back to the DEL thing, which is *"to promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy"*.
116. The Department of Education's overarching objective is somewhat different to that, but there is a great commonality between where DEL and DETI sit, particularly with Invest NI working with it. Without that personal leadership from individuals in those Departments, we would not have had the success that I alluded to."

Other Issues

117. A number of stakeholders stated that they did not have a view on which department was responsible for the functions of DEL as long as joined up government was maintained. Some stakeholders also raised concerns regarding the linkages between the demand and supply of skills.
118. **The Alternative Education Providers Forum (AEP)** stated in their evidence that *"There is a need for joined-up thinking in government. In the alternative sector, we have been doing that for quite a while. I do not think that it is just the responsibility of DETI or just the responsibility of the Department of Education. We could bring in Health, Environment or the Department for Social Development; there is a whole list of Departments that need to take responsibility. Within the alternative sector, we have youth workers, teachers and educationalists working together. I really do not see the problem in Departments coming together to work."*
119. **Include Youth** was concerned regarding young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). *"it should be noted that, although DEL has certainly had a lead role on the issue of young people who are NEET, responsibility for addressing the needs of that group lies with a number of Departments and, crucially, with the Executive as a whole. If we are to get the joined-up approach and connectedness that we need at Executive level, it is so important that the ministerial subcommittee works effectively."*
120. **Action on Hearing Loss** did not have any views as to which department should be responsible for people with hearing loss as long as the Departments talk to each other. *"...we do not have a very strong feeling as to whether it lives in one place or another. What we do feel strongly about is that whatever red tape is there is dissolved, and that the learner or person has a continuous pathway to move through. So, whether that responsibility moves to one Department or the other, the Departments must talk to each other."*
121. **The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY)** raised the policy areas of young people not in education, employment or training, Educational Maintenance Allowance, further and higher education and the transitions of children with moderate learning disabilities in special schools over the age of 16 into further education/training. *"Clearly both the Department of Education and Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment have critical roles to play in relation to these policy areas, and it is not for NICCY to comment on which should take a lead. However, it is critical that these two Departments work together in an integrated way to ensure that the Executive delivers most effectively for children and young people in relation to these issues."*
122. **The Orchardville Society** was concerned regarding what would happen with DEL's strategic plan after the dissolution of DEL. *"One of our main concerns is about the kind of precedence that DEL's strategy, if fragmented, would be given in any new Department. If it goes in pieces to different Departments, it could become a very small part of a larger Department. If the strategic*

plan is disseminated all over the place, its interlinkages may not be seen very clearly by those of us who work in the area."

123. **Invest Northern Ireland (INI)** gave an example of how joined up government worked in practical terms. *"I will take it into real examples, because that is helpful. On the skills side, let us take Citi. When Citi came to Northern Ireland, we worked very closely with it, DEL, FE and HE. At that time, there was no investment administrative qualification in Northern Ireland, and, working with DEL, Belfast Met and the University of Ulster, we put that qualification in place in Northern Ireland. That could not have been done before and, on the back of that, we were able to attract a 200-job project. That is one example of the work that we have done with DEL and the colleges and universities together".*
124. **The Forum for Adult Learning in Northern Ireland (FALNI)** did not specify where they thought the different functions of DEL should transfer to but raised a number of concerns they have for the future of adult learning. *"The main points that we want to emphasise include, first, the concern around access. Regardless of which Department takes lead responsibility, how can we best ensure that access is available for all? We are talking about access in the broadest sense of the word. Secondly, we are concerned about the broad sweep of curriculums. It is about learning that supports citizens' work and life. Thirdly, we advocate for a lifelong strategy for adult learning, which does not currently exist. That would be a great way of pulling together the disparate Departments and not just the two that are currently under discussion. The fourth point is that, perhaps more than ever, with the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), we advocate for there to be an all-party group to look at adult learning."*
125. *"There are dangers and threats to adult education wherever it ends up. If it goes to the Department of Education, there is a danger that it would be regarded as peripheral in relation to its mainstream activity, which is looking after schools. If it is in a primarily economic Department, there is, again, a danger that the exclusive focus would be on training that is related to enhancing people's employability. That is important, but there should not be an exclusive focus on that. Adult education deals with all of the other issues as well. The more important thing for us is not the Department that it is in; it is having a clearly demarcated responsibility for the promotion and oversight of adult education."*
126. *"It might be worth looking at the English model and how it operates, where, within the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), you have a Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning. Lifelong learning is still protected; it is separately funded and recognised. That Department is currently carrying out a consultation and asking communities what adult learning they need. You talked about whether it would be the right thing if DEL had the policy right. The English model appears to be working well there because there is recognition of the value of lifelong learning."*
127. **Mencap** made its position clear that the functions of DEL should be transferred to one department and that equality screening of the transfer of functions should be carried out. *"It is more the case that we feel that it would be better to keep the transfer of DEL's functions to one Department, rather than splitting them among different Departments. Our main concern is that people still get the specialist support that is required wherever they go."*
128. *"Our other main concern is that equality screening of the transfer of functions be carried out in order to assess the impact on the section 75 groups, especially on disabled people. That needs to be monitored to ensure that people are not worse off, whichever Department receives the functions. If part of those functions went to DE and part to DETI, we would be concerned that there would not be the link between learning and the employment opportunities and career guidance. We are concerned that such support would be lost."*
129. **Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills (Bill McGinnis)** was concerned regarding the implementation of the skills strategy. *"...move everything to DETI. It would ensure that the skills strategy would be implemented in its entirety. If it is spread across a number of*

Departments, it will likely not be implemented in full, and there will likely be mission creep, which will not be effective.”

130. **University of Ulster Professor Barnett** spoke of the importance of linking demand for skills with the supply of skills. *“At the moment, who is responsible for skills and training? It is split between two Departments, and there is some confusion there. It is important that the demand for skills and the supply of skills are, as much as possible, linked.”*
131. **Invest Northern Ireland** also raised some issues regarding skills. *“If a policy for skills is in one Department but the responsibility for delivering it rests in another Department, there is an opportunity for a mismatch between where the budget is allocated and where the policy sits.”*
132. **Ulster Teachers’ Union (UTU)** thought that employment rights should be transferred to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. *“The residual functions related to Employment Rights may be better placed within another department, and given their central role in the setting the scene for the labour market and industrial relations matters, which impact on the economy, the UTU would suggest that they should be under the control of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.”*

Views of the Staff of the Department for Employment and Learning

133. At its meeting on 25 April 2012, the Committee for Employment and Learning agreed that it should seek the views of the staff presently working in the Department. A consultation document, attached at Appendix 5, was circulated by the Department to each Head of Branch (approximately 40) and 15 of the 35 local Employment Service Offices (JobCentres, and Jobs and Benefits Offices) chosen randomly from each of the three Regions, to represent Employment Service views.
134. Heads of Branches were asked to meet with their staff to discuss the questions posed in the consultation document and to provide collective feedback from Branches and Offices by 30 April 2012. DEL Analytical Services and HR had agreed to collate these responses before forwarding these to the Committee by Thursday 3 May 2012.
135. The Senior Management Team (SMT) in the Department presented a separate response, outlining its views but pledging its commitment to the successful implementation of the transfer of DEL functions, regardless of the outcome.
136. In total, 645 staff responded to the consultation; these respondents were distributed fairly evenly across the grades from AO to DP, with a smaller number of responses from grades 6, 7 and AA. This represented approximately one-third of all DEL staff. Full copies of all these responses, including the response from the Senior Management Team, can be found at Appendix 3.
137. The SMT expressed definitive views that the transfer of DEL functions to DETI would provide a department that was more effective in delivering the targets of the Programme for Government. *“Addressing this agenda lies at the heart of the Department’s purpose. It requires concerted co-ordinated action across the skills continuum –*
- *ensuring that the economically inactive have a skill set aligned to the needs of employers and the economy (the employment service);*
 - *encouraging the acquisition of higher level skills (further education and higher education);*
 - *improving the basic skill set of the working population and those about to join the labour market (Further Education Training for Success and ESF)”*
138. The SMT referred to the creation of a strong economic department as recommended in the Independent Review of Economic Policy which could marry the *“the job creation function of Invest with the skills policy, the entire skills budget and the skills delivery functions.”*

139. The importance of the Further Education sector to a department focussed on the economy was also stressed by SMT. *"FE is the main delivery arm for skills and is linked intrinsically to the skills policy; the main aim articulated in FE Means Business for the sector is to support workforce and economic development. Its student population is predominantly adult."*
140. The SMT also echoed key stakeholders' views in their belief that FE and HE are intrinsically linked *"...separating further education and higher education from skills is counter to current thinking elsewhere which has brought together support for industry, innovation, skills, further education and higher education into one department (e.g. Business Innovation and Skills (BIS))".* SMT believes that together FE and HE are *"fundamental to the Innovation Strategy. It will align policy responsibility (DETI) for innovation with key delivery agents (FE colleges and universities). Through its research, the university sector is integral to INI's push to attract foreign investment, and the 'Connected' programme between universities and colleges focuses on supporting innovation and product prototyping for small and medium sized enterprises."*
141. In addition, the budgetary implications of a combined DEL-DETI were seen by SMT as reinforcing the effectiveness of a single economic department. *"the combined budget of DEL (£800+m) and DETI (£200+m) would provide for a substantial Department for the Economy with a budget in excess of £1bn."*
142. The concerns expressed by SMT regarding the role of further and higher education within DE reiterated those of stakeholders. *"There is a risk that within an expanded Department of Education the strategic focus on FE and HE could be diluted as a result of having to compete with a sensitive education agenda particularly within a tight financial context. ...There was a widely held view that in the past, prior to devolution, the FE sector was not given a sufficient priority."*
143. Another major concern of SMT which was shared by stakeholders related to the loss of coherence if DEL functions were to be transferred piecemeal to other departments. *"Some of this coherence could be lost in a restructuring and the potential separation of responsibilities for skills from further and/or higher education would mean policy responsibility for skills residing in one Department, with the delivery organisations (colleges and universities) and the associated budgets the responsibility of another. This has implications for the delivery of the PfG target as indicated earlier. But it also has operational implications at the frontline. Currently the demand from employers for skills can be met by the supply side, mostly further education, which can respond quickly and flexibly through short courses for industry. But in a scenario where responsibility to meet the needs of employers is separated from responsibility for the key delivery organisations such responses would be more difficult to negotiate. These concerns are reflected in the preference for the functions to be accommodated within an expanded DETI."*
144. The vast majority of staff who responded believe that their job function would sit most easily with DETI. This is summarised by one response as follows, *"The need to rebalance the NI economy is the Executive's number one aim. This aligns with our aim to help people realise their career aspirations, enabling them to contribute positively to their community and the NI economy. Both of these sit primarily within the remit of DETI."*
145. The existing relationships that DEL staff currently enjoy with their colleagues in DETI were referred to in a number of responses. *"The functions of Sectoral Development Branch (and Skills and Industry Division) are all related to economic development: skills development; working with DETI or in parallel with DETI to engage with employers and to tailor training to their needs; providing a skilled workforce for new/inward investment; and, improving the skills level of young people and the existing workforce... Historically, the model of our Branch/Division within the DETI remit has a proven track record of working. Past and present the Division has a track record of working with Invest NI on the development of sectoral skills."*
146. Staff could also see that there could be advantages in working as an integral part of DETI, *"I feel if we worked closer with colleagues in DETI, we would be more aware of the labour market conditions i.e. what investments are coming, what new trade will affect which occupational area."*
-

Therefore, we could assist customers develop or gain new skills to match what the demand will be in Northern Ireland.”

147. Job Centre staff expressed their concerns that transferring job seeking functions to either DSD or the Social Security Agency (SSA) would not be a beneficial move. *“Over the past couple of years, a lot of work has been done to regain our main focus which research has shown appears to have been lost in Jobs and Benefits Offices. Initiatives such as the New Jobseekers Process and concentrating more on our work with Employers have been welcomed by staff who feel they are now able to do quality work which helps clients get into employment. A move to DSD/SSA is seen as detrimental to this.”*
148. There were mixed views put forward by the staff in the Careers service, with some staff expressing a preference to move to DE to reflect their work with DE *“Careers Service should be an integral part of the Education System and inclusion in DE would highlight the division between SSA & Careers (Separate Offices) thereby encouraging customer attendance”,* while others opted for DETI as *“The aims and objectives of DETI fit in with DEL. Our Mission Statement refers to our role in providing a service that enables people “ to contribute positively to their communities and to the NI economy. The Careers Service provides an all age service, if we were part of the Department of Education this could be difficult as a major part of our work involves working with adults.”*
149. Apart from the Careers Service staff, other respondents expressed concerns about moving to DE because of the emphasis within that Department on schools rather than skills, training and the economy.
150. The Committee welcomed the views set out by DEL staff, and expressed its thanks to those who completed the consultation documents and collated the responses within a very short time frame. This proved a valuable exercise to inform the Committee’s thinking, and to reinforce the views of key external stakeholders.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 1

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday, 11 January 2012

Belfast Metropolitan College, Titanic Quarter Campus, Belfast

Present: Mr Basil McCrea MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Sammy Douglas MLA
Ms Michelle Gildernew MLA
Mr Chris Lyttle MLA
Mr Barry McElduff MLA
Mr David McIlveen MLA
Mrs. Sandra Overend MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Cathie White (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Sheila Mawhinney (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lawless (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr William Kinnear (Clerical Officer)
Ms Angela Kelly (Legal Advisor – Agenda item 1 only)

Apologies: Mr Pat Ramsey MLA
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

10:11am The meeting opened in closed session

10:31am The meeting moved into public session

11. Any Other Business

There was a general discussion on the implications for the future of the Committee if the Department for Employment and Learning is dissolved.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 18 January 2012

Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Basil McCrea MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Sammy Douglas MLA
Ms Michelle Gildernew MLA
Mr Barry McElduff MLA
Mr David McIlveen MLA
Mrs. Sandra Overend MLA
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA
Mr Alastair Ross MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Cathie White (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Sheila Mawhinney (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lawless (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr William Kinnear (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: None.

10:03am The meeting opened in public session.

4. Matters arising

The Committee discussed how it should carry out its scrutiny of the future of the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to this issue at its next meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 25 January 2012

Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Basil McCrea MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Ms Michelle Gildernew MLA
Mr Barry McElduff MLA
Mr David McIlveen MLA
Mrs. Sandra Overend MLA
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA
Mr Alastair Ross MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Cathie White (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Sheila Mawhinney (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lawless (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr William Kinnear (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Sammy Douglas MLA

10:12am The meeting opened in public session.

4. Matters arising

The Committee discussed how it should carry out its scrutiny of the future of the Department.

Agreed: The Committee considered a list of stakeholders and agreed that a consultation document should be circulated to these stakeholders.

10. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the draft Forward Work Programme until the end of March 2012.

Agreed: The Committee agreed this Forward Work Programme with the proviso that it may be amended when stakeholder briefings are scheduled.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should circulate details of a proposed witness to members for comment.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 15 February 2012

Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Basil McCrea MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Sammy Douglas MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Mr Barry McElduff MLA
Mr David McIlveen MLA
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA
Mr Alastair Ross MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Cathie White (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Sheila Mawhinney (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lawless (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr William Kinnear (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Ms Michelle Gildernew MLA
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

10.06am The meeting opened in public session.

5. Consideration of Responses to the Committee consultation on the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

The Committee considered various responses to the consultation on the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a research paper on equivalent departments in other jurisdictions, including the Republic of Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek responses from a number of other organisations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister for clarification on the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning.

6. Briefing from the Skills Adviser for Northern Ireland on the transfer of functions of the Department for Employment and Learning

10.21am The Adviser joined the meeting.

The Committee was briefed by Mr Bill McGinnis, the Skills Adviser for Northern Ireland, on options for the transfer of the functions of the Department for Employment and Learning to other departments.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

11.08am The Adviser left the meeting.

7. Briefing from Colleges NI on the transfer of functions of the Department for Employment and Learning

11.09am Representatives joined the meeting.

The Committee was briefed by Mr Gerard Campbell, Chief Executive Colleges NI, Mr Trevor Neilands, Deputy Chairperson Colleges NI and Chief Executive/Principal Northern Regional College, and Mr Joe Martin, Colleges NI Board Member and Chairperson of South West College, on what Department they saw the Further and Higher Education sectors being aligned with following the dissolution of the Department.

11.10am Mr Jim Allister joined the meeting.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

12.08pm Mr Jim Allister left the meeting.

12.22pm The representatives left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to make arrangements for an informal event to take the views of other stakeholders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should prepare a summary of all responses received for the next meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 29 February 2012

Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Basil McCrea MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Sammy Douglas MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Mr Barry McElduff MLA
Mr David McIlveen MLA
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA
Mr Alastair Ross MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Cathie White (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Sheila Mawhinney (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lawless (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr William Kinnear (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Ms Michelle Gildernew MLA

10.01am The meeting opened in public session.

4. **Matters arising**

The Committee considered a summary of responses to the consultation on the dissolution of DEL.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the arrangements for the planned stakeholder event in April, and to defer further consideration of this issue until its next meeting.

5. **Briefing from Queen's University, Belfast, and the University of Ulster on the transfer of functions of the Department for Employment and Learning**

10.16am Representatives joined the meeting.

The Committee was briefed by Professor Sir Peter Gregson, Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, Professor Richard Barnett, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ulster and Professor Tony Gallagher, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, on options for the transfer of the functions of the Department for Employment and Learning to other departments.

10.21am Mr Thomas Buchanan joined the meeting

10.31am Mr Fra McCann joined the meeting

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session when the representatives agreed to provide a copy of the Queen's University Junior Prospectus.

11.16am Representatives left the meeting.

11.16am Mr Pat Ramsey left the meeting

11.16am Mr Fra McCann left the meeting

11.16am Mr Sammy Douglas left the meeting

11.16am Mr David McIlveen left the meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed to contact Mr Pat O'Neill and First Derivatives to gain an industry perspective on the dissolution of DEL.

9. Correspondence

The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 9.

The Committee considered the following items of correspondence:

- Correspondence from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this correspondence.

12.20pm Mr Pat Ramsey left the meeting

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 14 March 2012

Riddel Hall, Queen's University Belfast

Present: Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sammy Douglas MLA
Mr Chris Lyttle MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Mr Barry McElduff MLA
Mr David McIlveen MLA
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA
Mr Alastair Ross MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Cathie White (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Sheila Mawhinney (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lawless (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr William Kinnear (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Basil McCrea MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Ms Michelle Gildernew MLA

10.20am The meeting opened in public session.

4. Matters arising

The Committee considered the arrangements for the planned stakeholder event in April on the dissolution of DEL.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite a number of stakeholders to the event in April, and to record all briefing sessions and have them transcribed by Hansard for inclusion in the Committee report.

9. Correspondence

The Committee considered the following items of correspondence:

Correspondence from the Committee for the Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister requesting a list of stakeholders consulted by the Committee for Employment and Learning, and a summary of those responses

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the information requested.

Copy of correspondence from the Committee for the Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister, inviting all statutory Committees to respond to a consultation on the re-distribution of the responsibilities of the Department for Employment and Learning

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this correspondence.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 25 April 2012

Abercorn Suite, King's Hall Belfast

Present: Mr Basil McCrea MLA (Chairperson)
 Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Jim Allister MLA
 Mr Sammy Douglas MLA
 Ms Michelle Gildernew MLA
 Mr Chris Lyttle MLA
 Mr Fra McCann MLA
 Mr Barry McElduff MLA
 Mr David McIlveen MLA
 Mr Pat Ramsey MLA
 Mr Alastair Ross MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Cathie White (Assembly Clerk)
 Mrs Sheila Mawhinney (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
 Mr Jonathan Lawless (Clerical Supervisor)
 Mr William Kinnear (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: None

10:02am The meeting opened in public session.

2. Chair's Business

The Chairperson asked members if they were content to seek the views of DEL staff on the proposed dissolution and transfer of functions of the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to proceed with a staff consultation questionnaire.

4. Matters arising

The Committee considered a draft motion on the transfer of the functions of the Department for Employment and Learning.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to submit the motion to the Business Office.

7. Correspondence

The Committee considered the following items of correspondence:

- Copy of correspondence from the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding their consultation on the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this correspondence.

- Correspondence from Committee for the Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister to all statutory Committees detailing the list of stakeholders consulted by the Committee for Employment and Learning on the dissolution of the Department

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this correspondence.

12:12pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Basil McCrea

Chairperson, Committee for Employment & Learning
 2 May 2012

Wednesday, 2 May 2012

Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Basil McCrea MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Sammy Douglas MLA
Ms Michelle Gildernew MLA
Mr Chris Lyttle MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Mr Barry McElduff MLA
Mr David McIlveen MLA
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA
Mr Alastair Ross MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Cathie White (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Sheila Mawhinney (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lawless (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr William Kinnear (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

10:10am The meeting opened in public session.

4. **Matters arising**

The Committee considered a draft summary of responses and evidence to its consultation on the dissolution and transfer of functions of the Department, and noted that the response of the DEL staff still has to be included.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to its consideration of the summary at a later stage of the meeting.

7. **Matters Arising**

The Committee agreed to return to agenda item 4.

The Committee considered a draft summary of responses and evidence to its consultation on the dissolution and transfer of functions of the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the summary and agreed to consider the new section regarding the responses from the Departmental staff at its next meeting.

13:05pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Basil McCrea

Chairperson, Committee for Employment & Learning
9 May 2012

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 9 May 2012

The Lecture Theatre, South West College, Omagh

Present: Mr Basil McCrea MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Sammy Douglas MLA
Ms Michelle Gildernew MLA
Mr Barry McElduff MLA
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Cathie White (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Sheila Mawhinney (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lawless (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr William Kinnear (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr David McIlveen MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA

11:05am The meeting opened in closed session.

1. Consideration of the Summary of Responses and Evidence to the Committee's Consultation on the Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and the Transfer of its Functions

The Committee considered a draft summary of responses to its consultation on the Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and the Transfer of its Functions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the summary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the required extract of the minutes should be attached approved by the Chairperson.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a draft press release.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the summary should be published formally as a report.

13:25pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Basil McCrea

Chairperson, Committee for Employment & Learning
9 May 2012

[EXTRACT]



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 2

Minutes of Evidence

15 February 2012

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Basil McCrea (Chairperson)
 Mr Jim Allister
 Mr Sammy Douglas
 Mr Fra McCann
 Mr Barry McElduff
 Mr David McIlveen
 Mr Pat Ramsey
 Mr Alastair Ross

Witnesses:

Mr Gerard Campbell *Colleges Northern Ireland*
 Mr Joe Martin
 Mr Trevor Neilands
 Dr Bill McGinnis *Northern Ireland Adviser
 on Employment and Skills*

1. **The Chairperson:** We move to the consideration of the responses to the Committee consultation on the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). I remind members that the meeting is being recorded by Hansard. Please check that your electronic devices are switched off.
2. There are 23 responses to the Committee consultation, and three further responses have been emailed to members. I will open up the meeting for any comments. I trust that you have all had a chance to read the submissions. I will take a quick run through them to give you a chance to find your place. Are there any people you think we ought to hear from, other than those already on the list? Mr Lyttle has suggested some others in correspondence. Is there anyone who has been missed?
3. **Mr McElduff:** In the South, as I understand it, the Department of Education and Science became the Department of Education and Skills in 2010. Is that right?
4. **The Chairperson:** I do not know.
5. **Mr McElduff:** I believe that it changed its title and its emphasis. It would be worth finding out the rationale for that.
6. **The Chairperson:** How would we do that?
7. **The Committee Clerk:** Research.
8. **The Chairperson:** OK, we will ask for the research.
9. **Mr P Ramsey:** I do not have a difficulty with that. I agree with Barry. It would be good to look at the models in other regional Parliaments and not just at the South.
10. **The Chairperson:** That is a good point. We should get a research paper on how we compare with other jurisdictions, including, obviously, the South, Scotland and wherever. Are members satisfied with that?
11. **Mr P Ramsey:** I have gone through the submissions, and, in most of them, there is a clear preference for a move to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). For the next meeting, if possible, it would be useful to get a summary — a two-page report — of the points and of where the organisations favour going to.
12. **The Chairperson:** Fortunately, I have done my own.
13. **Mr P Ramsey:** Have you? You can share yours then.
14. **The Chairperson:** That is a good point.
15. **Mr F McCann:** One of the other elements of DEL that sometimes seems out of kilter is the jobs and benefits offices. It makes sense for the two to be under the one roof because the services that they provide are so entwined.
16. **The Chairperson:** Before you joined the Committee, we had a very good briefing from the Department's employment services directorate. Quite often, people do not realise that DEL is involved; they

- think that it involves just social services. That fact is missed. We have had a briefing from the Department, but are there any stakeholders that this would directly impinge on? In our submission, we can say that we think that —
17. **Mr F McCann:** It seems to make sense, given that people go there for their benefits. The issue of benefits sanctions was raised last week. This directly affects the DEL jobs element.
18. **Mr Ross:** From the responses and other meetings that we have had individually, it is clear that it will not be an easy split. Most likely, some elements will go to the Department for Social Development (DSD), and teacher training and stuff would clearly go to the Department of Education (DE). However, it seems from the responses that the higher education (HE) and further education (FE) sector seem to favour moving towards DETI or a Department for the economy, or whatever you want to call it. Initially, Pat had said about putting a day aside and having a special meeting to take evidence from a number of stakeholders.
19. **The Chairperson:** That is part of what is on the agenda now. We have had the written responses. We said that we would write to whoever we thought might be interested and then call people from the list — or anybody else that you wish to add — bearing in mind that we have only a limited amount of time. We cannot call all 23 people, as we would never get through them. We could perhaps take evidence from the two groups that are here now, and, by the end of the meeting, you might have had a chance to reflect on some of the other issues. Would that be the appropriate way to deal with it?
20. **Mr Douglas:** A couple of voluntary and community organisations have responded, such as Include Youth. However, there is a whole range of training and employment organisations across Northern Ireland. I am not quite sure whether there is a forum for them or whether they know about this consultation. It would be good to
- elicit the views of practitioners on the ground. We have met some of them. The responses are very light as regards representation from the community and voluntary sector in particular.
21. **The Chairperson:** We did not go for a formal consultation, with advertising and so on.
22. **Mr Douglas:** Did we just write to those groups?
23. **The Chairperson:** We are still not sure of the timescale. We have not had any direction to say that DEL will be gone in three months, six months or six years. I had heard that there would be a proper consultation that would last four months. That would get us to around May. Presumably that would come back, a decision would be made and things would be implemented over the summer. However, that was one of those wee whispers that did not turn out to be anything more than a wee whisper. I wonder should we write to find out?
24. **Mr P Ramsey:** I think that Sammy's point about involving the community and voluntary sector is fundamental. We have a database of those who participated in the NEETs inquiry, most of whom came from the community and voluntary sector. Maybe we could use that database. That would not necessarily involve a huge mail drop; we could e-mail those groups.
25. **The Chairperson:** Right, we can take those who participated in the NEETs inquiry. Sammy, I am happy to include anyone that you or any other member may be aware of. The only issue will be our ability to process the information that comes in. There is a fair amount of work involved in reading 23 responses, and if we get 123 responses, it will take even longer.
26. **Mr Douglas:** Yes, I understand.
27. **The Chairperson:** We will take it that we will use the NEETs inquiry database that Pat suggested and contact any other voluntary organisations that are suggested.

28. **Mr F McCann:** I do know whether the likes of Advice NI and Citizens Advice would be part of that database, but there is a connection with DSD and the jobs issue.
29. **The Committee Clerk:** I do not think that we would have access to that. I do not think that they would give us that information. We would have to give the information to them and ask them to distribute it.
30. **Mr F McCann:** If you asked —
31. **The Committee Clerk:** Do you mean ask for their opinion? Sorry.
32. **The Chairperson:** We can look at that. Do we write to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister?
33. **The Committee Clerk:** You would send a memo to the Committee along with a letter to the First Minister and deputy First Minister. The Committee will forward the letter.
34. **The Chairperson:** I think that we should write to the Executive to ask for some clarity. I am told that the letter needs to go to the First Minister and the deputy First Minister. Is that appropriate?
35. **Mr P Ramsey:** The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) is carrying out its own consultation. Could we not ask it to share a summary of that information?
36. **The Committee Clerk:** I do not think that it is doing a consultation.
37. **Mr P Ramsey:** Is it not?
38. **The Committee Clerk:** I do not think so. The press release just says that it will consult with parties.
39. **The Chairperson:** Let us write to the First Minister and the deputy First Minister and copy in the OFMDFM Committee. We will deal with it ourselves. Depending on the response we get, we will, if necessary, go back to the OFMDFM Committee.
40. **The Committee Clerk:** So we will write to the First Minister and the deputy First Minister and the OFMDFM Committee to ask when dissolution will occur?
41. **The Chairperson:** Yes. We should also ask what processes they intend to set up — for example, a consultation — and whether they can give us some guidance on the timescales.
42. Cathie, for approval, will you read out Mr Lyttle's list of those who have not been contacted. Do you recognise any of them?
43. **The Committee Clerk:** The Assistant Committee Clerk will help me out. CMI. Do you know what that is?
44. **Dr Bill McGinnis (Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills):** That is the Chartered Management Institute.
45. **The Chairperson:** Bill, we may have to get you to answer all of these for us.
46. **The Committee Clerk:** ILM.
47. **Dr B McGinnis:** It is the Institute of Leadership and Management.
48. **Mr P Ramsey:** Very good, Bill.
49. **The Committee Clerk:** The Chamber of Commerce; Eamonn Donaghy from the Economic Reform Group —
50. **The Chairperson:** He was the boy who gave me a wee bit of hassle yesterday.
51. **Mr F McCann:** It was actually the other way round, from what I heard.
52. **The Committee Clerk:** The chair of the food industry future skills action group (FSAG); the chair of the ICT Skills Taskforce; Joanne Stuart, the chair of the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) implementation steering group; the sector skills councils — we wrote to the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils, so that is covered; the nine Steps to Work lead contractors; and the Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment (NIUSE). Will we write to all those?
53. **Mr P Ramsey:** Why not.
54. **The Chairperson:** But you will have to read all the submissions; there is no point in just writing to them.

55. **Mr Douglas:** To come back to my suggestion, I think that the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) is involved in an all-party group here, and it brought a lot of the NEETs groups together a couple of times for lunchtime presentations. So NICVA might be the body to bring one response on behalf of everybody.
56. **The Chairperson:** That is a good idea, Sammy. While we are on a roll, is there anyone else? Cathie has nothing to do this afternoon. No one? OK. I will refer to that at the end of the meeting to see whether there is anything that members want to do.
57. I welcome Bill McGinnis, the Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills, and invite him to give a briefing on the transfer of functions of the Department for Employment and Learning. I remind members that the meeting is being recorded by Hansard.
58. **Dr B McGinnis:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today. As Cathie is aware, because of the fairly short notice, I have not had time to prepare a paper; there were other business activities that I had to get involved in. However, I have had a good think about the subject and have prepared major notes on it.
59. I will give an introduction and refresh your memory of what DEL is all about, how it delivers its various functions and how the whole skills strategy fits in with the Northern Ireland Economic Advisory Group, of which I am a member. It puts the economy at the heart of government and the Programme for Government. We have looked at the economies of places such as Singapore, Finland and New Zealand, and we have looked to our near neighbours in the Republic of Ireland. We have seen how they have driven things forward and how skills have been very much part of that drive for the economy. In many ways, skills are as important as corporation tax. They are one of the drivers in all economies, so it is important that we take that into consideration.
60. I will refresh your memory of the aims of the Department, which are to promote learning and skills, prepare people for work and support the economy. It is responsible for further and higher education, training and skills, employment programmes and employment law. In pursuing its aims, the Department's objective is to promote economic, social and personal development through high-quality learning, research and skills training and to help people into employment and promote good work practices.
61. It seeks to achieve those aims through four key areas of activity: promoting the provision of learning and skills, including entrepreneurship, enterprise management and leadership; encouraging research and development, creativity and innovation in the Northern Ireland economy; helping individuals to acquire jobs, including self-employment and improving the linkages between employment programmes, skills and development; and the development and maintenance of the framework of employment rights and responsibilities.
62. As I said, skills and employment are the key drivers to sustainable economic growth and a shared prosperity. A highly and properly skilled workforce has a crucial role to play in a modern knowledge-intense, export-driven economy. Skills and employability support the expectation of other key drivers of economic success. They help economies to make the most of new opportunities and high-value activities; they encourage greater investment, including inward investment and innovation; and they help firms to compete successfully in export markets. Ultimately, they support economic growth and enhanced productivity.
63. The case for developing the skills and employability of our workforce is, therefore, compelling, but our skills profile remains weak compared with that of many other developed countries. There are too many with low qualifications and not enough with higher-level skills. There are also too many who are economically inactive.

- Research shows that, if we are to close that productivity gap with the rest of the UK, over 50% of our jobs in 2020 will require higher professional and technical qualifications and other higher education level qualifications — up from about one third currently. If we look at how the job market has changed in the last number of years, we can see that there are very few low-skilled jobs around. The people in that sector are the ones who have been most affected by the downturn. We have to move those people up the supply chain and get them into higher-value jobs. As I mentioned, Finland, Sweden and the Republic of Ireland rely heavily on their superior skills profiles to drive export growth and innovative capacity.
64. Addressing that agenda lies at the heart of the Department's purpose. It requires concerted and co-ordinated action across the skills continuum, ensuring that the economically inactive have a skills set that aligns with the needs of employers and the economy, and that lies with the employment service. The aim is to improve the skills set of the working population and those about to join the labour market — that sits in further education — and to encourage the acquisition of higher-level skills, and that sits in further and higher education. All that is set in the context of the skills strategy, which is the delivery arm of the policy. That is delivered through higher and further education and skills solutions. You are probably aware of all of that as it is mostly lifted from DEL's corporate plan.
65. There are a number of options. A couple of things probably automatically need to go to DETI. Employment rights and employment relations automatically sit with DETI. I am not sure why they were not put there when the Departments were set up. The ETI Minister announces the unemployment figures, yet they are not really connected to that.
66. Option 1 is to move everything to DETI. That creates a number of advantages. It would create a strong economic Department and underpin the strengths of the economic strategy, which would include not only the job creation function but the skills policy and operations to support job growth. It would also increase productivity and competitiveness. It would ensure that the skills strategy would be implemented in its entirety. If it is spread across a number of Departments, it will likely not be implemented in full, and there will likely be mission creep, which will not be effective.
67. There have been major changes in recent times. There is now quite a strong connection between Invest Northern Ireland and the Department for Employment and Learning. Take the Assured Skills programme that came about recently; though it, the Department prepares people for new inward investments. For example, a company coming here might need 150 ICT graduates. It could be a year before that company is here. In the meantime, the Department could be working with colleges and universities to get those people through or to establish courses to move that forward. There is strength in that model.
68. I have been involved in this since 1994, which seems a long time. I do not think that anyone senior in the Department has been around as long as I have, and I have a non-executive function. I was there pre-devolution, when we had the Department of Economic Development (DED) and the Training and Employment Agency. However, we were short of tools to do the job. In fact, we had very little access to further and higher education. The system may not be perfect at the minute and certainly can be improved, but we need to move towards keeping that in place or else we will lose what we have gained. We should not go back in life and look at something that was a failure. We should try to keep in place something that exists.
69. I turn now to pre-employment training and getting the unemployed into the labour market. I heard the Committee discuss the difference between the Social Security Agency and the employment service. The Social Security Agency is really about getting you your

- benefit. If you turn up in the morning and need cash for whatever reason, it has an obligation to get you sorted and onto some form of benefits. The employment service is a much softer way of dealing with people. It is about trying to get people prepared for work, getting them into schemes such as the Steps to Work programme, preparing them for interviews, getting their CVs sorted out and trying to get them into work. It is an employment issue, in my opinion. Some social issues are obviously connected with that. Quite often, those social issues remain with the Social Security Agency because they involve people who are not economically active. It is quite important that those things stay there.
70. Option 1 would bring the Careers Service, skills and Invest NI into one grouping. Further education is the main delivery arm of that and it is important that that stays there. It would support the work on STEM subjects and MATRIX. All of that is connected to the skills side. Those sit in DETI at the moment and should remain there.
71. It is difficult to see any disadvantages in not bringing it all together. I have no axe to grind. I just want what is best for the economy.
72. I am an adviser, not a civil servant. I am a businessman and run my business daily. I feel that what is best for the economy is the creation of a new Department.
73. Option two is that skills and employment would go to DETI with the other elements that I mentioned earlier, such as employment law. Further and higher education would then go back to DE, which was the position pre-devolution. Having the employment and skills services together provides economic benefits and supports economic policy in one Department. That is essential. FE and HE in the Department of Education would mean that Department's covering education from nursery to higher education, and it could support the 14 to 19 agenda in particular. You may be aware of discussion in England at the moment, where further and higher education is part of BIS under Vince Cable. The Secretary of State for Education has been trying to move them across to his Department, but Cable is making a very strong case for retaining them. It might be a resigning issue for him, if it were pushed. Cable thinks that it is very important that innovation, and so on, sits with his Department.
74. **The Chairperson:** His Department being education?
75. **Dr B McGinnis:** No, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Cable argues that HE and FE should stay with his Department. I think that, at one stage, they were under the Department of Education, but they were separated from it.
76. I am not sure what model they follow in the Irish Republic; it has changed. It is not exactly as it was described earlier. We would need a paper to know exactly how it sits. It is not as straightforward as it sounds. They had FÁS, the Irish national training and employment authority, which sat outside the Department as a non-departmental public body, a bit like Invest NI. It was a very large organisation that delivered much of the skills agenda. However, it has experienced corporate governance issues in recent times, as you may have read. I am not sure how that sits at present.
77. We can all see that the FE sector has been well developed over the past number of years. Recently, I visited the new Belfast Metropolitan College building and had a look at what was being doing there. It is a state-of-the-art building and is coming on in great leaps and bounds. The Department of Education has the major issues of downsizing and selection to deal with at the moment. I suspect that HE will look after itself; it can finance itself, to some degree, with a bit of support. However, I am worried that FE would become the Cinderella of education once more, because it must be the main driver for the technical and professional skills required for the industries of the future.

78. The other option is that skills go to DETI and employment to DSD, as some members said this morning. The pros and cons of separating further education and higher education are even. The pros and cons, as discussed earlier, still apply to their going to DETI.
79. In GB, there is a body called Jobcentre Plus, and that model would operate in Northern Ireland. I do not know whether you have taken evidence from that body. It is a one-step body, where you go to get benefits and look for employment at the same time. We work in a similar model, except that the two elements are separate: you go to top up your benefits first, and then you are sent to see an employment adviser. The GB model was an expensive system to bring together. We would have some slight problems with that model, including the fact that, at present, the computer systems do not talk to each other, because the benefits side is data-protected, which means that the information does not go through immediately to the employment side. So there are issues to be resolved and bringing the two elements together could raise fairly big IT problems. However, that looks like its natural home —
80. **The Chairperson:** Is that not the point that Fra made? Earlier, you said that you were not that happy about it.
81. **Dr B McGinnis:** Yes, but I am making the argument and looking at the pros and cons of various models. It is not for me to decide; it is for you, as the Assembly, to do so. I am just trying to give you a balanced view.
82. **Mr F McCann:** In jobs and benefits offices, there are fairly strong connections between the benefit and job elements. If you go into one, you are sent to the other, and vice versa. Reports are sent directly from job-focused interviews to the benefits side. It just seems to make sense that they both operate out of the same offices. They have the same focus. Not only do they pay benefits but they try to create an atmosphere whereby people enter employment, so it makes sense to have them based together. You said that the employment end was the soft option. However, it may be quite a while since you visited a jobs and benefits office to see how the system operates.
83. **Dr B McGinnis:** I do not mean that it is the soft option. My point is that you receive different customer care when looking for a job than when dealing with someone about your benefits. Maybe, you think that has changed.
84. **Mr F McCann:** The two are interconnected.
85. **The Chairperson:** We take the point.
86. It is back to you, Bill, to finish what you have to say, and then we will have a general discussion.
87. **Dr B McGinnis:** If we are to support the skills strategy, the employment service needs to stay within DETI. Invest NI has been given some £20 million in recent times to create jobs that require lower-level skills. The people for those jobs will come from those who engage with the employment service. I find that, if responsibility for related issues sits in different Departments, it is very hard to get joined-up government. You need to have control of the situation, because each Department gives its issues priority. We all like to talk about joined-up government, but it does not always happen. That is not just the case here; it applies everywhere, and something needs to be done.
88. The other option is that skills and further education go to DETI, the employment service goes to DSD and higher education goes to DE. One of the pros of that is that higher education, to a large extent, takes children who have gone from nursery school right through the system to university. In many ways, it is for the high-flyers who want to get a university degree. So that is another possibility, because HE is quite self-sufficient when it comes to funding. As well as getting a lot of money from DEL's innovation fund and money from Invest NI, it raises quite a lot of money itself. So there is a possibility that HE could go to the Department of Education.

89. We could consider skills and higher education going to DETI, the employment service going to DSD and further education going to DE. There are all sorts of options, but the one that I favour, as I am sure that you have gathered, is for everything to go to DETI. Daily and weekly, I see quite a lot of stakeholders and business people in the community, and their view is that we need a strong economic Department. Given the current economic situation, we need to get people back to work and create jobs, and it would be nice to have responsibility for all those areas sitting in the one place.
90. **The Chairperson:** What do you feel about the removal of DEL per se? Would you have advocated that anyway?
91. **Dr B McGinnis:** I would have advocated fewer Departments in the Executive.
92. **The Chairperson:** If there were to be fewer Departments, would DEL be the one to go?
93. **Dr B McGinnis:** I think so, because it sits alongside the economy. Either DETI takes over or DEL takes over. The other point to note is that, from a financial perspective, DETI is quite small and DEL is quite big. If you join them, the resulting Department will not be as big as the Health Department or the Education Department, but the Department of the economy and employment, or whatever they decide to call it, will be big. I would have liked more rationalisation, including looking at other Departments.
94. **The Chairperson:** I am happy for that to come out in the conversation. We will now have a discussion, Bill, which is an opportunity to exchange views.
95. Last week, we were pretty stressed because of our workload, but today is more balanced, so we can have a talk. This is a chance to put on record how we should look at things. I will open the discussion to the floor now and come in a wee bit later. Members can indicate if they want to ask a question, and I will let people come in several times, so do not feel that you have to get everything out in one go.
96. **Mr D McIlveen:** I probably will try to get everything out in one go, if that is all right.
97. **The Chairperson:** I keep trying to give guidance and keep being ignored. That is all right. Just carry on.
98. **Mr D McIlveen:** I will try to set the trend for an early lunch.
99. Bill, I want to check something with you. A couple of times, you mentioned economic inactivity as a problem that we must deal with. How much economic inactivity is down to too many people having the wrong qualifications for the jobs in the marketplace?
100. **Dr B McGinnis:** I cannot give you a percentage of the amount of economically inactive people to whom that applies, but employers tell me about the mismatch. Employers' needs have totally changed. Last week, for example, I visited a food company that trades at a fairly high volume. I have been impressed with what has happened in the agrifood sector, which is an area of growth. I discovered that most of the people working on the company's production line were engineers, not food scientists. The company had a food science department that was involved in all of the preparation, but engineers now run that plant. Before going to a company like that, I would not have thought that it needed engineers. There is a big change in what is happening, and processes are becoming more automated. Lower-skilled people cannot do those jobs because they involve a lot of ICT. The labour market has changed: the old jobs have gone and, I think, gone forever.
101. **Mr D McIlveen:** Let me just take that a step further. Would you support the slightly more dogmatic approach of careers advice as opposed to career options? At present, there seems to be an issue, particularly in the upper end of secondary or grammar school, that young people receive career options rather than careers advice. Those

- options do not always send students in the direction that would give them the skills for which there is a demand in the marketplace. Should careers advice be a little more directional and dogmatic in pointing people towards skills for which there are jobs at the other side?
102. **Dr B McGinnis:** I think that it should be more directional. In fact, if you read my priority skills report, you will see that that is what it is really saying. It outlines the areas that we think will be good in the future, and the careers people should be taking that advice. I know that FE is taking that advice and moving its courses along in that direction. The grammar schools are a different issue. I have spent evenings giving talks at grammar schools, and most young people want to enter particular professions. That is just human nature. You bring them along, and they get involved in business-type research projects in lower sixth. I go along to some of the projects at Queen's or the University of Ulster, and they are fantastic. I speak to the kids afterwards and ask what they intend doing and whether they have thought of going to some of the local scientific companies such as Almac or Norbrook, but they all want to be doctors or dentists. The rewards from those two professions are much better than young people could get from industry for a long time, unless they are real high-flyers. I am not sure that you can change their minds, and, quite often, it is the parents' minds that have to change. A change in mindset needs to happen in Northern Ireland so that we look upon the guy on the shop floor doing an engineering job in the same way as we look upon a doctor. A big societal change has to happen.
103. **Mr D McIlveen:** What I am getting at is that a lot of people out there have, I believe, degrees in Canadian studies — I use that as a facetious example. I think that teachers can pick up, whether at secondary school or grammar school level, the potential of a pupil. So is there an argument for the careers advice to be a little more nurturing? The advice to pupils could be, for example, that they should head in the direction of a certain industry that is recruiting and has a good five-to 10-year plan.
104. **Dr B McGinnis:** Most educationalists would disagree with you. They say that young people should have a choice in what they want to do, but you are using terms that might be used in a dictatorship to say that they must do this or that. I think that young people should be guided to where the future jobs will be. It is important that they are given that sort of advice and those sorts of options. I am not sure that that always happens. In many schools, careers advice is very poor. It is offered by people who have never been in the world of work. They went to school, university and spent all their working life teaching. They have not really seen the real world of work, and some of their advice to kids can be quite outdated. That needs to change.
105. **Mr McElduff:** Bill, you cited Finland and Sweden as examples of best practice in joined-up government. Will you tell us a bit more about that?
106. **Dr B McGinnis:** They decided, way back, that their basic industries would not survive. We all know how well IKEA, for example, has done. It decided to outsource its product a number of years ago but still employs a large number of reasonably high-level people back in Sweden. Not a stick of furniture is made in Sweden; it is all made in the eastern European countries around it. Nokia is another example, although it went through a bit of a bad time. TVs, electronics, and so on, came from Finland, and Nokia decided to go for those high-level products. There was good joined-up government. There was a Minister responsible solely for the economy and for driving such things forward in those countries.
107. New Zealand has changed dramatically as well. That country was very much — not unlike Northern Ireland — based around farming. It had problems with its food exports in the years after the European Commission came into being. Exporting to the Commonwealth

- countries was fine, but that drifted away from them. We used to get New Zealand butter here, but you never see it now. There has been a big change in its economy, and it has tried more diversification in farming and grown quite a lot of new food products.
108. So countries can change, and the Republic of Ireland was going well until the downturn. It invested a lot of money in skills. The Republic is one of three pharma centres in the world. If you consider its exports, the Republic is holding on because pharmaceutical companies are expanding and amalgamating. Its status as one of the three pharma centres has been driven by skills and corporation tax.
109. **Mr McElduff:** Can you throw any light on a question that I asked earlier? Why did the South put skills into the Department of Education?
110. **Dr B McGinnis:** I cannot, honestly, throw any light on that. I am not sure, because the situation has changed so much. I am never sure of names, but I have gone down to meet people on the skills side. However, I have not really talked to people in the education sector, but it would be easy enough to find out.
111. **The Chairperson:** We will pick that up.
112. **Mr Ross:** Bill, you said that, from a business point of view, you favour a much smaller Executive and fewer Departments. Most people around this table have probably played out in their minds what a smaller Executive would look like, and it is certainly in our longer-term interest for that reform to happen. I presume that, no matter what reconfiguration results from reform, a Department of the economy will be one of the Departments.
113. I will follow on from what David said. At the moment, we hear from a lot of employers that the skills with which young people leave education do not necessarily match the needs of industry. If we had a Department in which that was all together, it would be much more beneficial to industry, businesses and the economy. As you said, that is your priority. There are those who advocate a Department for education and lifelong learning. We always hear, particularly in this Committee, about efforts to get adults into learning, and Scotland has a Department for Education and Lifelong Learning. How would you argue against those who advocate a Department for lifelong learning as being preferable to one focused on business and the economy?
114. **Dr B McGinnis:** If we are to turn the economy around, the number one priority is for everything to be together. You cannot stop people doing "Mickey Mouse" degrees, and I have heard the Committee refer to that before. However, that is what certain people want to do, and it is important that they are given the opportunity to do so. However, if we want to get people back to work, we have to give them an opportunity to do so through a Department for the economy. Very few people cannot work. You can go to university and get a degree in "whatever" studies, and people have the choice to do that. As I said before at this Committee, I favour bursaries for areas in which we want people to work. Perhaps we should penalise softer degrees to make it more expensive to get a degree in a subject that will not get you a job.
115. **Mr P Ramsey:** That is an interesting perspective, as ever. You make a very valid argument that separating FE from HE would undermine the contribution that FE makes across Northern Ireland and make it a second-class area. We ought to discuss that. However, all that depends on what OFMDFM wants in the carve-up.
116. The Committee has been focusing on the NEETs bracket for some time, and, if we are honest, we will admit that we are reactive. DEL has been asked to bring forward a strategy, but the problem is that early years provision is letting young people down when they get to a certain age. Where do you see NEETs fitting in? You are absolutely right in saying that we all talk a good game about shared and joined-up government, but, for various reasons, we are not doing the best at

- that here. It is easier for Scotland's single-party Government to collaborate much better than we do.
117. **Dr B McGinnis:** Soon after my appointment to this job, I met the then Minister, Reg Empey, for a first briefing. I suggested to him that the Department of Education needed to do more not to create as many NEETs, because DEL was spending a significant amount of its budget on correcting — I am not saying that people should not have second and third chances — what should be fixed at school. In this day and age, nobody should leave school without being able to read and write and having some ICT skills. That is a basic requirement, and there must be ways of sorting those schools out. They must deliver those basic skills, and that is how they should be measured. People should be kept back until they get to that stage. We all went to school with guys who were not up to the level of the class, but they were brought along, and most were able to survive in life. However, far too many young people leave school without those prerequisites, which are essential for any job.
118. **Mr Douglas:** Thanks for your presentation, Bill. Do you have any dealings with the Institute of Directors (IOD)? I imagine that you deal with people in that sector.
119. **Dr B McGinnis:** As part of my brief as the adviser, I meet all of those bodies about two or three times a year. I also see them socially at dinners, and so forth. Their views are very similar to mine. When doing my rounds recently, I asked for their views. The view of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) is similar, as is that of the Chamber of Commerce. All those bodies are pushing in this direction.
120. **Mr Douglas:** In its response to the consultation, the IOD said:
“While the IoD is in favour of rationalising the number of government departments ... This particular move appears motivated by political expediency rather than good governance”.
121. **Dr B McGinnis:** I do not think that I should comment on that.
122. **Mr Douglas:** I was just surprised at that comment. However, the IOD calls for the: *“creation of a Department for the Economy”.*
123. What is your view on that? Clearly, there will be further rationalisation over the next number of years.
124. **Dr B McGinnis:** As I outlined, I think that a Department for the economy should contain DEL issues, Invest Northern Ireland —
125. **Mr Douglas:** What I am asking is whether you think that there should be a Department for the economy further down the line?
126. **Dr B McGinnis:** Yes, I think that the new Department should be called the Department for the economy, as that would show a fairly major change. It could be the Department for the economy and employment, or whatever you want to call it. There must be a new name; it cannot remain as DETI. I do not know what legislation that would involve, because I do not know the details, but it should have a separate name.
127. **The Chairperson:** Bill, people talk about joined-up government and how that might be part of the reason for creating a Department for the economy. However, many people would express the fear that the focus would be lost. The problem of NEETs, for example, is one that has exercised the Committee in the past. Would a Department for the economy look at NEETs, who are outside the economy?
128. **Dr B McGinnis:** I think that it would look at areas like that. If we are giving job offers, I think that changes have to take place, and we have to allow people who have been unemployed, new apprentices, and so on, to join those organisations at an early stage. In fact, that should be part of the letter of offer. We talk to them about that at the moment, but I am not sure that it is always enforced. However, within the one Department, you can hold them more to account. I have a simplification programme, as you have heard me say in the past. Businesses are utterly and

- totally confused about where to go for information. If you want information on management and leadership, you go to DEL, you go to Invest NI, you go to DETI —
129. **The Chairperson:** What I am asking is this simplistic question: if functions are to be moved to another Department, what would that Department be? Whether they are moved to the Department for the economy, as you have suggested, the Department of Education or elsewhere, how would you maintain oversight? We have some “super Departments” such as Health, which accounts for almost 50% of the Executive’s expenditure. To me, that seems an imbalance when compared with some of the smaller Departments such as DETI and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), which have relatively modest budgets, so there seems to be a reason to try to equalise.
130. However, even in this Committee, the range of issues that we have to consider is quite challenging. It includes, and I am talking only about DEL as it stands, everything from science and innovation in the higher education sector to those who have fallen out of education and have no skills whatsoever, as well as disability issues. How do we maintain focus? If a “super Department” were created, would there not be a danger of its concentrating on the top 20%?
131. **Dr B McGinnis:** There could, undoubtedly, be mission drift. The idea, I hope, is that the Assembly and the public hold the Departments to account for what they agreed to in the Programme for Government. This morning, I heard that the Executive achieved something like 75% of the targets set out in the previous Programme for Government, which is fairly good, and I think that we need to keep getting nearer to closing those things out. I understand that DEL has a mishmash of responsibilities, and it is very hard to get a handle on all of them. It deals with, for example, the social economy and people with a disability. Such issues are part of its remit. Could some of those become lost in a Department of the economy? I am not sure.
132. **Mr Ross:** The flip side of your argument is that there is, of course, another “super Department” in the form of the Department of Education, because it also has a massive budget. If you are arguing that some of those functions would get lost in a new Department of the economy, you could also argue that they would get lost in DE, because it is big enough already.
133. **The Chairperson:** I was not saying that functions would get lost in other Departments. My point was more about the oversight of functions. There may be reasons for having one Ministry. I know that this might be a case of, “Well, you would say that” but, perhaps, there could be more Committees looking at different areas. Would you have a Committee focusing on, for example, NEETs, statutory powers or children’s champions? Is there another structure that could provide focus on certain areas while we reap the benefits of the “joined-upness” of one Department. I throw that out as an open question just to gauge whether we should consider that, rather than simply saying that piling everything into one Department will be the panacea.
134. **Dr B McGinnis:** To be honest, I am not sure that I have an answer for you. It is a very complex issue. It will be hard for a Department of the economy to get all the areas for which DEL is responsible to sit comfortably together. For example, it would be hard for a Department of the economy to do anything on disability, as is the case for DEL at the moment.
135. **The Chairperson:** The problem for most of those who end up NEET is that they have left the school system. Given that they are not in school, how can we affect them? They have said that education is not for them. The social factors are much more important: poverty, broken homes, inappropriate parenting skills and all sorts of other issues tend to lead to deprivation. It is not the case that people who are NEET are stupid. The fact is that there is a huge range

- of other factors. Society must realise that the sooner we find a better way of dealing with those folk, the better it will be for everybody. I am not sure that NEETs would get the focus that they deserve in a Department of the economy, because, self-evidently, they do not have the skills to participate in the economy.
136. **Dr B McGinnis:** First, there has been a dramatic change in the labour market in the past number of years. Take Harland and Wolff, Bombardier, Mackie's and even the Port of Belfast, for example, all of which employed large numbers in the past. Kids got jobs in those places through their parents, but that network no longer exists. I have been doing a bit of work on that in England and found exactly the same thing happening in all the big cities, such as Birmingham. In the past, depending on where you lived, your father or mother could get you a job. Those networks do not exist anymore, and kids are lost in many ways because they do not have the necessary social skills. That is why they need to stay in education, and they must come out with those three minimum qualifications. That is the only chance that they have to get into the world of work. That is where society has to change.
137. **Mr F McCann:** There were also those who were not able to walk into such jobs.
138. **Dr B McGinnis:** Exactly.
139. **Mr F McCann:** That must always be kept in mind. Schools also played a major part in trying to shape careers in later life, but that seems to have gone by the wayside. You talked about jobs going, be they from the shipyard or construction industry. We often hear that people need to be upskilled to meet the needs of new types of jobs. I had occasion to visit some of the training providers in my constituency. Many of the workshops for kids have closed down because the jobs do not exist. However, no thought seems to have been given to how to train, encourage or upskill people to meet the needs of new employers. Where do you see that going?
140. **Dr B McGinnis:** I see that going to the Department of the economy as well. That is important. For example, the project that is being undertaken at the harbour by the company from Copenhagen, DONG Energy, will need many low- and medium-skilled jobs. People should be trained for those jobs. That is a simple bolt-on from construction. That is how to bring people on. You look at every industry, and, as things grow, you provide training that is suitable for those jobs.
141. **Mr F McCann:** I made the point that, a number of years ago, there was a problem due to a serious shortage of occupational therapists in the health service. People were asked to go into schools to try to encourage young people to train as occupational therapists or other medical professionals. However, they ended up bringing a number of occupational therapists from Australia to work in posts here. There does not seem to be a push to encourage industry or the health service, for example, to go into schools to try to encourage people to take up particular posts. It is taken for granted that, if you come from a certain area, you will end up in the construction industry rather than be encouraged to do something else. So change is needed. Certainly, there needs to be a change of mindset. Everybody has an equal right not only to education but to employment. If people need to be skilled up, that is what needs to be done. The issue is where it fits in. You say that it fits into a new Department of the economy.
142. **Dr B McGinnis:** Yes.
143. **Mr P Ramsey:** I was interested in your comments about fitting into a new Department. The MENCAP consultation response reflects the views of people with learning disabilities throughout Northern Ireland. It acknowledges the close relationship between further and higher education. It states that:
- "Mencap believes that this would provide an opportunity for people with a learning*

- disability seeking training and employment to take an active role in the economy”.*
144. It believes that it fits perfectly. The bottom line from MENCAP is that:
- “incorporation of DEL functions into DETI would provide better opportunities for the inclusion of disabled people”.*
145. MENCAP sees that as fundamental in going forward. It goes on to state that it would put disability issues into the core direction of government and enable people to become economically active. That is what disabled people want. That is a different perspective. Sammy mentioned the community and voluntary sector and how it sees itself fitting in. It will be interesting to see what other groups say about how they see themselves fitting in. They see that they need to be part of the economic driver going forward. Alastair's point is so right. MENCAP expresses concern that people with disabilities would be swallowed up and disappear in the Department of Education and would have no direction.
146. **Dr B McGinnis:** We talked about supply and demand. For quite a while, there has been talk about teacher training colleges. We know that far too many teachers are being trained, but the demand comes from the Department of Education. We talk about joined-up government; that is something that we could be in total control of, but that does not happen. Far too many teachers are being trained. Should teacher training sit within the Department of Education?
147. **The Chairperson:** Bill, you could argue that far too many people are being trained as lawyers, doctors and other professionals. The argument is put that some degrees are just a good basic training. Certainly, teacher training colleges have said that graduates will find employment but not necessarily as teachers. I am not sure that people are quite ready at the age of 19 to decide where their careers will end up. What is important is that they have the skills that they need.
148. **Mr F McCann:** What about at age 11?
149. **The Chairperson:** I do not think that they are ready at 19 years of age. They may not be at 11 either.
150. **Mr F McCann:** I just thought that I would throw that in.
151. **The Chairperson:** Contributions are always welcome.
152. Certainly, careers advice is an issue. I am not sure that the real focus is on the economy — whatever it takes or whether it is in DETI. We tend to be reactive. We tend to deal with tactical issues rather than strategic ones. With regard to the skills in which young people need to be trained, the challenge is, as I am sure you would agree, one of productivity for Northern Ireland. It is not just about getting people into employment; it is about getting them into high-value-added jobs that reward them justly for their skills and actually utilise the labour pool. We need to find a way to step forward on that.
153. I am sure that you are on this page, given your role, but I think that the real generator of economic advantage is skills-based. You mentioned the skills deficit that you see in the Northern Ireland economy and where we have to get to in future years. Will you expand on that? What organisation or structure would be best placed to hit those quite challenging targets?
154. **Dr B McGinnis:** We need to move quickly and work on the priority skills because the skills have changed quite a bit from the last lot of priority skills. Change is happening, and we need to make that move fairly quickly, which will address some of those problems. It is about getting everybody to move at the one time. FE and HE are quite hard to move at any speed. Courses are set down and staff are in place. They have that whole system set up, so it takes a bit of time to change. From going around the colleges, however, I have found that tremendous change is taking place, with people looking at new industries and seeing jobs for the future.
155. **The Chairperson:** There is always a certain amount of inertia, otherwise you

are moving backwards and forwards. However, we need some way to pull together. Bill, we are at the start of this process, and there is an opportunity for the debate to begin. Our society and Government need to work out what they want to do and what is the best form and function to achieve that. It is not just a case of bolting things together administratively, because there will not be any savings from that. It is about how you can be more effective and efficient. I am very grateful to you for coming and sharing your thoughts. As the debate goes on, it may well be that we will do something else. We would welcome your input in particular, given your emphasis on skills.

156. **Dr B McGinnis:** It is a challenging time. We are much better off than we were when I came into this role in 1994, when the unemployment rate was at 14% or 15%. We have made up fairly major ground. A lot more people have qualifications, and the skills of the workforce have improved. However, we are not making the leap fast enough, and we need to find some way to accelerate the progress.

157. **The Chairperson:** OK, thank you very much indeed.

158. We now move to the briefing from Colleges NI. We have Gerard Campbell, chief executive of Colleges NI; Trevor Neilands, deputy chairperson of Colleges NI and chief executive of Northern Regional College; and Joe Martin, Colleges NI board member and chairperson of South West College and former chief executive of the Western Education and Library Board. Gentlemen, you are all very welcome. We will be very pleased to hear what you have to say. This session is being recorded by Hansard. I remind members and the public to make sure that their phones are switched off.

159. **Mr Trevor Neilands (Colleges Northern Ireland):** We thank you for the opportunity to come along and discuss the issues on the agenda. You asked us specific questions and that caused reflection. We had a good discussion

because you asked good questions. They not only asked what should happen to Departments but raised issues about what the FE sector does and how we should articulate what we do and what our priorities are. We have tried to do that in the paper that we submitted. We will talk around the issues in the paper; we do not intend to go through them in detail. We have looked at the broad strategic issues and identified all of the key relationships. For us, there are many, many relationships with more than one existing Department. We feel that we have a massive contribution to make to the development of the Northern Ireland economy, and, on balance, we have come to the conclusion that we can best develop and make our contribution if, structurally, we are as closely aligned as possible with the economic priorities. No doubt we will elaborate on that in the discussion. My colleagues Gerry and Joe want to say a few words in support of the paper, and then we will be happy to enter into discussion.

160. **Mr Gerard Campbell (Colleges Northern Ireland):** I want to emphasise that we believe that colleges are vital to the economy and to getting economic growth back on the table, and the further and higher education sector is the key delivery arm of government in delivering the objectives and targets in the Programme for Government and the economic strategy. Colleges are distinct and unique in that they are neither large schools nor small universities. We have a distinct vocational, technical and professional offer right across the sector, and that links to raising skills and education, to upskilling and retraining people in our community and directly through to progression routes into higher education, including university, and, particularly, employment. We operate across not only the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Education but other Departments, too. We take a strategic focus. We operate across OFMDFM. There are issues to do with child poverty, social exclusion and NEETs, which we have already heard about this morning. We also operate

- across the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) on rural exclusion and the agrifood industry, linking through to educational attainment in the criminal justice system. We would argue that a strategic approach needs to be taken to whatever decision is reached on DEL's dissolution, and the colleges are a key lever for the Executive in delivering on their economic priorities and the objectives in the Programme for Government.
161. **Mr Joe Martin (Colleges Northern Ireland):** We had a very interesting discussion that reflected many of the issues that are around here and which have been discussed earlier. Clearly, we have key links with the economy, and we also have very strong links with education. The dilemma arose when we were asked the direct question: with whom do you align yourselves? The six colleges have unanimously come to the conclusion that we need to be aligned, primarily, with a Department that focuses on economic development while maintaining very strong links with a Department whose predominant focus is learning, education and schools.
162. We have looked at the development of the FE colleges, and, in particular, we have looked at the key document, 'Further Education Means Business'. That document possibly addresses the point that you, Chair, mentioned earlier about the need for a strategy. A clear strategy is set out there. If you trace the history of where the colleges have come from, you will perhaps see more clearly why we are moving in that direction. Having been the chief executive of an education and library board, I remember clearly that, prior to incorporation, the education and library boards had responsibility for the colleges. With hindsight, I have to say that the colleges were the Cinderella element of a very large education and library board system. I say that with regret. Incorporation gave the colleges a new focus and a new direction, and it moved them upwards from the level that they had been operating at before.
163. I see how the merger of the 16 colleges into six colleges has brought that much further forward. That coincided, in a way, with DEL's key strategic document, 'Further Education Means Business', which linked further education clearly with the economy. In fact, the document states that:
- "A central outcome of this review of the current strategy is to recommend that the primary role of the sector should be to support the economy through the development of workforce skills, employability and enterprise ... While the strategic objectives set out for the sector"*
164. — that is, education, skills and so on—
- "are inter-dependent, support for economic development should be regarded, by all, as the primary objective."*
165. The whole document, particularly the chapter entitled 'Greater Support for Economic Development', is focused on that. Since the merger of the six colleges — I became a member of one of the new colleges four years ago — I cannot believe the development that has taken place over the past number of years. The links with business and industry, the relationships with employers, the level of skills training and the qualifications and professionalism of the staff have moved further education to a very high level. In fact, they are operating at all levels now, from level 1 up to links with the universities.
166. Interaction with the economy is absolutely central. At the same time, the links with schools are vital. We had to decide, on balance, in which direction to move. Our clear preference is for a move towards linking with the Department that looks after the economy, but not to be swallowed up in DETI or any other Department. In fact, the budgets for the six colleges amount to more than the budget for DETI, and the DEL budget is about four times the size of the DETI budget. It is not a question of being swallowed up or moving into a Department; it is a question of how the Departments can be realigned to focus on the key element of the economy.

167. On the other hand, that has to be balanced with the fact that we have a major responsibility for 14- to 19-year-olds. That ties in with some of the issues that were raised earlier. As from next year, the entitlement framework will be operative. There is a statutory requirement whereby the schools curriculum for 14-year-olds onwards, key stage 4, and then post-16, will be one third, one third and one third. One third of that has to be applied or vocational, or whatever you want to call it, as opposed to academic. That ties in with the issue of careers guidance. We have a key role to play in working with the schools to deliver that applied or vocational element of the curriculum. That is a new part of the debate that has to be opened up, because, while a lot of lip service has been paid to it and a lot of good work has been done, there remains a huge amount to be done. One of the things that the Assembly can do is to emphasise the key role of the vocational or applied element, which is now statutory. We need to discuss how that is brought forward.
168. In summary, we are saying that we want to be aligned with a new Department — call it the Department of the economy or whatever you want, but the economy has to be the key driver, and we are key to delivering on that — while ensuring that there are strong links and protocols or whatever with the Department of Education.
169. Finally, we want to ensure that we do not lose sight of the key priorities that FE delivers. I know that each college has to draw up its own corporate plan. In that, we have to set targets. Our job, as governors, is to hold our executive to account. We set the strategic direction and then we hold them to account for the targets that have been set. In turn, we the governors and the directors have to account for our stewardship to the Department for Employment and Learning or to whatever new structures are put in place.
170. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. You brought out the key tenet that FE means business, but not everybody
- agrees that it has been a success. The University and College Union (UCU) gave us a submission stating that:
- “The incorporation model which underpins the functioning of our FE colleges since 1998 was designed to make colleges into corporate organisations run on a business model. We believe that policy has been a failure.”*
171. **Mr Neilands:** I know that Committee members have been out to visit colleges. You will, therefore, have some evidence in relation to the way that FE colleges have developed. Joe very eloquently outlined the recent history of the further education sector and how it has moved through various phases.
172. The core of what further education colleges do has not changed in the 30-odd years that I have been involved in colleges, in the sense that we have a portfolio of vocational- and work-related programmes that we deliver to full- and part-time students. The difference now, as Joe talked about, is that, since incorporation, we have changed the way that we do that. Instead of sitting with a prospectus and saying, “If you are interested in what we do, come along and sign up with us”, we are now much more outward-facing. We go out to other parts of society, particularly business and industry, but also the community sector and other public sector organisations. We interact with those organisations and have a greater recognition now of the role that we play.
173. As regards the question about business, the issue is what is a business model. If a business model is a model under which you can spend only the amount of income that you have, I would like to know what other sort of model there is and what the Assembly would like us to do. I do not see any other model in any part of the public sector other than one under which you get a certain amount of income and you make the best use of that income. Basically, you spend what you are given. I do not know whether that is the definition of the business model, but that is the way in which we have been asked to operate over the last number of years as responsible

- custodians of public expenditure. In doing that, you try — and I hope that I, as chief executive, try — to make the maximum impact with that money in the region that you serve.
174. There have been advantages to incorporation and there have been disadvantages. There is no question about that. However, we argue that it has helped considerably to develop the role of the sector over the last 10 or 12 years.
175. **The Chairperson:** All I am doing is putting a statement to you. I am not expressing an opinion one way or the other at this stage. It is probably worth saying on the record that we have been out to a large number of colleges. We have all been very impressed by the infrastructure and investment. Nevertheless, in the submissions that we received, a number of the unions, including the UCU, indicated that they think that the role of the colleges should be in the Department of Education. I am just saying that there is a disparity of view, and it is something that the Committee will want to look at.
176. I will go straight into questions and then come back with a few tidy-up remarks myself, assuming that time permits.
177. **Mr Ross:** I have two points. First, you talk a lot about the linkages with schools. Some sixth formers and whoever else go to colleges to do part of their course. I visited the Newtonabbey campus, as you know. Young people enjoy getting out of the classroom and into workshops. They can do the vocational training and have a practical class as opposed to just sitting and learning things in theory. Is that proof that the linkages that young people want are in the practical stuff? They want links with business and to learn the skills that will be important to them when they are trying to get a job. Is there a reassurance that, if we move to a Department of the economy or whatever it ends up being called, those links with schools will be as strong as they are at the moment and you will still be able to deliver those courses
- but perhaps with greater focus on what industry demands?
178. **Mr Neilands:** I know that Joe would like to comment. That is another success story that I would point to. We quantify in the paper that there are some 12,000 school students involved in the six colleges in one way or another, and, as you quite rightly point out, that can include the school pupils coming to the college. However, some of our teachers go out to the schools, so it is a two-way sharing process. We regard that as one of the important developments that has taken place. I remind the Committee that we are talking about working with all sorts of schools — high schools, special schools and grammar schools. There is no section of the post-primary sector that we do not work with. We have been able to develop those relationships while being in two separate Departments. That is the current situation; we are in the Department for Employment and Learning and schools are in the Department of Education. So that is a positive example of working across a departmental interface.
179. From a policy point of view, that could be further strengthened if we were able to develop a policy framework between the two Departments that would cement the very important local relationships that we have been able to develop. I would argue that those local relationships have developed to such an extent that they would be able to survive any change in departmental structures. Everybody who is involved in this debate recognises that there should be a closer relationship between the world of education and the world of work. We are ideally placed to further develop that relationship. Therefore, if we were in a Department that is primarily focused on the economy, we would have that set of relationships already with us, and we would have the relationships that we have with business and industry, which give us the relevance that you are referring to. I can only see that strengthening those key relationships and allowing them to develop in more positive ways.

180. **Mr Martin:** I reinforce that very strongly. I have no doubt whatsoever that the links with schools are now so strong that, regardless of whether DEL continues as a separate Department or is aligned with any other Department, those links will continue. They must continue from the point of view of the schools. I do not think that sufficient emphasis has been given to the introduction of the entitlement framework. Many schools are not as aware as they could be or should be of the importance of the delivery of that one third of the curriculum, the vocational-type element. One of the concerns that we looked at recently was the fact that schools are developing school-to-school links. Although that is very important, the specialist expertise and facilities, the particular insights that are now well developed in FE and the links with the economy, which would feed into the points that were made about careers guidance and so on, will be vital in delivering a really balanced curriculum that includes the vocational element.
181. For example, I read recently that Ballymena Academy is delivering a construction programme and was highly commended for it. It is being delivered for the academy by the Northern Regional College. Those links are so well developed that there is no doubt that they will continue. However, there needs to be far greater awareness. One of the weaknesses in the schools system is that it is not as au fait with or aware of the fantastic developments that have taken place in the FE sector over the past number of years or of what is to be offered through collaboration and co-operation there.
182. **Mr Gerard Campbell:** We have been clear on where we see the sector sitting — at the highest level in helping the economy. If we link that back to lifelong learning, we see that learning does not stop. Some 70% of the current workforce will be in employment in eight to nine years' time, and there will be requirements for upskilling and retraining, so it is important that that principle of lifelong learning does not stop at the end of the school years. There needs to be good collaboration and partnership working between the college, the FE sector and the schools, and that should be linked through to employment and future jobs — jobs that none of us around the table is aware of today. It is important to keep that at the centre.
183. **Mr Ross:** That leads into my second point. When Bill McGinnis gave evidence earlier, I said that there was an argument from some quarters that there should be a Department for lifelong learning. His point was that the Department of Education is big enough already and should continue its current focus on ensuring that early years provision is correct and that young people leave school with the necessary basic skills. Do you agree with the view that the Department of Education should concentrate on making sure that people have those basic skills and that you should concentrate, in a Department for the economy, or whatever it might be called, on ensuring that people are skilled for work?
184. **Mr Neilands:** I think that we would agree with that. I have always thought that the best possible preparation for success in high-quality vocational education is a good general education. Bill referred to other European countries, and the European countries that have succeeded in giving vocational education a high status are those in which it is clear that it is a route for those who are successful. It is not a remedial route; vocational education is seen as something for which people should strive and in which they can succeed. You are right; that is the issue.
185. On the question of lifelong learning, I go back to the important point that Joe made about the key purpose and objectives of the further education sector. Those were defined in 'Further Education Means Business' in 2006, and I have kept the three objectives of the FE sector in that document to the forefront of my mind in what we do in our college. Those objectives are that FE should be a key driver for economic

- development, an active agent of social cohesion and a promoter of lifelong learning. We do all of those. Therefore, whatever happens structurally in the Departments, we will always be a key agent for lifelong learning. If you want to see the evidence, all you have to do is walk into any FE college on any evening of the week and see the range of people who come through the doors. Walk around the classrooms and see the range of different courses and provision that take place in those buildings. That is the key to what we are about. Wherever we go within government structures, we will carry with us that key role of providing lifelong learning.
186. **Mr Gerard Campbell:** The number of essential skills enrolments across the sector shows that, in many ways, the FE sector is picking up the pieces when people leave the post-primary sector without having achieved a basic level of skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.
187. **Mr P Ramsey:** Good morning, you are very welcome. Joe talked very well this morning about governance and accountability. I was tempted to ask a question on that, but I will park it for today —
188. **The Chairperson:** We are all very grateful.
189. **Mr P Ramsey:** That has been greatly tarnished.
190. On a serious note, we acknowledge the immense contribution that the colleges make to young people across Northern Ireland. I suppose that we must go back to the decision by OFMDFM to dissolve DEL and it appearing that there will be a 50:50 carve-up between DETI and the Department of Education. Bill McGinnis made the point that HE and FE should remain intact, and there is a concern that the FE sector will become the poor relation. Will you expand a little on that?
191. The other issue is NEETs. Bill was correct in saying that the colleges and others are forced to bring forward strategies to make young people more fit for the workplace. Where do you see
- NEETs fitting into the new environment when DEL disappears?
192. **Mr Neilands:** There are so many aspects to the nature of the NEETs problem, if you want to characterise it like that, that it is hard to see anything other than a multi-agency approach being used to solve it. We see ourselves as having a major role to play because, apart from the many other things that we do, giving young people and slightly older people a second, third or fourth chance has always been part of the further education philosophy. Every time that there have been specific developments in rising youth unemployment, people have turned to the further education sector. I came into the FE sector in the 1980s, at the same time as the former Youth Training Programme was being devised in response to the particular problems of youth unemployment. So by the very nature of what the colleges do and our links, which we mentioned earlier, and the impact that our being work-related has on motivation, and so on, we have a key role to play in NEETs. However, we are only one of many agencies involved. I remember attending an event, held in the Building by this Committee or its predecessor, on a coherent response to the NEETs problem. That event brought together a whole range of people from the statutory sector and the community and voluntary sector. I am not trying to downplay how difficult it is to bring all those people together and get everyone pointing in the same direction, but no matter what way responsibilities are realigned, the NEETs issue must cross a number of Departments. A number of agencies across the statutory and voluntary and community sector must also be involved. The issue is whether we can produce a coherent NEETs strategy so that we all know what our contribution is. I argue that we have a major contribution to offer, but I would like that to sit within a NEETs strategy so that we know how our contribution aligns with those made from elsewhere.
193. **Mr Martin:** In practical terms, whatever strategy is agreed will be incorporated

in the college development plan. That will ensure that it will be looked at and given priority. Another key element is that funding follows policy. Given that colleges are funded, to a very large extent, from the public purse, once a strategy is decided upon, the funding will follow. Part of that funding goes into different agencies, part will go into the college budget, and our college development plan must ensure that we are aligned with the Programme for Government and government priorities. The issue of governance was just mentioned, and our job as governors is to ensure that what is incorporated in the college development plan is implemented by the executive and that we, in turn, are accountable to the Minister and the relevant Department for carrying out those objectives. Once there is a coherent government strategy and the funding has been allocated to implement it, it is our job to ensure that we deliver, and we have to account for that.

194. **The Chairperson:** Joe, you have the opportunity to influence a coherent government strategy. It is not just about listening to what comes down and saying that you will do it. I was going to leave my next comment to the end, but I want to state, now that the subject has been raised, that I think that the fixation on Further Education Means Business is not entirely helpful. Trevor mentioned social cohesion and lifelong learning. I do not disagree with where you see yourselves in the future. I was particularly impressed by your provision of pastoral care to those who might not have found school the most enjoyable experience; I think that you should make more of that. I will not ask you to respond to that now, because I have a long list of members wanting to come in. However, I would like you to use the opportunity to tell government what the coherent strategy should look like.

195. **Mr Allister:** I want to tease out a few more of the outworkings should you fulfil your desire of coming under the umbrella of DETI. Does it matter at all if further education and higher education

are under different Departments? Is it imperative, desirable or a matter of indifference that both are under the same Department?

196. **Mr Neilands:** If I had to choose one from your selection of words, it would be “imperative”. I take that view because it is vital to the development of the Northern Ireland economy and the delivery of high-level skills that we regard higher education as a coherent provision. Over the past two years, we have carried out a number of consultations on, for example, a higher education strategy for Northern Ireland and widening access to higher education. We have been able to make a major contribution to those consultations on the basis that we provide a substantial amount of the higher education in Northern Ireland. We quantify it in the paper by stating that we provide:

“20% of all HE provision to indigenous students studying within Northern Ireland”.

197. That is a minority of higher education provision, but it is a very significant minority. It is also an important minority, because it provides the balance in the range of higher education available. As well as delivering degree-level courses, we deliver a lot of sub-degree level qualifications. We deliver higher national certificates and diplomas, which are very clearly work-related, and foundation degrees, which are related to vocations. All those, as well as being qualifications in themselves, allow progression into our universities and can be topped up to honours degrees.

198. In Northern Ireland, we have a coherent system that has a range and depth of provision. We argue that maintaining that range will be especially important, given what has happened with tuition fees and the financial pressures that people accessing higher education will face. It is possible that young people will be reluctant to go across the water to access higher education. There is, therefore, a greater need for higher education to be locally provided, not only on a full-time basis, but, increasingly,

- as we have found in our enrolments in the Northern Regional College this year, through part-time engagement with higher education.
199. We would argue very strongly that we are not detached from the universities and that government should view higher education as a single provision provided by the universities and colleges and governed by one coherent strategy. We would also argue for an equalisation of the funding, but, perhaps, that is a different argument.
200. **Mr Allister:** I am sure that it is.
201. You say that it is “imperative” that, wherever higher education goes, you go, and vice versa. That is very much an all-or-nothing approach. The powers that be might not decide the issue on the basis of the logic that you are expounding, and it might come down to a political decision to split the Department: the Department of Education has to get some of it, and DETI has to get some of it. If we give higher and further education to DETI, there is nothing left to go to Education. If you are taking an all-or-nothing approach and higher education goes to the Department of Education, for example, will you go with it?
202. **Mr Neilands:** All we can do is answer the questions that are posed.
203. **Mr Allister:** You could have said — or could you — that it might be “desirable”, but that you work extremely well with schools, for example, which are already in a different Department, so the matter of which departmental umbrella is not the imperative issue? You did not say that to me. Why not?
204. **Mr Neilands:** In the paper that we presented, we looked at the entire range of key relationships that we feel that we have. No matter what way responsibilities are realigned, the further education sector will work across more than one Department. That goes without saying because of the role that we play. At the end of the day, we took a balanced view. We recognised that there were other arguments. The Chair mentioned conclusions that
- people have come to about our going to the Department of Education. We recognise that there are arguments in relation to that. On balance, however, we argue that we and the universities would be best placed to deliver our roles in a Department that is aligned to, or responsible for, the economy.
205. **Mr Allister:** If it were decided, against your better judgement and that of a number of others, that the universities should go to the Department of Education, is it your position that you, reluctantly, think that you have to go with them?
206. **Mr Martin:** We are arguing from an education point of view. If the political decisions made are different from the views that we have put forward, I have no doubt that we will do our very best to deliver, within a new framework, whatever has to be delivered.
207. **Mr Allister:** You must have a view about where, in that scenario, you would want to be.
208. **Mr Martin:** I think that we have expressed that view.
209. **Mr Allister:** You would go with higher education.
210. **Mr Martin:** I do not think that we are saying that we go with higher education in the sense that it drags us along with it. We are saying that there is great merit in our being with higher education. However, if it were decided that there was to be another framework, I have no doubt that we would do our level best to make the most of whatever scenario comes about.
211. **The Chairperson:** I have no doubt, Joe, that you will do whatever you can in the circumstances, but Jim is asking whether FE could exist in a Department with responsibility for the economy while HE is in a Department dealing with education. If you feel that you cannot answer that because you have to talk to others first, that is OK, but —
212. **Mr Neilands:** You are making me think about what I had intended to say in my summary, but your question has brought

- that forward. We in the FE sector feel that we are a confident sector; we know what our contribution is. Perhaps we should make this clear now: we will make that contribution in any changed government structure, and we will be a major asset to whatever Department we end up in. That is the bottom line. However, if asked for our view or preference, I would say that I think that it would be unfortunate if the important links between the college sector and the universities were broken. I think that I articulated as well as I could what we believe to be the important links. If they were broken, that would pose certain problems for government in the sense that two Departments would be funding higher education at the same time as developing an apparently coherent single strategy for HE and a single strategy for widening participation in HE. So I think that that would cause some difficulties. However, at the end of the day, we will, we hope, deliver our proportion — the 20% — of higher education. That is what the economy needs; it will not primarily be because whatever Department we happen to be in has decided that.
213. **Mr Gerard Campbell:** We have a very flexible offer of part-time routes to higher education and routes that are more flexible to those who want to go through to higher education.
214. **The Chairperson:** Jim has made his point, and if he wants to come back with more questions, that is up to him. Believe me, this session is not an interrogation; we are interested in exploring ideas. Issues may come up about which, on reflection, we might change our mind, because we do not know what others will say. I am aware that the session is being recorded and that the universities will read the Hansard report.
215. Given that you are so skills oriented, I think that you have a strong case for linking with the economy. Others may argue, and they may or may not get support, that higher education churns out professionals. That argument was articulated earlier. So higher education has a case to make for why it should be included in a Department for the economy. I am just saying that that is an issue that we are looking at. I have no doubt that this will be a developing discussion. I am only putting the arguments; I am not expressing an opinion either way.
216. **Mr Martin:** Would you allow me to make one very short point?
217. **The Chairperson:** Of course, Joe.
218. **Mr Martin:** I just want to pick up on the phrase that Jim used about us gravitating “under the umbrella of DETI” — I think that that was the phrase. I hope that that was not what I said; it was certainly not what we intend. We are not talking about being “under the umbrella” of anybody; we are talking about DEL being aligned with a new Department in which the focus would be different. In other words, we do not want to be subsumed into another Department, and, after all, DEL is a much bigger Department than DETI. However, the issue is their coalescing into a new dynamic.
219. **The Chairperson:** I agree with you, Joe — we will take over DETI. That is the Committee’s new strategy.
220. **Mr F McCann:** Thank you for your presentation. I have certainly been a supporter of FE, and I believe that it has offered opportunities where none previously existed, especially in many working-class areas right across the North. Although it may not tap into a level that might be described as “professional”, it has tapped into a level of education and training that, at one stage, was not offered to people. If you look at the direction in which nursery, primary and post-primary education is going, much of it operates, through a hub, as seamless education. It seems to make sense that that would follow through into FE and on into higher education. However, that is a debate and an argument for another day.
221. In his presentation earlier, Bill was fairly complimentary about the Scandinavian way of doing things. Are there examples

- in other countries that we can learn from and tap into?
222. **Mr Neilands:** I think so. What I always pick up from European examples, and I think that Bill referred to it, is the question of the relative status of academic versus vocational qualifications. That issue has bedevilled us, certainly as long as I have been involved in education. It is the idea that there is only one route to success, which is the academic route, and that the other is somehow of lesser importance. We have continually had to fight that battle and demonstrate that academic excellence can be pursued through high-quality achievement in vocational programmes, as evidenced, for instance, by the number of young people whom we send to university every year.
223. The other model that has certainly influenced policy thinking in DEL over the years is the one operating in some states of the USA. Some members of the Committee have been to see the role of community colleges in North Carolina and other states, and we can learn from that, too. Some years ago, I also had a chance to see the North Carolina model. There are significant differences between North Carolina and Northern Ireland, not least of which was the amount of money available to invest in the reorganisation of the economy in North Carolina. However, what impressed me was the clarity of roles, and we should certainly learn from that. In North Carolina, it was clear that the universities had a research and development role in supporting incoming investment, and community colleges came in behind them with skills development. That was supported by the advice/benefits system of the Department of Labor in North Carolina. I certainly think that that presents lessons in clarifying roles. We must ask: what are the roles, and what are the relationships? If we are making a case to support foreign investment, everyone should know what the various parts of the support system do, and they should all kick in behind that in a coherent manner. We have made some progress
- in trying to adapt that model for use in Northern Ireland.
224. **Mr Gerard Campbell:** May I make a point in answer to that, Fra? Over the past number of years, the influence and role of community colleges have been growing in the United States. The same issues — widening access and the cost of entering further and higher education — affect education in the United States and Northern Ireland. The community college offer is much more attractive to students who, traditionally, would have wanted a university-type education. In many ways, some of the issues that they face are exactly the same as those that we face here. Colleges, for example, have to deliver more for less money, and that has been the case over the past number of years. Colleges now deliver a higher-quality, value-added product. So there are many similarities, and we can learn from each other.
225. **Mr F McCann:** Thank you for that.
226. Pat raised the issue of NEETs. Although a lot of people use community colleges for education, there is a section of people who will not tap into that and feel more comfortable being trained and educated in the community. There are examples of where that has worked, even at school level. Recently, I gave a presentation to a community group. A number of young people in that group were not going on to study for GCSEs, but preferred to tap into community structures locally, and they got the equivalent of GCSEs through the training and work of local community groups. The same applies in other areas, such as job prospects, which community groups may be in a better position to deliver.
227. **Mr Neilands:** That illustrates another very important point that we want to make. Over the past number of years, in pursuing relationships and partnerships with the community sector, the colleges discovered that it meant also looking towards the initiatives of other Departments to enable that to happen. A prime example, in which a number of colleges have been involved, is that of neighbourhood renewal projects

funded by DSD. That is an example of the further education sector having a relationship with another Department because of that Department's remit. It illustrates the point that we were trying to make earlier and, indeed, which we emphasised in our paper: whatever happens with the realignment of responsibilities at departmental level, the further education sector, by its very nature, has a role to play in supporting the work of a whole range of Departments. Those interfaces will continue even after realignment, and we argue for a greater recognition of the role that we can play across a range of Departments.

228. **Mr Douglas:** Thank you for your presentation. I had a couple of questions, but my friend Jim Allister has asked them, so I will take his point a bit further. Trevor's answer to Jim's question was a bit like the famous verse in the Bible in which Ruth says to Naomi, "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay." Are you saying, this morning, that that is not your position and that, if higher education were to go to the Department of Education and you were to go to DETI or wherever, it would not be a big issue? In your written submission, you talk positively about your relationship with universities, which is good, but you also say that that alignment has helped with employment and supporting the economy. Trevor, if the Department's being carved up were to result in higher education going to the Department of Education, would that be a negative or backward step for employment and growing the economy?
229. **Mr Neilands:** As I tried to articulate earlier, it would be a backward step to do anything that interfered with the coherence of higher education policy in Northern Ireland and the development of the appropriate range and depth of higher education provision. I illustrated that by pointing to the need for a proper balance between sub-degree provision and degree and postgraduate provision. There is a need for a proper balance: between full-time and part-time higher education; and between provision

centralised in university campuses and provision decentralised around the FE campuses. If you want a coherent contribution from higher education to the economic development and well-being of the citizens of Northern Ireland, you require that range and depth. That comes from coherence in higher education provision, and it would be a mistake to detach the colleges, which equate to 20% of that provision, from the other 80%. Doing that would not be an argument for coherence, and that is why we argue that it would be better for all concerned if we and the universities were in the same Department.

230. **Mr Douglas:** That is very clear.
231. Your submission also refers to your contribution to the economy, and one of your key concerns is that the momentum built over many years will be lost. Given that we are in the middle of a recession and that everyone is working harder to try to stimulate the economy and create jobs, can you explain how that might slow down that whole operation? Is it the practical aspect of people moving into a new Department with different staff and new learning? Is that the sort of thing that you are talking about?
232. **Mr Neilands:** There is bound to be some element of disruption. However, what we were getting at was that, as we tried to illustrate earlier, over the past number of years, it is not so much what we do that has changed but how we do it. We believe that we are pursuing a coherent development of the sector, and that gives me a chance to answer the Chair's earlier question about referring back to 'Further Education Means Business'.
233. The reason we refer back to it is that it was the last strategic review of the FE sector and what it is about, so it is a reference point for us. That was the last major review of what the FE sector is for. All views can be revisited and changed in the light of changing circumstances. We do not have any difficulty or problem with that. The review gave us the three main objectives of supporting the economy, promoting access and promoting lifelong learning.

234. Returning to the specifics of your question, we do not want any slowing of momentum in the relationships that we have been able to build, particularly with business and industry, because they have had a significant influence on not just what we do but how we do it. We will be able to keep that momentum going if we are seen to be still aligned with the Department where economic priorities are defined. If we are saying that the key issue in the Programme for Government is support for the economy and economic development — we are getting the clear message that that is the overriding priority — we would want to be as closely aligned as possible with how that is achieved so that we can maximise our contribution to it.
235. **Mr McElduff:** Trevor dealt with the questions that I planned to ask about the linkages between schools and colleges. Joe also touched on that. Maybe my question should now be: is there an absence of coherence? You say that there is no problem interfacing with two Departments in respect of education and the colleges. However, is there an absence of coherence around the entitlement framework, in that, as Joe said, schools are not aware to the degree that they should be of the potential for better working with colleges in respect of that framework? Is that not driving you towards education?
236. **Mr Neilands:** I will clarify the point that I made earlier. This may have been an issue at previous Committee meetings, but certainly we have had discussions with DEL officials over the past two or three years about their interaction with the Department of Education and their work in trying to develop a policy framework document on 14-19 provision that would make clear what those relationships were and what the relevant contributions of the FE and schools sectors would be. That would not just be about covering the entitlement framework, because, as you know, we provide our own substantial 16-19 provision anyway for people who choose to leave the schools system and come to us. So it would be good if that were pulled together in a policy framework, and DEL officials have told us that they have been working with the Department of Education on that over a period of time. We would find that useful because you always have to have a combination of local initiatives, local developments and local partnerships. We have demonstrated that we have been good at developing those local relationships and partnerships. My college works with nine school learning communities in our area. However, we need to link the local developments with policy issues. As Joe said, funding tends to follow policies, so it is important that that element of it is sorted out. So could there be more coherence at policy level? Yes, and that would still be the case irrespective of there being any realignment of Departments.
237. **Mr Martin:** There is a need for coherence at policy level, and that has not happened to the extent that it should have. At the practical level, although there has been a lot of collaboration between schools and colleges, it has not developed to the extent that it needs to. We would argue that a lot of young people, particularly in the grammar school sector, are not getting the range of opportunities that they could get if they were able to avail themselves more freely of the range of facilities and expertise available in the FE sector.
238. **Mr Gerard Campbell:** Some of that goes back to the careers advice and guidance that young people get at an early stage in schooling and enabling them to see the range of choices and opportunities available. A vocational education is a real and tangible opportunity for many young people. Consider the amount of capital investment that has gone into the sector over the past 10 years. I would argue that we have world-class facilities and world-class lecturers, and we have proved that on the world stage in the world skills. So there is a very attractive career opportunity there. There is a range of issues in the mix that need to be dealt with.

239. **Mr McElduff:** Typically, is an advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) in construction and the built environment delivered by a grammar school or by a college?
240. **Mr Neilands:** It is rare, in my experience, for that to be delivered by a grammar school. The best way to answer your question is maybe through a specific example, and Joe referred earlier to Ballymena Academy, which is seen as a fairly traditional and well-regarded grammar school that is very jealous of its reputation and academic performance. However, GCSE construction is offered as part of the portfolio of GCSEs available to the pupils in that school, and part of our arrangement, in partnership with Ballymena Academy, is that our lecturers deliver GCE construction in the school. That is only one example of the partnership; Ballymena Academy pupils come to the college to do modules for a national certificate in engineering to supplement their A-level programmes and thus enhance the points for their Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) applications.
241. We could point to many examples from all six colleges of different types of partnership arrangements that either offer greater choice at the 14-16 level or enhance the programmes available in the sixth form. Traditionally, school/college links tended to be with the secondary schools and high schools, but the new aspect to school/college links, particularly over the past five years or so, has been that the colleges have engaged with an increasing number of grammar schools. That is very significant in the context of the overall provision, access to what is available and, as Joe says, what will be required under the legislation on the entitlement framework.
242. **The Chairperson:** Are you interested in a course, Barry?
243. **Mr McElduff:** I had a perception that, for example, Christian Brothers Grammar School in Omagh delivers an AVCE in construction and the built environment directly. Is that the case?
244. **Mr Neilands:** A number of schools offer vocational programmes. Maybe you were getting at that point earlier, but I wanted to come back on it anyway. You asked about coherence, and I talked about coherence at policy level between Departments. Of course, the other aspect of coherence is local area planning, which is about making the best use of local educational resources from the point of view of making the most effective use of increasingly scarce resources in the current economic climate. So there is a strong argument for sharing on that basis. The other argument for sharing is that we need to make the maximum opportunity and choice available to the pupils in an area learning community. If you take that a step further, the issue is that, if there is to be a rationalisation of the schools sector — that will be a major priority for the Department of Education — that raises the question of investment in facilities and accommodation and ensuring that there is no unnecessary competition for that capital investment and that there is coherence in what is provided in a locality so that we make the best use of resources and share between schools and, as we would argue, increasingly between schools and colleges.
245. **The Chairperson:** Trevor, it strikes me that we will have enough trouble taking over DETI without adding DE as well. We will see what happens.
246. **Mr D McIlveen:** I have a couple of questions that are somewhat unrelated. The only group in our mini consultation — if I can call it that; I do not mean to understate it — that seemed to take an on-the-fence approach to where it sees itself going was the adult learning group. Obviously, you have a connection with adult learning, and I am quite keen to gauge your opinion on where that should sit. Trevor, if you feel that you need to hold your tongue to avoid a family feud, I will forgive you, but I am curious to know your views on the issue.

247. **Mr Neilands:** I do have a view. The reference to family feuds is a reference to the fact that my brother works for the Workers' Educational Association, so I wonder whether I should clarify that and declare it as a conflict of interest. *[Laughter.]*
248. I have been involved in various kinds of adult education for a number of years and have various kinds of relationships, particularly with the community sector. It is my view that adult education — adult learning and access to adult learning — takes place in a variety of settings. Mr Ramsey referred to that earlier. A number of people who have been out of education or have had poor educational experiences in the past are more comfortable making their first steps back in a local, community-based setting rather than walking through the doors of a further education college, which can be a bit daunting.
249. That brings up the need for relationships between the colleges and local community organisations. I have always seen adult learning and lifelong learning taking place in a number of different locations: community settings; in the home, increasingly, through distance learning and e-learning; in the workplace, which is a very important component of lifelong learning; and in formal settings such as colleges and universities. The issue, and the approach that I like to promote in my college, is the development of local networks of providers.
250. I completely accept that a lot of people, particularly adult learners, will take their first steps back in a community setting, but the question is: how will they progress? The community organisations can be very good and very skilled at making people feel comfortable and at providing for the first steps back, but if those learners, having got the confidence that they can achieve, want to move on further, where do they go? That is where the colleges come in, because we have the progression routes. Last week, the Committee heard from DEL officials about the learner access and engagement programme. We have to work as closely as we can with community groups so that that transition is made as easy as possible rather than as difficult as possible. I have to admit that we have not always made it as easy as we should for people to access programmes.
251. The community and voluntary sector has a huge role, but the key is establishing the progression routes for learners who want to move on to something more formal. I seek to do that in our college by establishing local networks of people who can orientate towards the colleges for the progression routes for the learners that they work with.
252. **Mr D McIlveen:** Do you feel that they should, in theory, follow you?
253. **Mr Neilands:** Yes, but in a sense, the community groups will always get their funding from a variety of sources, primarily European. Essentially, the key is the local relationships between community organisations and the colleges, and not so much the setting, if you like, within Departments, because the community groups will access their funding wherever they can.
254. **Mr D McIlveen:** I have one final question. I am not a statistician, but I would say that, out of the 25 or 26 responses that we got, 90% are veering towards DETI. The one group that seems to be at the other end of the scale is the unions. I was curious to explore why you feel that might be. Was it an impulsive reaction? They were the first off the blocks when it came to publicly commenting on the dissolution of DEL. Following on from that, how much dialogue do you, as management, have with your staff on the ground about whether they are in tune with the unions or management? I suppose that, in trying to avoid problems further down the road, we do not want to lock horns with the unions.
255. **Mr Neilands:** We put the argument that we had looked at all the aspects of the various options and identified all the key relationships and that, on balance, we had come down on the side of wanting

- to be in a Department that is aligned to the economy. That is not to say that other conclusions are not legitimate, within the terms that other people might look at them.
256. It is very difficult. There are subtle differences between the union responses that I have seen. There is an issue on the lecturers' side with a desire to be more in tune with the conditions of teachers' service and pay. That has had an influence. That is a legitimate argument to put forward.
257. We would probably take issue with the idea that somehow there is some type of ideological conflict between education on the one hand and skills and training on the other hand. I would certainly argue against that. I honestly do not see how that is the case. Everything that we have tried to argue with you this morning is about saying that those are not two conflicting issues; they are part of the same thing. We deliver our support for the economy and our part in upskilling and reskilling the potential working population by offering a range of vocationally related educational programmes. That is what we do.
258. Maybe we need to talk to staff and unions a bit more about the implications of some of the changes that we are undertaking. If you increase the amount of work that you do with business and industry, the truth of the matter is that you have to be a bit more flexible than perhaps some in some of our traditional areas of delivery are. That brings up the question of change and the management of change. Not everybody is necessarily comfortable with some of the changes that we will, perhaps, be advocating.
259. If you are asking if there is an issue about internal communication and debate in the colleges, the answer is yes. In a sense, the question about the dissolution of DEL was flung on us. We did not have a huge amount of lead-up time. Certainly, in the internal communications and staff meetings that I have in my college, I am perfectly happy to raise these kinds of issues and promote some kind of discussion and dialogue. I will be discussing it in the college with our local union representatives; in fact, I have done so. I do not think that it is necessarily a surprise that people could come to different conclusions.
260. **Mr P Ramsey:** Do you fancy a trip to Derry to start that discussion?
261. **Mr Neilands:** All I can say to that is that I am fully engaged with the issues in my college. It absorbs all my energy.
262. **The Chairperson:** You were doing so well, Pat.
263. I have a couple of points to make in closing. I hope that Joe does not mind me putting this at his door, but it is interesting to note that the combined colleges' budget is bigger than DETI's budget. The issue has almost been looked at in terms of the removal of DEL and its being subsumed into another Department. I have no doubt that, wherever they go, the colleges will prosper and be central to our economic development and should take the lead. You said that you wished people would give greater recognition to that issue. That is, perhaps, one of the more worrying things. Within DEL, you were getting recognition, and it was a Department to which you were, at least, a major contributor. We need to make those arguments. The debate that has to take place, which you should be involved in and leading, is the debate that says that this is not an administrative exercise but a refocusing of Northern Ireland's economic strategic direction, and you are absolutely central to it.
264. Even Committee members will not necessarily be aware of the processes that you have in place in many colleges for ensuring the retention and attendance of people who were not the best attendees in the past. That is a really significant development, and the colleges should be applauded for it. However, you need to find a way of drawing that forward. It links in with social cohesion, attitudes to training and

- making people feel welcome when they return to training. I think that you should bring that forward.
265. The final issue — again, I do not think that it has come to the fore — is the fundamental change in the way that we provide higher and further education, with a focus on more part-time, locally based provision. I was not convinced when we heard about the strategy earlier. However, the more that I look at the cost issues and the need to react to the current situation, the more I think that it is a good way forward and that there are big strengths in it.
266. The issue about whether colleges can be separated from higher education should be viewed in the round and in the context of the question; why are we thinking about changing the current arrangements? It cannot just be that we have one Minister too many. We must take the opportunity to work out what we want to do, and other Departments may well need to be drawn in. If one were to combine DEL and DETI, one could argue that DCAL should also be in there because of its connection to tourism. There is a bigger debate to be had, and you should have the confidence of your sector to engage in a debate with government on that. I assure you that you have much to be proud of and that we will do our best to ensure that that comes to the fore.
267. Thank you all very much for your attendance. We look forward to further engagement with you, either formally or informally, on this debate.
268. **Mr Neilands:** Thank you very much. It was a very good and enjoyable discussion.
269. **The Chairperson:** Thank you.
270. Having been encouraged by the thought of an early lunch, we may well just achieve it. I have some correspondence to go through. However, before we do that, as the staff from Hansard are still here, I want to return to some of the submissions that we have received.
271. **The Committee Clerk:** We need to discuss how you want to take this forward. You have received two briefings today. We have lined up representatives from Queen's University to come to see us on 29 February and have checked with the University of Ulster, but it has yet to come back to us. Alastair, you talked about having a one-day session that would be covered by Hansard. If that is to be the case, should we allocate a Wednesday to that? What way do you want to do it? Also, do you want everybody to come? Some of the submissions are very light.
272. **The Chairperson:** Any views?
273. **Mr Ross:** We could do it in this sort of format or through the speed dating-type events that we have had before, which would allow anyone who wants to come to come, and two or three members could move around the tables to talk to them. I do not really have a preference. I think that you can tease more issues out when you speak to people and ask them questions rather than reading their written submissions. I think that would be quite useful.
274. **Mr F McCann:** The Long Gallery events that have taken place in the past allowed people to focus on what they wanted to say in a short period rather than on prolonged discussions.
275. **The Committee Clerk:** If we want to have a stakeholder event in the Long Gallery, it would have to be organised through Hansard. Hansard would really need to be involved so that, at the end of the day, the Hansard report can go into the report. Can I be left to investigate with Hansard how we could do that and what dates are available in the Long Gallery?
276. **The Chairperson:** Yes.
277. **The Committee Clerk:** That would also give us time to write to the other stakeholders to get their responses.
278. **The Chairperson:** OK. I hope that members have had a chance to read the submissions. Pat asked for a synopsis of them. I will arrange to have that in next week's members' pack, so that members can get the general points.

The problem is that some people took the opportunity to write expansively while others were more to the point. This stage was really a fact-finding exercise and an opportunity for groups to tell us what they want to talk about. As Pat suggested, we should have a two-page report at the next meeting for you to scan through. You will get the chance to read it, and we will write to the people whose names we have taken a note of today. We will have a proposal about a Long Gallery event or something of that ilk when we see what resources are available. That concludes that item of business, unless there is anything else.

279. **Mr D McIlveen:** The bigger debate that needs to take place is around teacher training. It seems to be the one area of ambiguity. Although I appreciate that comparisons were made with professionals such as lawyers, medics and so on, education is a bit different. DEL has only been the paymaster. The Department of Education has set the curriculum and been there to provide the jobs at the other side, and DEL has been in the middle, facilitating the training. It might not be as obvious as some of the other areas.
280. **The Chairperson:** I agree with that, but it is not only St Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College that carry out teacher training. There are other providers.
281. **Mr D McIlveen:** Absolutely. Everything needs to be looked at. There are other providers, and where Stranmillis goes, Jordanstown and Queen's teacher training have to go. Teacher training as a block has to stay together, but I am not 100% convinced that it is as straightforward as the other areas.
282. **The Chairperson:** We might be able to do teacher training as a separate issue then.
283. **Mr D McIlveen:** I think that would be worthwhile.
284. **The Chairperson:** Is that OK? We will look at that as a separate issue.
285. **Mr Douglas:** The speed dating-type event that Alastair suggested is a good idea. We need to be clear on what the format would be, because some groups — for example, St Mary's — are philosophical in their view that they should go into the Department of Education. I would not necessarily ask anyone to come and give a presentation, but I would give them the option. The Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) is strongly opposed to any change and wants to keep the situation as it is. We need to get the format right so that we are not there for six or seven hours, although I would be happy enough to go along with that. As you said, Chairman, we will have this grid, so we will know what people's line is.
286. **The Chairperson:** I agree, and I thank you for that, Sammy. The exercise was intended for us to hear what people had to say and to select the points that we want to pick up on. With the greatest respect, the aim is not to have everyone come along. It is your time for you to select who you want to hear from and talk to face to face.

29 February 2012

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Basil McCrea (Chairperson)
 Mr Thomas Buchanan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Jim Allister
 Mr Sammy Douglas
 Mr Fra McCann
 Mr Barry McElduff
 Mr David McIlveen
 Mr Pat Ramsey
 Mr Alastair Ross

Witnesses:

Professor Tony Gallagher	<i>Queen's University Belfast</i>
Professor Sir Peter Gregson	<i>Belfast</i>
Professor Richard Barnett	<i>University of Ulster</i>

287. **The Chairperson:** We will move on to a briefing from Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and the University of Ulster (UU). We invite the august panel to come to the table. I want to remind members that the session, as with all evidence sessions, will be recorded by Hansard. Papers are in members' packs. There is a joint response to the Committee's consultation. We welcome the following witnesses in no particular order: Professor Richard Barnett, Professor Sir Peter Gregson and Professor Tony Gallagher. You are all very welcome. You are all very well known, so we look forward to hearing what you have to say.
288. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson (Queen's University Belfast):** Perhaps I could start by making three points from our joint response. The first is that the most important aspect of all of this from the universities' perspective is our commitment to support delivery of the Programme for Government (PFG). I think that we have made that point very strongly in the opening paragraph.
289. Obviously, as we stand now, we have a dedicated Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). In the main, we deliver our support for the Programme for Government through that

Department. However, it has to be said that both universities work very closely with many other Departments as well. A recent event at which Professor Barnett and I were present was the opening of the new Northern Ireland Advanced Composites and Engineering Centre (NIACE), which is a joint venture between Queen's University, the University of Ulster and Bombardier. Both the Minister for Employment and Learning and the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment were present. That is just one of many examples upon which we would draw to highlight the way in which we currently work closely with a number of Departments, particularly the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), alongside the Department for Employment and Learning.

290. The thrust of our evidence is based on the fact that, over recent years, with the expectation emerging from the review of public administration (RPA) and the desire to streamline government, there has been a recognition that, in time, the Department for Employment and Learning would likely cease to exist and an expectation that further education (FE) and higher education (HE) responsibilities would transfer to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment as a matter of course. That is probably predicated on three elements. The first is the fact that, while the Programme for Government is central, central to it is economic development. Clearly, the universities' role to support economic development in the Programme for Government is at the heart of what we do. Secondly, there are two sub-themes in that; the work that we do to ensure that there are appropriate graduate-level skills and our research activities that directly support the Programme for Government, whether that is through inward investment or support of indigenous companies or our own spin-out companies. That so-called

- golden thread of innovation very much links higher education and our research and education missions to economic growth and, therefore, to the Programme for Government. Those are the key arguments that we have put in the response, and we are happy to pick up on any issues that you might have.
291. **Professor Richard Barnett (University of Ulster):** Clearly, the Programme for Government must be central. That is what it is all about. The revision of the strand one institutions is coming up, and I hope that this issue is looked at as part of the whole and not on the basis of one Department at a time, because sharing out one Department now could lead to an imbalance when the overall package is looked at. I hope that it is done in that rational way. The Departments are not there as an end in themselves; they are a means to an end. They are there to deliver an effective and efficient Programme for Government, and I hope that that is considered. As Sir Peter said, creating a sustainable economy is your number one priority in the draft Programme for Government, and I guess that it is likely to be in the revisions as well. That is where the priority is being put. That will not be a quick fix; we know that. It will be a very long, hard slog. It is important that the strand one institutions do their utmost to support that priority of the Programme for Government, which is developing the economy.
292. As Peter said, the universities play a key part in supporting the economy through research and innovation. However, we need to look at the skills side as well. At the moment, who is responsible for skills and training? It is split between two Departments, and there is some confusion there. It is important that the demand for skills and the supply of skills are, as much as possible, linked. We are a small economy, and the one thing that we should be able to do is benefit from that smallness by being agile and by working together and being very responsive. It is important that no rigidity in the support administrative system gets in the way
- of being responsive. For example, we both worked with Citigroup as it was thinking of coming in. We work through the officials in DEL, and that working relationship has improved recently. It would be much better if the function were in the same Department so that, when there is potential investment, be it indigenous investment or foreign investment, we are working together to make sure that we have the work-ready skills to link through. Given the priority in the Programme for Government, it seems that HE and FE should be with a central economy Department.
293. **The Chairperson:** That is a reasonable starter for 10. We will find out what way the questions go now.
294. **Mr Ross:** A couple of weeks ago, we heard from the colleges, and their views were very much in line with what you are saying today about a Department for the economy that matches the needs of industry. Understandably, perhaps, you have not spoken about some of the areas of the Department that would not fit as naturally in a new Department for the economy or in DETI. There is an argument that teacher training would perhaps fit better in the Department of Education (DE) than in DETI or in a new Department for the economy. I suppose that you are looking in particular at teacher training at the University of Ulster in Coleraine. Where do you see teacher training fitting in once DEL is dissolved?
295. **Professor Barnett:** The situation is, in a sense, similar to the situation with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS). Both universities have large contracts with DHSSPS, which commissions and funds the numbers, so we continue to work there. At the moment, teacher training is a halfway house in that the Department of Education commissions the numbers that we supply, but it is funded by DEL. It is not so clear-cut. It is an issue of linking the skills and requirements there to workforce planning, although I think that that is fraught with dangers. At the moment, the Department of Education is involved in commissioning the numbers

- of teacher training places in the same way as the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety commissions the numbers of nurses.
296. **Mr Ross:** I appreciate that, but where do you see teacher training going ultimately? I appreciate that it is not clear-cut at the moment, but if we are moving towards a position where we can realign certain functions of this Department, where do you see that fitting? A couple of weeks ago, we were told that we are, arguably, training too many teachers, so it is not fitting the needs of the economy. That was the argument for having the function in DETI. As you say, the numbers are set by the Department of Education. Do you have a view on that? If you do not, that is fine.
297. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** We speak for the two universities. As Richard said, education is essentially driven by DE at the moment, just as our health contracts are essentially driven by DHSSPS. One of the important points to make is that, in delivering for the Programme for Government and all our priorities, it is the relationships between the Departments that are so crucial. Whether they are between DETI and DE, as you highlighted, or between DETI and DHSSPS, those linkages and relationships between Departments are crucial. At the moment, there is no doubt that our respective universities would see significant parts of our activity in health and education essentially being driven by two Departments. However, the central missions of the two universities are very much more concerned with the innovation agenda and linked with the priorities of DETI.
298. **Mr P Ramsey:** I asked Barry what the word is for a group of professors; I am sure that somebody will tell us. *[Laughter.]* You are very welcome. I want to follow on from Alastair's question, which was reasonable. Stranmillis University College and St Mary's University College have made it clear that they wish to be within the Department of Education, and one can understand that. You would imagine that, going forward, there would need to be some synchronisation in order to have all teaching training within one Department. Setting that aside, another question has come up about higher education and further education. Do you see further education becoming part of the economic driver, and should both FE and HE transfer to a single Department of the economy?
299. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** Further education and higher education are inextricably linked in terms of the skills agenda. I explicitly referred to graduate-level skills because that is the part of the agenda that we contribute to. Much has been done over many years to ensure close working on the skills agenda and to ensure that there are suitable linkages between the further and higher education colleges and the universities. It would certainly be our view that, if you are going to drive innovation and deliver that golden thread of innovation to which I referred, you need that whole skills agenda, together with the research agenda.
300. **Professor Barnett:** I support that. We work very closely with the colleges of further and higher education. It is the graduate-level skills but also the higher technical skills — the old higher national certificates (HNCs) and higher national diplomas (HNDs) — and the foundation degrees that are a key part of economic development, and it is important to make sure that they are employment-related. Both universities also have a strong commitment to widening access. Many students come to us through the FE sector, having first done a foundation degree. Those progression routes can be full-time or part-time. So there is that natural link to the economy. Having said that, we are aware of that 16 to 19 age range, although a lot of the FE sector is not about that; it is about mature and part-time activity. However, that 16 to 19 age range is more confused. There is a continuum, and, as with any continuum, it is a question of where you make the break. The natural break is to have FE and HE together.
301. To go back to Alastair's point, it could be the case that the Education Department

- will follow the model that we have with the Health Department, whereby it commissions and funds places. Perhaps DE should commission and fund. At the moment, it commissions but does not fund. A lot of workforce planning for education assumes that we are a small, closed society. We are not. We have excess demand for our postgraduate certification in education (PGCE) places. Those who do not get in go off and train, typically, in Liverpool and then come back into the labour force here. So if you cut the numbers substantially here, the only thing you are doing is boosting the economy in Liverpool. You are not changing the supply of teachers to the system here. However, that is an aside.
302. **Mr P Ramsey:** Would it create management or governance difficulties for universities if teacher training were linked to the Department of Education?
303. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** No. As you know, the two university colleges are academically integrated with Queen's. There is no difficulty with them being academically integrated with Queen's and being funded either in the current way or in the way proposed by Richard. We have those mechanisms in the health arena already. Again, it comes back to reiterating the importance of not seeing the boundaries as hard boundaries but as permeable boundaries, because, at the end of the day, the important priority is to deliver on the Programme for Government.
304. **Mr Douglas:** Thank you for your presentation. The response that you sent to us was succinct, direct and to the point, and that shows clearly that there is no ambiguity in that you see higher education as being within the DETI framework.
305. We undertook a range of visits, including one to the Northern Ireland Science Park. I was very impressed by what it is doing with spin-off companies and the links with universities. In your response, you mention:

"an expectation that higher education would, at some stage, be brought within DETI. Such a move would reinforce the importance of
- flagship joint ventures such as the Northern Ireland Science Park".*
306. How would a move to DETI improve and reinforce your involvement with the Science Park and make it even more successful?
307. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** The work at the Science Park is only one example. I have already referred to the Northern Ireland Advanced Composites and Engineering Centre as another example. The Northern Ireland Science Park is one of the outstanding successes of recent years. It has emerged as a true science park from a rather small property company. Earlier, you discussed San Diego, from which the CONNECT model has been imported to the Northern Ireland Science Park as NISP CONNECT. Now, we have a truly functioning science park that has both the infrastructure part and the people and services part, which is so crucial. At the end of the day, we should not be measuring success by numbers of bodies or people going in but by the success of the companies, whether we are supporting them in the right way and so on. The universities have a crucial role to play and so do other organisations. NISP CONNECT is one, and the Halo Business Angel Network is another. There is also the property dimension. As a director of the Northern Ireland Science Park, I have been very pleased to see the way in which that joint venture has developed into a proper science park in recent years.
308. **Mr Douglas:** In the unlikely event of your proposals not happening, you mention that higher education would fit best with a Department for the economy. Can you make a few remarks about that, Professor Barnett?
309. **Professor Barnett:** Sammy, that goes back to my first point. I do not think that it is rational decision-making to decide what will happen to the functions within DEL without considering whether, as part of the strand one reviews, there are other aspects of other Departments that will be merged and got rid of as well. We ought to have a view about

- what those other areas might comprise. “Department for the economy” might be the title, but, in the main, I envisage that it would include the current DETI activities and a large part of DEL. In rational policy, I cannot see the employment side going to either DETI or DE; it is a work and pensions issue. If the decision is to split DEL between those two Departments, it does not seem to make any sense to give either that function. However, that is not a central concern to me, although it would not help to have such services in a Department for the economy, because you would get a lot of things that are not central. That Department needs to focus on getting the job done; it should not have everything thrown into it. There may be other functions from other Departments that would fit in a Department for the economy. That needs to be looked at as a whole, or, at least, when you get rid of DEL, you need to think where you are headed to in the longer term so that you are not diverted from the longer-term target.
310. **The Chairperson:** I am secure in the knowledge that Jim will come in with some very to-the-point questioning. I will tee that up a wee bit because, so far, the discussion has been a little tame. There is a line of argument that says that education is a continuous spectrum and that we should have primary school, secondary school and then tertiary education. Why should we not put universities and FE colleges into the Department of Education?
311. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** I will kick things off, and my colleagues will chip in. First, we have a dedicated Department, and there are risks in moving away from that, whatever the decision is. There are clearly different options. Higher education is an end in itself, when you think about individuals, and it is a means to an end, when you think about delivering for the Programme for Government and so forth.
312. Secondly, the synergies that we have tried to refer to in our response to the Committee cover the innovation thread that I have already mentioned and the international thread. One of the things about the Department for Employment and Learning and the universities and the way in which they are linked with DETI is that we are all working for Northern Ireland by working beyond Northern Ireland. When DETI sends missions overseas, the universities are well represented on them because we are an integral part of that important element when it comes to foreign direct investment (FDI) or selling or developing a company overseas. Internationalisation is as central to the universities’ mission as it is to that of DETI.
313. The third point is that we, as institutions, are also responsible for leveraging the Government block grant. The Queen’s University block grant from the Department for Employment and Learning is currently £110 million, and our turnover is £300 million. Much of that is from companies or bodies that are linked to economic development. Culturally, from the perspective of working for Northern Ireland by working beyond Northern Ireland, or from a perspective of leverage and successful delivery to the innovation agenda, there are close synergies. However, at the end of the day, there is a risk whichever way you go. The point that I will come back to is that, whatever you do, you have to have close synergies and relationships between education and DETI, because those boundaries have to be permeable.
314. **Professor Tony Gallagher (Queen’s University Belfast):** The biggest risk of all would be if there were a wholesale division of responsibilities for higher education, with, say, the Department of Education funding the education side and DETI funding the research side. In that situation, there is a real risk that, with no one looking at the bigger picture in education and how it works in the Programme for Government, a wholesale split could cause real difficulty.
315. **Professor Barnett:** I will go back to your point. There is a continuum; as Peter said, there is no natural break in this across government. Where is the centre of gravity of government priorities at this time? It is about developing

- the economy. That is what you have set as your number one priority. You cannot then have a system that does not support that. It is natural that higher and further education should go to a Department of the economy to support that. Having said that, it does not and cannot mean that there must not be important relationships with the schools sector, because the whole skills sector permeates down, as does the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) agenda. I can see that, from your point of view, if they are all in the same Department, that is made easier, but then you lose the close interactions with the economic development arm. There is a weakness in where it goes, but there is a bigger weakness if it goes to the Department of Education, because the direct link to economic development is weakened.
316. **The Chairperson:** I will come back to that in a bit. I would like to bring the members in first. When we come to the end, I want to ask you what a Department of the economy would look like. Should we put in more Departments, such as the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL)? Should we even consider putting in DE and DETI? Why not put them all into one Department? That would create continuums all the way round the place. I will put you on a warning that that is where I will be heading.
317. **Mr Allister:** I would like to tease out a little more the dichotomy around teacher training. I am quite clear about, and I understand and do not particularly dissent from, your mutual view that Queen's University and the University of Ulster ought to be aligned with DETI. However, equally, we have heard a strong view from teacher training colleges that it should be with the Department of Education. So, not least in the context of Queen's University's avaricious ambition to take over Stranmillis, can you help me to understand why teacher training colleges would take a view that is diametrically opposed to that of the universities?
318. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** I have to say that their view does not surprise me at all, because, at the end of the day, as we have already said, essentially, teacher education is already driven by DE. DE sets the numbers, and all of the linkages are with DE. So, in exactly the same way, as Richard and I have highlighted — including the number of times that we meet Ministers and what have you — we would be very strongly displaced towards the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. It is inevitable that that particular part of our activity and all the activities of the university colleges are linked inextricably to the Department of Education. So it does not surprise me at all. The links with Queen's with regard to accreditation, academic integration and so on would not change in any way.
319. **Mr Allister:** You have expressed the view that not only higher education but further education should go to DETI. Are you now embracing the view that teacher training should be an exception within that, or are you saying that, in the greater good, it, too, should go to DETI? That is what I want you to clarify.
320. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** I do not think that we are here to speak for the university colleges. You have highlighted that they have expressed a view.
321. **Mr Allister:** Yes, but, for example, if you succeed in your ambition of merging Stranmillis with Queen's, you would be speaking for them.
322. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** That still does not change things in the slightest. Clearly, that is a political decision.
323. **Mr Allister:** If higher education and further education go to DETI, can the teacher training element of that be outside the ambit and with a different Department?
324. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** Yes, just like how, at the moment, our two universities are working with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety on the provision of contracts that cover medicine, dentistry, nursing and physiotherapy.

325. **Mr Allister:** OK. It can be outside the ambit. Is that the ideal world?
326. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** I do think that there is an ideal here. At the end of the day, it is —
327. **Mr Allister:** It does not matter?
328. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** It probably does matter.
329. **Mr Allister:** Well, if it matters, which is better?
330. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** I think that our submission has made it clear where we think the universities are best placed. We are not here to speak on behalf of —
331. **Mr Allister:** In terms of further education and higher education as a whole, which is the better solution?
332. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** It is for further education and higher education to remain linked and to be linked in a Department that is focused on economic development and the Programme for Government, whether it is DETI or any other Department to which you might want them to belong.
333. **Mr Allister:** Would Stranmillis and St Mary's be included in that ambit?
334. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** My understanding is that they have expressed a preference.
335. **Mr Allister:** Yes. I am asking you which is the best option for the overview of further and higher education.
336. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** I would be very comfortable with either. I have absolutely no —
337. **Mr Allister:** It does not matter?
338. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** No, it does not. It is a matter for them to express their views on.
339. **Professor Gallagher:** If further education and higher education went to DETI, DE would still have a very important role in setting numbers for teacher education places. The process currently operates between two Departments on a contractual basis. The logical thing would be for that to continue, because teacher education numbers are closely linked —
340. **Mr Allister:** Stranmillis claims that that does not work.
341. **Professor Gallagher:** Well, everyone has issues with the nature of the formula that is used and how that process operates. However, that role would still continue. The extent to which DE would have formal control over teacher education policy overall would be a matter for the Assembly to decide on. However, as the vice chancellor said, we could happily live with that situation because, as we said earlier, the relationship between both Departments is crucial no matter what happens. If DE had a bigger role in teacher education, not just in colleges but with regard to numbers on PGCE courses in the two universities, we would be quite comfortable with that, as long as that relationship was good.
342. **Mr Allister:** I want to raise one final point on a different subject. Your ambition is to be aligned with DETI, and your focus and emphasis are on research and development and all of that. Would it be an unfair observation to suggest to you that there is a motivation of following the money?
343. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** I do not think that finances come into the discussion at all today. Certainly, that has been no element of our discussion.
344. **Mr Allister:** You do not see DETI, with that orientation towards research and development, being a better listening ear to your requirements?
345. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** I will pick up what Richard and Tony have said. At the end of the day, it is about an integration of the skills agenda, education, the graduate skills agenda and the research agenda. It is not about a division of those.
346. **Mr Allister:** It has never crossed your mind that it might be?

347. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** At the end of the day, we, as a university, will work with whatever Department —
348. **Mr Allister:** Of course you will. It has never crossed your mind that, financially, DETI might be a more comfortable place to be?
349. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** It does not come into the discussion at all.
350. **Mr Allister:** Right. Thanks.
351. **Professor Barnett:** I am making the assumption that, in the short term, the current higher education budget would shift across to wherever. If you go beyond the short term, it is a matter of where it best fits, given the Programme for Government. We cannot predict the political players or where the money will go, because, under d'Hondt, we do not know who the Minister will be.
352. **The Chairperson:** I think, Jim, we will call this a nil-nil draw.
353. **Mr Allister:** I am just in pursuit of information, as ever.
354. **The Chairperson:** As ever. It is great to see the clash of intellects; it is wonderful. Speaking of which, Barry McElduff.
355. **Mr McElduff:** In response to Pat's question, a troika of professors is my offering.
356. **The Chairperson:** Are they not involved with the banks?
357. **Mr McElduff:** They are indeed. *[Laughter.]* There is a linkage here. There are linkages and synergies all around the place.
358. First, the universities have extensive dealings with various Departments, as outlined in your paper and submission. What are those extensive dealings with DE? What is the extent and character of the universities' dealings with the Department of Education at this time?
359. Secondly, can anybody offer any insight into why the Department of Education and Science down South became the Department of Education and Skills in, I think, October 2010?
360. **Professor Barnett:** The main dealings of the universities with DE are indirect. As I said, DE says how many places it requires for PGCE courses, and we provide those places, although they are funded by DEL. We offer teacher training for the further education sector as well. There are no dealings with DE on that; it is done directly with DEL. That is the link between the further education sector and the University of Ulster.
361. Our other link with DE is through our school of education, and it involves educational policy issues. Through our school of languages, work is being done on the language agenda and the language review, for instance. We have been actively involved in that. Other than through teacher training, our links with DE are as they are with other Departments. Professional experts in the university work with colleagues in the Department, mainly on educational strategy. More recently, our staff were instrumental in helping the Minister draft the languages strategy.
362. **Professor Gallagher:** We have a very close relationship with the Department, the inspectorate, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), other bodies, school principals and career teachers around the entitlement framework and the processes of change within the school system. We are trying to blur the edges, in some senses, between school and university so that young people who are making decisions about going on to higher education have good information as early as possible, in a rapidly changing environment, about what their choices are and the consequences of their choices. That relationship is very close and is growing.
363. **Mr McElduff:** This past couple of weeks, I have been trying desperately to get some insight into why the Department of Education and Science down South changed its emphasis from science to skills. It is now the Department of Education and Skills. What was the

- thinking behind that? I do not expect you to know, but can you throw any light on it?
364. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** I cannot throw any light on it. The only important thing is that we provide a Northern Ireland solution that is right for Northern Ireland. You can look at different models around the place and so on, but it is the principle of what is right for Northern Ireland that is important.
365. **The Chairperson:** There is a research paper being done for you on that, Barry. I think that there will be a report within the next week or two.
366. **Mr D McIlveen:** I think that Barry is suggesting a junket to the Dáil. *[Laughter.]* I am not so concerned about what a Department of the economy will look like, because that decision will probably be taken well outside this room. However, I would be interested in what your universities will look like wherever they go and what potential changes that could make to the general running of universities and colleges.
367. You may disagree with me, but I think that it is probably fair to say that, within DEL, the universities and colleges were the dominant players, certainly when it came to funding and budgets. An example of that would be that you pretty much pulled off the impossible, in that a £40 million gap in your budget was, effectively, filled at the last minute, which I agree was the right thing to do. Regardless of where you end up, whether in the Department of Education or the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, ultimately, you will probably lose that dominant edge as far as size is concerned. In a bigger Department, you will be competing against other players who perhaps already have those networks in place. When it comes to jobs, Departments and the long-term sustainability of both our universities, where do you see the threats and the opportunities, but particularly the threats? The unions have raised concerns that your choice or, I suppose, delegation of Department will have a knock-on effect on the long-term viability of certain jobs and positions.
- I will not show my hand on whether I agree with the unions on that, but I am keen to hear your views and opinions on how you ultimately see the colleges and universities looking on the other side of any move.
368. **Professor Barnett:** It is for the universities to demonstrate, wherever we are, how we can contribute to the delivery of the Programme for Government. I am confident we can do that, and it shapes the kinds of things we do, certainly in the University of Ulster. We are an applied and vocational university. We are a university that has a lot of workplace placements and that concentrates on getting people employability skills across the board. You may say, "If we are about the economy, do the arts and humanities lose out?" They certainly do not, in that a high proportion of jobs are not graduate-specific. What employers want are good graduates with employability skills. I am not sure of the current figure, but CBI said recently that 50% of all graduate jobs are not specific about the discipline. Employers want good graduates with good skills. So it is important that we get the best students and continue to widen access to do that.
369. The fundamental nature and philosophy of the University of Ulster will not change wherever we are. We can demonstrate our importance wherever we are. In what we are doing and in the job that you as politicians have set, we can do better and contribute more to the economy, but that will not influence other things. Clearly, we will work constructively with whatever Department we are put in and with whatever Minister we have to work with.
370. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** From Queen's perspective, I do not disagree with anything that Richard said. Working on the assumption that the public funding for higher education moves with wherever responsibility lies, I do not think that the move changes the opportunities or threats at all. At the end of the day, both universities are autonomous institutions. We have increased the leverage on Government

- funds. We must continue to do that to maintain our growth in providing world-class education and research.
371. With regard to delivering on the Programme for Government, we will absolutely continue to respond to our education mission. We are the only university in the UK that has secured four successive major awards from 'The Times Higher Education', ranging from entrepreneurial university of the year to most innovative teaching of the year. That is absolutely linked to our determination to provide the graduate level skills, whatever the type, to support the economy. Equally, Queen's is becoming increasingly recognised for the quality of its translational research, whether that is in securing a centre of excellence for secure information technologies, which is a £30 million inward investment to Northern Ireland; the inward investment of a global corporate such as Petronas in Northern Ireland; the support of our small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through the knowledge-transfer partnership scheme; or, indeed, the spinning out of our own companies through our different vehicles and on to the Science Park. At the end of the day, those are the priorities for the universities. We want to continue to deliver that and to support the Programme for Government. None of that, I believe, changes with this change in position.
372. **Professor Gallagher:** Could I add very quickly, David —
373. **The Chairperson:** I do want you to be quick, because I want to ask a question as well.
374. **Professor Gallagher:** I just want to reinforce a point that I made earlier. The biggest threat to us would be if our two core functions of education and research were split across Departments. That would be a real challenge.
375. **Mr D McIlveen:** This question will have a yes or no answer. We are in public session here. Do you feel that, by going into the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, the staff in your universities have anything to fear?
376. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** Absolutely not.
377. **The Chairperson:** If you were to ask the man in the street where universities should go, he would probably say DE, because there is perhaps not an appreciation of the role that the university sector plays in the economy.
378. **Mr McElduff:** What would the woman in the street say? *[Laughter.]*
379. **The Chairperson:** I have not asked her yet, Barry, but that is my next question.
380. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** I expected a member to raise that.
381. **The Chairperson:** Did you want to come in with another supplementary question, Barry?
382. **Mr McElduff:** If you want, I will chair this section.
383. **The Chairperson:** Thank goodness you are here, because I was at a loss as to what to do next.
384. The gender-neutral person in the street has a view that universities are about education and students. So, if we decide to put universities into a Department of the economy, that will surprise some.
385. **Professor Barnett:** Since the universities are not in the Department of Education now, I am not sure why people should be surprised if they are not there in the future. I think that they will understand the role. I am sure that, if we asked the average person in the street, they would understand and appreciate the role that universities play in supporting the economy.
386. **The Chairperson:** The issue that comes up regularly is that we produce the wrong type of graduates. For example, there are huge skills shortages in information and communication technology (ICT). We talk repeatedly about STEM, yet many of the decisions on STEM subjects fail because people make decisions in school too early. For

example, they do not take single award science, and that therefore limits them. Surely there would be some advantage in the universities being the flagship of this funnel into the type of education that we can offer. We need to provide the skills. We are not doing a good job of that at the moment.

387. **Professor Barnett:** As I said, there is a continuum. At the end of the day, everything needs to be integrated with everything else, and there has to be some role for the Executive and interdepartmental committees to make sure that, whatever administrative structure you put in place to support the delivery of the policy that you, as politicians, want delivered, it works in the most effective way, bearing in mind that there is no perfect answer. So there will be obvious areas where links are needed, one of which will be the skills link between the schools sector, the FE sector and the university sector. That will be done, no doubt, through the Executive subcommittee on the economy — if it continues — which is chaired by the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. You might think that the whole roads infrastructure is crucial to the development of the economy, especially in getting those connections within the economy, so would you put all of the Department for Regional Development (DRD) in a Department of the economy? In one sense, you could do all of that and end up with one Department. However, we cannot do that, so where is the centre of gravity of the policy? Through things such as the Executive subcommittee on the economy, which the Minister for Regional Development, the Minister of Education and other Ministers sit on, those connections are made. For administrative purposes and to make it manageable, you need to make the break, and I think that it is better, given the current focus —
388. **The Chairperson:** Let us call a spade a spade: the universities are big enough and independent enough to thrive in whatever environment they are put in. However, I picked up the assertion that
- Tony made twice that you do not want to split research from teaching in tertiary education. However, there is another question about you being supportive of higher education and further education going to a Department of the economy. I think that I have heard you express that view. Would there be a benefit in splitting higher education and further education so that one is more to do with education and the other is more to do with the economy?
389. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** We have already addressed that in respect of the integrated approach to the whole skills agenda. We have responsibility for graduate-level skills, and it is important that the close links that already exist between universities and further education colleges are not disadvantaged whatever way things go. So we would argue strongly that it is important that further education and higher education go together.
390. To come back to your comment about skills shortages and imbalances, it is important that we recognise how extremely hard universities work to try to make sure that those balances are changed. Our curriculum changes year in, year out to reflect the supply side from the students and the demand side from business. At the end of the day, there are large and competing challenges. If we go through some statistics from Queen's University this year, we can see that we are reflecting the desire of the Assembly to see more Northern Ireland students doing STEM subjects in order to support economic growth. Therefore, by 2014-15, we will have nearly 900 more Northern Ireland students. The majority of those additional students will move into STEM subjects, and application rates this year reflect that. That is because of the very hard work being done by many of my colleagues and many of Richard's colleagues to ensure that we respond to that need.
391. The ICT issue is very important. There was another headline in the media yesterday that was quite unhelpful, because it is the ICT sector that is

- short of skills. We are increasingly hearing from employers that they want more graduates who are well qualified in mathematics and computer science, not ICT as perceived at school level. It takes time for the message that we are hearing to be reflected in the programmes that have been put on. Some decisions have been unwise. There is no doubt that there has been an emphasis on young people picking up ICT as a qualification, but that is not being fed through into the high-demand jobs that are out there. Both our universities are working very hard to address that. We are changing our curriculum and our entry qualifications to ensure that those needs are met, but we cannot undermine the enormously hard work that many of our colleagues are doing to address exactly that.
392. **The Chairperson:** There is a key issue here. Every high-value-added company in Northern Ireland that I am aware of cites a shortage of skilled labour, whether it is in life sciences or software engineering, and I understand the distinction between some of the softer areas of ICT or whatever. Central to our economic proposition to the world is the message, "Come to Northern Ireland because we have a pool of intelligent, well-educated people that your business needs", but the reality is that we do not. We have to import people from all sorts of places.
393. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** The reality is that we do, but it is not big enough.
394. **The Chairperson:** I will clarify that, because the meeting is being recorded by Hansard. I mean unallocated resources. When you are trying to attract people from outside to come in, you want to say that there is a pool of talent here, and actually what they get here is that it is a very competitive world.
395. **Professor Barnett:** We can do that, and we can do it even better with universities linked into DETI, so you are making the point that we were making. I will say two things about your observation, Chairman. First, no employer will say that there are plenty of skills out there. It is not rational for them to do so. They
- want you to encourage us to invest in more skills so that there is an excess supply in their area. It is rational for them to do so. It is not rational for them to say that there is plenty of supply. It would be crazy for any business to say that.
396. Secondly, we face the difficult issue of feasts and famines, and we have spoken about that before. That is one of the areas where we need more links with the Careers Service, which is currently with DEL. At the moment, the University of Ulster has a lot of provision in the area of civil engineering and building. Civil engineering is in recession, and kids are not going into that area. Students on those courses will not graduate for three or four years, and there will then be a shortage in that area. A few years back, there was bad news in computing, so people were not going into computing then. Now that there is good news, they are all charging in, and, in three years' time, there will be a glut. Overcoming that is an issue, and that is why there is a sense that you should get good graduates irrespective of the subject. In the past, through DEL and linking in, we have been able to offer short conversion courses, which overcomes that problem.
397. **The Chairperson:** I will not go on. To be honest, it was more of a chance for you to air your position than for me to get questions answered.
398. **Mr F McCann:** This morning I read a letter to a newspaper from Pat O'Neill, who is, I believe, the managing director of Powerscreen. He was severely critical of the education system and said that most people who come out of universities are too academic, have not been skilled up and are not getting the jobs. There is a lack of training in the skills that are needed to allow them to take up any positions that may be there and any that may come in. This is from a guy who has built a fairly successful company, and he makes a fairly severe criticism of the system.
399. **Professor Barnett:** I have not seen that article.

400. **Mr F McCann:** I just picked up on it this morning.
401. **Professor Barnett:** Clearly, there are those kinds of issues. Because Northern Ireland is small, you can talk directly and address those issues, but I would point out that, at the University of Ulster, virtually all of our engineering students complete a full year of work experience before they complete their degrees, so I have difficulty with the idea that they do not have that work-ready experience. However, if there is a serious concern there, I would take it very seriously indeed.
402. **The Chairperson:** It is the closing bit that we need to focus on. Richard, it is not just a case of, "They would say that, wouldn't they?" First Derivatives, for example, tells me that it is scouring the country to find people with certain skills. I understand that it may be looking for people who are a few years further on than those who are exiting tertiary-level education. When I was in Boston and San Diego, I noticed that there is a perception that there is a huge shortage of people with technical skills here, and I find that wherever I go in the world. We need to address that. I take on board your point about feast and famine, but there must be some role for manpower planning. Earlier, we talked in some length about manpower planning for teacher training, and, as an economy, we need to look at how, strategically, we can produce a pool of talent that investors will follow. There is a role for universities in that.
403. **Professor Barnett:** I agree. I mentioned workforce planning rather than the title that you used, but it would be workforce planning. I know where you are going with that: the issue is whether there should be differential fees and some encouragement. There are things that we need to look at.
404. On Peter's point, people have done ICT in schools, but that is not computer science. They come to university ill-equipped to do computer science. There has been a big growth in the areas that do not require programming, for example, and we are not equipped for that. So there is a problem there that we need to join up.
405. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** I want to reassure the Committee that the universities work extremely hard with employers and schools to bridge that enormous gap. We will never ensure that every single company's needs are satisfied, but the two universities are working extremely hard to try to close that gap. Equally, less than a month ago I was with Michael Ryan of Bombardier, and I explicitly asked him about the quality of the graduates that he is getting from Queen's University at the moment and whether they are satisfying Bombardier's needs. His response was that they are better than ever. The challenge for us is to meet the changing needs of society and companies, and they are changing. The growth of companies such as First Derivatives has been truly exceptional. It is working with both universities to make sure that its growing demand is met. However, that demand is different from the demands of other companies three years ago. We have to work together with the demand side and the student side, informing students and giving them the right choices. At the moment, there are far too many students who think that they are doing computer science but who are, in fact, doing ICT. That does not provide them with the background to get into either of our universities so that they can provide the computer science or maths-literate graduates whom a lot of companies are crying out for. That takes time.
406. **The Chairperson:** Time has gone on, but the benefit of this discussion has been that others will read the Hansard report rather than us winning any great point of principle. Young people's decision-making at age 14 or 15 is usually done on the basis of imperfect knowledge. Although we have a Careers Service that does its best, the people with the authority and the brand, the people to whom they are listening, are, by and large, the universities and, perhaps, the FE colleges. You need to have better outreach to our secondary schools so

- that you can explain to them what you think they should be doing. Ultimately, of course, it is up to them; they make their own decisions. We have not had the chance to explore the difficulty that you have in responding to demand. You made the point, Peter, that, if we do not have enough teacher training places, people will go to Liverpool and come back. Similarly, a lot of people are going to university to do subjects that they think are a good idea but which, ultimately, turn out not to be the best choice. Whatever structures we end up with, the universities, as the leading brands in our educational establishment, have a responsibility to take on more of that outreach in schools as part of a wider remit.
407. **Professor Barnett:** I agree with you. The University of Ulster is probably unique in that it has recently established a schools liaison team. I have merged that with our careers service, because the careers service knows where the current jobs are. The head of the careers service runs the schools liaison team in order to overcome the very issues that you mentioned.
408. **Professor Sir Peter Gregson:** I will express Queen's University's commitment to that as well. We have an annual conference, which this year will take place on the first weekend in March, at which we have always gathered together careers teachers from Northern Ireland to explain what the challenges are and the openings for the future. This year, we have first-hand information, because we have invited a number of key employers to share with careers teachers what the opportunities are for the future, working with our academics. We would certainly want to say that we are absolutely committed to the path that you have highlighted. We will continue to raise our game.
409. **Professor Gallagher:** We have even produced a junior prospectus, which is targeted at 14-year-olds to give them a sense of some of the consequences of the decisions that they will make. It is key that, when they are making decisions about their GCSE subjects,
- they have a sense of the doors that those subjects will either open or close further down the line.
410. **The Chairperson:** The Committee would be interested in having a look at that junior prospectus and your amalgamation initiative. I thank you very much for coming along. We realise, or at least I certainly do, that you tread a fine line in expressing an opinion. However, there are decisions that will, obviously, be made by other people. I want to encourage you. We have not really talked about it, but it may come out in another forum: it is not just about whether DEL should take over DETI, because, of course, DEL is the bigger Department —
411. **Mr Allister:** I think that it is DEL that is disappearing.
412. **The Chairperson:** Hold on a tick, Jim. *[Laughter.]* DETI is a wee small Department that has less than the FE budget. It is a reverse takeover, as far as I am concerned. There is a fundamental issue about whether we should be developing a real Department of the economy. What would that look like? You mentioned other Departments. Should we be putting DCAL, a tourism-orientated Department, into DETI as well? Should we end up with eight Departments or four Departments? What way should we do it? If we are going to do it, we should do it in a planned way and have a format. You should not be so nervous that you cannot lead the debate in society. After all, you have a pivotal role in it, and you are a major stakeholder. I realise that you will all smile politely at me when I say that and carry on as you were. However, I think that you should lead the debate; you have a great responsibility and a great opportunity. Thank you.

18 April 2012

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Thomas Buchanan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Jim Allister
 Mr Barry McElduff
 Mr David McIlveen
 Mr Pat Ramsey

Witnesses:

Ms Claire Lavery *Action on Hearing Loss*
 Mr Alan McClure
 Ms Nicola Strahan
 Ms Jackie White

Ms Louise Brennan *Alternative Education Providers' Forum*
 Mr Conor Kennedy
 Ms Caroline Rutherford

Ms Monica Wilson *Disability Action*
 Ms Sara Boyce *Include Youth*
 Ms Koulla Yiasouma

Mr Mark Ennis *Invest Northern Ireland*
 Ms Tracy Meharg

Ms Jennifer Greenfield *Law Centre (NI)*
 Ms Ursula O'Hare

Mr Thomas McKillop *Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance*
 Mr Tony McMullan
 Mr Jack Thornbury

Mr Brendan Clarke *Open Colleges Network Northern Ireland*
 Ms Patricia Short

Ms Orla Corrigan *Parkanaur College*
 Mr Tom O'Sullivan

Professor Peter Finn *St Mary's University College*

Mr George Dunn *University and College Union*
 Mr Mike Larkin
 Ms Julie Williams-Nash

413. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Folks, we will make a start. We have quite a lot on today, and we are fairly tightly tied for time. We have to try to keep within the time regime if possible. We welcome the folk from the Law Centre, and we have your written presentation in front of us. If you want to add something to that, you can, and we will then go into questions. We have only 15 minutes, so we have to

get it all done and dusted within that time to let the other groups come in. We will hand over to you to say a few words first, and we can then ask some questions.

414. **Ms Ursula O'Hare (Law Centre (NI)):**

Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you today. We appreciate that you have a very large number of presentations to hear this morning, so we will confine our comments to the two broad areas that we remarked upon in our correspondence on the issue that you are considering today.

415. When the Committee wrote to us to seek our views on where, in the event of dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), its functions should be realigned, we commented largely on two broad areas: the jobs and benefits function of DEL and its employment law function. That focus is explained by the nature of our work and where we interact with the Department for Employment and Learning. The Law Centre has appeared before this Committee a number of times in the past couple of years to discuss employment law and policy, so you are aware that our work is to provide advice and representation on a number of legal issues, including employment law. Hence, our interest in the proposed dissolution relates to the transfer of that employment law function. We also provide social security advice and representation, and, given the changes that are ahead with welfare reform, we have an interest in where that jobs and benefit function aligns.

416. I will take the social security issue first. We suggested to you in our paper that consideration should be given to realigning that jobs and benefits function in the Department for Social Development (DSD), and the reason is simply that, as you know, it is anticipated that the Welfare Reform Bill will be introduced here this spring. The

- Welfare Reform Bill in Britain recently received Royal Assent, and that will pave the way for what some are heralding as the biggest change in the social security system in a generation. The Welfare Reform Bill introduces universal credit, and universal credit strengthens the link between receipt of working-age benefits, requirements to look for work and increased conditionality. It is, essentially, predicated on a model that envisages integrated delivery of employment support to help people to get into work and arrangements to implement the new benefit. We are also, of course, in a situation where more and more people will move into jobseeking arrangements as a result of the migration from incapacity benefit to employment and support allowance, and lone parents will increasingly move to work-seeking arrangements if their youngest child has reached the age of five and they are transferring onto jobseeker's allowance.
417. As you know, our current arrangements are that that work is split between two Departments. DSD, through the Social Security Agency, is responsible, essentially, for establishing your entitlement to benefit and payment of benefits, while the Department for Employment and Learning has responsibility for delivering its jobs and benefits services to working-age claimants. So, the Department for Employment and Learning's job and benefits advisers would have a role in determining whether someone is actively seeking work. In practice, the decisions on those issues are essentially for DSD, so you have an intermeshing of services. In Britain, that work is handled under the auspices of one Department, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Because of the shift to universal credit, which is a significant change to our current arrangements, we are suggesting that consideration needs to be given to whether or not the jobs and benefits function should be transferred to DSD, and we think that there are reasons why it should. Essentially, because of the importance of the policy on welfare reform and the centrality of the new work-seeking arrangements,
- we suggest that that work should be handled by a single Department. In a sense, I suppose that this is about achieving a seamless co-ordination of what could be the biggest change to the welfare state. Therefore, our preference is for that function to move to DSD.
418. As we outlined in our paper, we also have an interest in the employment law function and how that should be realigned in the event of dissolution, and I want to turn to that now. I will pass over to my colleague, Jennifer Greenfield, who will comment on the employment law aspects.
419. **Ms Jennifer Greenfield (Law Centre (NI)):** You will see our proposal in our letter to the Committee. Our proposal is founded on the basis of our daily exposure to the range of queries on employment matters that comes to us from employees and workers across Northern Ireland. For example, during 2011 we received well over 2,000 queries on many and varied issues, and we represented some of those cases at industrial tribunals. We provide a source of advice to those who might otherwise struggle to receive it. That is the point that I wish to focus on this morning. We would be very concerned to ensure that the existing specialism and expertise that have been built up in the current Department and that flow from it are not lost. The value of advice at an early stage in employment law matters for employees and employers cannot be overestimated; it can have a knock-on effect on whether a case goes any further or goes properly forward. We would be concerned to ensure that there is no loss of specialism and expertise. In addition, we view this as an opportunity to look at the particular areas that are currently within that sphere of advice. There may be opportunities to look at that a little. For example, migrant workers' rights may fit with a Department that has an equality specialism or remit. We have an open mind in looking at the areas that will best fit the particular issues.
420. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I think that we get the gist of that, and I know

- that Committee members want to ask questions.
421. You referred to the jobs and benefits function of DEL and said that it would best be situated in DSD. However, the purpose of the jobs and benefits function is to get young people and the unemployed into work rather than just get them benefits. Why do you feel that that function would be better in DSD rather than the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI)?
422. **Ms O'Hare:** Absolutely; the function of the employment service to get people into work, and the Department for Employment and Learning runs a number of programmes, Steps to Work being one. As a result of the requirement for those on benefits to actively seek work, there will come a point at which there is a mandatory requirement for them to participate in, for example, Steps to Work or other employment support programmes. What effectively happens in jobs and benefits offices is that you register for your benefits and are then passed to a personal adviser who will support you in seeking work. The universal credit will make a strong connection between entitlement to benefit and actively seeking work. There will be increased conditionality in the system and more and more of a requirement on you to actively seek work. Our thinking was that, given that all that will be delivered in one place, it would make sense to co-ordinate that function in one Department.
423. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Fair enough, we will leave it at that.
424. **Mr P Ramsey:** I will also try to be brief. Your presentation is unusual in that you see there being different roles. Most groups want to be in one Department or the other, but I can understand your view because of the complexity of the work that you do on employment, benefits and other matters. Could you break down your funding streams for the three areas that you identified?
425. **Ms O'Hare:** Certainly. We have a mixed funding base. Our core funding comes from the Department for Social Development for our social security work; we have an employment law funding stream for our employment advice service; our immigration work is funded separately through a contract with the Legal Services Commission; and there is health board funding for some of our community care work. So we have a very mixed funding base.
426. **Mr P Ramsey:** So, your funding is mainly from DEL. Do you not get any funding from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM)?
427. **Ms O'Hare:** No. Our core funder is DSD, and we get project funding from DEL. In the past, OFMDFM has, for example, supported the translation costs for migrant workers' guides.
428. **Mr P Ramsey:** It would be useful if you could provide us with the percentage of funding that is provided for each area of your work.
429. **Ms O'Hare:** OK. Would you like me to send that through to the Committee Chair?
430. **Mr P Ramsey:** Yes, please.
431. **Mr McElduff:** I commend your thoughtful approach, and your presentation is very well laid out. Will you tell us a little more about the Law Centre's interaction with DEL on essential skills? That will highlight the relevance of the final paragraph of your submission.
432. **Ms O'Hare:** It is an issue that we have only really just come to, specifically in relation to refugees' access to classes in English as a second language. It is really about ensuring the integration of refugees in Northern Ireland. It is very much a new area of work for us, and it emerged through work that we have been involved in with OFMDFM on an immigration subgroup, which is formally convened by OFMDFM, chaired by the Law Centre and involves a range of Departments and stakeholders. We have discussed with DEL how it could consider and put in place arrangements that would enable refugees to have

- access to English language classes.
I suppose that I added that last paragraph for the sake of completeness and to highlight that that is a new area on which we are working with the Department.
433. **Mr McElduff:** Thank you.
434. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Any other questions from members? We are very close to the end of our time for this session anyway.
435. **Ms O'Hare:** I know that you are. I had my watch off to make sure that, come the fifteen minute bell, we would stop.
436. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you for coming, giving your short presentation and taking some questions from the Committee this morning. We will certainly take on board all the information that we receive during these sessions. I remind you that these sessions are being recorded by Hansard.
437. **Ms O'Hare:** Thank you very much for the opportunity. One of the things that would be helpful for us all would be some clarity on the timescale and the arrangements that will be put in place. From our end of the house, I know that there is some uncertainty around that. Thank you very much.
438. **Mr Buchanan:** I welcome representatives from the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) to the Committee. We have fifteen minutes to go through this and get it over with. We thank you for coming along to give us a brief presentation, after which we will open the session up for questions. We have your written submission, and I note from it that you folk are of the very strong view that the Department should not be abolished. I can see that view throughout the submission. The Department will cease to function at the end of June 2012, from what we can make out, but I see no indication from you as to where you feel its functions should go when it ceases operations. Perhaps you could give us some clarification on that front.
439. **Mr Tony McMullan (Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance):** Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Chairperson. I will explain the background. The decision to abolish the Department was announced — surprisingly and quickly for us — in January by the First Minister and the deputy First Minister, but, until then, there had been no hint of it. We then received an invitation from Mr McCrea to make a written submission, in which we argued strongly for the retention of the Department. Since then, however, the situation has become slightly clearer than it was at that time, in that OFMDFM has also issued invitations to interested groups to provide submissions. We have made a submission in response to OFMDFM's invitation. In that context, we are still arguing for the retention of DEL as a separate entity. However, if it becomes clear that DEL is no longer going to remain, it is our very strong opinion that the entire Department should merge with DETI and form a new Department.
440. DEL should not be split into various parts. There are some indications that the First Minister and the deputy First Minister saw the Department splitting into DETI and the Department of Education (DE). We are aware that there are also some strong rumours that DSD is arguing that the employment service function should be transferred to it. However, it is our considered view that, if DEL is to be abolished, it should transfer in its entirety. It should not be subsumed into DETI but should be merged with DETI into a new Department, which, we have suggested in our submission to OFMDFM, should be called something like the Department of the economy and employment, because of the close interrelated links between the economy and employment.
441. I turn now to the proposed transfer of the higher education (HE) function to the Department of Education. Members may recall that, at one stage, education functions were all part of the same Department. Although, in theory, it looks logical and sensible to have all education functions in the one

Department, it was the considered view of people that when that happened, the primary, secondary and grammar school sectors were seen as the cream of the Department and got more interest from the politicians and the media and so forth, and the further education (FE) and higher education sector was not viewed in the same light. It is the view of our members who support the further and higher education sector that rather than move back to that situation by way of a transfer to the Department of Education, they would be better treated in the exercise of the functions that they provide to the education sector as part of DEL or in a new Department.

442. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you. Do members have any questions?
443. **Mr Allister:** Are you of the view that DEL should move as a whole because you think that, as a Department, it is a homogeneous whole, or is it because that, when you analyse each constituent part of it, you think that the natural home for each of those happens to be DETI?
444. **Mr T McMullan:** It is our view that the Department is homogeneous in nature. When the Department was originally created, at the time of the creation of the Northern Ireland Assembly, there were some arguments about whether functions should be created in DEL or in other Departments. The Department is not one of the smaller Departments; there are smaller Departments than DEL. It has a range of functions, including the employment service function, the careers function, the disability advisory service and others. We believe that those functions work well together in the Department, and, in our submission, we argue that it should not be split apart, because of the nature of the work and the interrelationship between the various functions. If it is to go into another Department, a merger with DETI seems to be the most sensible and logical merger, given its role in dealing with the economy.
445. **Mr Allister:** The Department, as it presently exists, even in its very title, has different components: employment and learning. Indeed, it has a jobs and benefits dimension as well. Is there anything particularly homogeneous about the Department that means that it must stay together? What is the argument against the jobs and benefits dimension going to DSD?
446. **Mr Thomas McKillop (Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance):** I would have answered “both” to your previous question. It sits well in its entirety, but each of the individual functions, if they were to transfer, would transfer to DETI. Each constituent part would fit in very well with what is being done in DETI, whether it is the higher education stuff that is helping with skills and that ties in with the economy and industry, or whether it is the employment service, which, again, helps people find employment and already has links with sections of DETI through the redundancy service and the statistics and things that are produced for the Department. There already are close similarities between them, and, if the Department were to go, the argument is that it should go in its entirety. However, you can look at each individual part and say that it would fit in with that theory as well.
447. **Mr Allister:** What is the argument against jobs and benefits going to DSD?
448. **Mr McKillop:** It is almost against the primary focus of DEL at the minute. The priority for the Department for Employment and Learning is to create employment. The priority for the Social Security Agency and for DSD is the payment of benefits, and the two have almost been seen to be counterproductive. Over the past couple of years, a lot of work has been done in the Department to say that the focus needs to move away from merely fulfilling benefit conditionality, which is what seems to be happening in the jobs and benefits offices, towards doing more qualitative work with employers. There is a very strong feeling among staff, particularly our members who have transferred from DSD into DEL, that they are getting the chance to see that. Instead of doing quantitative work based around fulfilling benefit needs,

- they are now doing quality work to help to skill people and get them out into the economy.
449. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Some other unions feel that some of further and higher education would sit better with the Department of Education. Do you think that teacher training fits in best with DETI or with the Department of Education?
450. **Mr T McMullan:** Teacher training has not been an issue that affects our members, and, quite honestly, we have not considered it.
451. **Mr Allister:** Your members certainly have a view on the merger of Stranmillis University College and Queen's University because they have expressed it to us. They do not have a view about which Department that should go to?
452. **Mr T McMullan:** NIPSA's submission has been based on the response from DEL members and the Civil Service side. I understand the point that Mr Allister makes, and we do not have a view on that.
453. **Mr McElduff:** I want to broaden the question out beyond teacher training to higher education in its totality. Would you make an argument against higher education being absorbed in the Department of Education? Is an argument being advanced by NIPSA that it should not go to DE?
454. **Mr T McMullan:** Yes. At one point many years ago, all the education functions were in the same Department, and the view of our members who were around in those days was that, in a sense, the further and higher education sector was the Cinderella service of education. As I said, the media, politicians and others looked at primary, grammar and secondary education as a priority, and, when resources needed to be allocated, those sectors got it rather than the further and higher education sector. So, our members in the further and higher education sector believe that they have had a better opportunity to propagate what should happen in further education as part of a separate Department rather than as part of the Department of Education. They think that they have had a better deal in DEL.
455. **The Deputy Chairperson:** OK. There are no other questions. Thank you for coming along and giving us your time and your presentation this morning. We have stayed well within the time, so thank you for that.
456. I welcome Mark Ennis and Tracy Meharg from Invest NI to give us their presentation this morning. I remind you that this session is being recorded by Hansard and will go into our report. A slot of 15 minutes has been allocated for this session. We have your written response in front of us, but we invite you to make a short presentation and we will then open it up for questions from Committee members.
457. **Mr Mark Ennis (Invest Northern Ireland):** I thank the Committee for inviting us here to give evidence. It is much appreciated. As our time is limited, I will cut to the chase. Unashamedly, we are very keen to have a fair part of the Department for Employment and Learning reassigned to either a new Department of the economy or to DETI. Whatever it turns out to be is for others to decide. We are particularly keen to reassign the further and higher education parts of the Department. The reason for that view is that we have been tasked to create 25,000 jobs over the next few years, and there are three pillars to achieving that: the financial, in terms of grants, tax and corporation tax, etc; the environmental; and, most importantly, the supply of well-educated young people and skills. I have differentiated as there is a difference between the two.
458. In the past three years, we have been fairly successful in job creation. However, we are already seeing some skill shortages, particularly in areas such as engineering, chemistry and IT, and that is a concern. One of the challenges that we have is that when you build up some critical mass in a sector, as we have in the financial services and legal services sectors, you create a demand. I am getting feedback

- from businesses that they have lost people to other companies as the skills are not available to supply that critical mass. The worst thing from the standpoint of Northern Ireland plc would be an inability, having once established such a critical mass, to supply it. That can only be achieved through a focused strategy, and the success of that is the alignment between business and higher and further education. That is paramount. That also came out in the report of the Independent Review of Economic Policy (IREP), which made a similar recommendation with the same basic logic that I have articulated. I am sure that the Committee is also talking to DEL and the FE and HE sectors, but the views that I have received from them is that they strongly support its being combined in a single Department.
459. From Invest NI's point of view, if Northern Ireland is to be competitive and attract new investment, it is important that we have a single point of contact. That will mean that, instead of having to co-ordinate across a number of Departments, we can go with that financial and skills package. That is paramount for success, and it would also be helpful and give us a competitive edge. Indeed, that was one of the key themes that came out from potential inward investors to us during the investment conference in Washington in 2010. They asked us to help them to make their transition easy and to give them one point of contact they can talk to and that will deliver.
460. The best way to illustrate that point quickly for the Committee is through the use of some examples that show how the approach has worked and demonstrate the evidence of success. We were recently successful in bringing in 300 jobs from Axiom. We worked with DEL to achieve that, and we provided the business improvement training and DEL provided the pre-employment training. That was an example of the two organisations combining and working together. Tracy and Catherine Bell in the Department in particular have worked for a number of years and are starting to get some real success in the cohesion of bringing that unit together, and I am very protective of trying to keep that relationship as strong as possible.
461. What is our relationship with colleges of further education? How has that benefited us? What are the examples? We now have 40 courses that promote STEM subjects in FE. My day job, aside from my role in Invest NI, is in the energy business, and so I am very conscious of the renewables sector in particular. Belfast Met now does a course in wind turbine apprenticeships, and the DONG business is coming in. There is a direct link with FE supporting business coming in. South Eastern Regional College is promoting offshore energy, and South West College is supporting the foundation degree in wind technology. That is all very relevant to the industry.
462. What direct stuff have we done? Our innovation vouchers have encouraged a lot of small businesses to engage with FE colleges, because there is a reluctance among SMEs to engage with the universities. We will not go into the reasons behind that, but they are more comfortable dealing with the colleges, particularly in their own areas. The new composites centre is a fantastic example of where the universities have combined with businesses and Invest NI to create something. On Friday, I am meeting a potential inward investor who, potentially, has 300 jobs for Northern Ireland based on the production of composite wheels for aircraft. One of the key factors for that investor was visiting that composites centre and seeing that it worked.
463. **Ms Tracy Meharg (Invest Northern Ireland):** I very much re-emphasise Mark's point. It is quite clear that the economies that have the skills and research infrastructure are the economies that will grow in the future and attract investment.
464. I will take it into real examples, because that is helpful. On the skills side, let us take Citi. When Citi came to Northern Ireland, we worked very closely with

- it, DEL, FE and HE. At that time, there was no investment administrative qualification in Northern Ireland, and, working with DEL, Belfast Met and the University of Ulster, we put that qualification in place in Northern Ireland. That could not have been done before and, on the back of that, we were able to attract a 200-job project. That is one example of the work that we have done with DEL and the colleges and universities together.
465. On small businesses, it is important to recognise the importance of further education and its role in the community, particularly around subregional growth, which is key. In trying to get a more even spread of growth in the economy, the anchors have to be in the FE colleges. One really good example that Mark mentioned is the South West College, which has been brilliant, especially the InnoTech Centre and the innovation voucher scheme. It is working with tiny little companies on things like working with tourism businesses to develop collaborative phone apps to drive tourism to them. It is working with farms to develop innovative farm cubicles to allow the cows to produce more milk, and it is working with material housing companies to increase what they are doing. It is very much happening on the ground.
466. The change in FE over the past number of years and its role on the economy have been transformational, and we cannot afford to lose that. It has such an important role in vocational and technical training and embedding innovation in the community. It is important that there is a whole cascade. At the high end, Mark has mentioned the composites centre. You also have the likes of Seagate, which we work with to embed lots more R&D in Northern Ireland. As part of that, it invested in Queen's to create a centre, and, on the back of that centre, spin-outs are starting. We need to have that whole continuum of support from the very high-tech companies right down to the very small companies that have never done this before and need to get stepped in.
- The FE colleges get them on that ladder. We talk about the innovation escalator, and we want to get them on that escalator and grow them. From FDI right through to small companies, we have to ensure that everything that is happening is fully aligned with the needs of the economy. I believe that that is best served by retaining it in the Department.
467. **Mr Ennis:** I hope that that gives you a flavour. We could go on all day with examples, but I hope that that has given you an understanding of the importance that we are placing on it.
468. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Yes, thank you very much for that. I want to open up the discussion.
469. **Mr P Ramsey:** It is a pity that we are tight for time today, because I would have liked to have had a good discussion about the skills shortages that were referred to earlier. However, let us cut to the chase. Can you explain, in a few short sentences, how detrimental it would be to separate further and higher education?
470. **Mr Ennis:** As Tracy mentioned when she gave you the examples, we have worked for the past three or four years to try to get the two to work closer together because one tends to be a stepping stone to the other in many instances. The examples that we have given show how it is not just about the university linkage to business; it goes a step back into the further education link to business. The danger in splitting them, as with anything, is that you lose the focus of one. The focus of DEL — I just wrote this down to remind myself — is:
- “to promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy”.*
471. To my mind, that feeds directly into a Department of the economy. FE is a vital part of that whole link, as is HE.
472. **Ms Meharg:** Wherever the policy sits will be an issue. If a policy for skills is in one Department but the responsibility for delivering it rests in another Department, there is an opportunity for

- a mismatch between where the budget is allocated and where the policy sits.
473. **Mr Ennis:** Sitting as the body that is responsible for providing skills to both indigenous businesses and those attracted by inward investment, if you do not have control of the budget and the policy, but you are being tasked with the outcome of supplying it, there is a disconnect there that is not helpful.
474. **Mr P Ramsey:** I agree.
475. **Mr McElduff:** I want to deploy the challenge function, although I am not being adversarial for the sake of it. What is the status of Invest NI and its relationship with DETI at this time? Does that relationship allow you to be objective in addressing this issue?
476. **Mr Ennis:** Let me answer the second bit first. Tracy can give you the exact details of the relationship with the body itself. We are very independent in view. We have a board, which I am representing today, that is independent even of the executive team in Invest NI. The quality of the board — I will take myself out of the equation — means that it is a challenging and independent board. Its focus is on all on what is best for Northern Ireland plc, regardless of where it sits. I report and am directly responsible to and am appointed by the Minister, so there is an independence there. While there is a Civil Service structure, which runs from Invest NI through DETI to the Minister, I have a direct link with the Minister. That independence is very important in the whole outcome. The IREP report has strengthened that, in my view, and has enabled us to have a greater degree of independence.
477. **Ms Meharg:** Invest NI was set up in 2002 as a non-departmental public body. We are not civil servants, we are public service employees nowadays and are employed directly by Invest Northern Ireland. We take direction from our board, which has a level of independence from the Department. Clearly, from an operational perspective and from the Government's perspective, DETI has clear oversight of and responsibility for our targets up through the Department. You would not take that away. Ultimately, however, our remit is about delivering the targets that are set for us by the Executive through the Programme for Government, which flow down through to Invest NI.
478. **Mr Ennis:** The chain of command, as I see it, begins with the Executive, who deliver policy in a broader round. That gets distilled down to our Minister, who sets policy for our Department. It is distilled further by DETI, which splits that up, and then we are responsible for the delivery of that policy.
479. **Mr Allister:** You have given us examples of how you say Invest NI has worked successfully with DEL. One could turn that round and say that it does not really matter which separate Department those functions lie within, because you have a track record of working successfully with an outside Department no matter which it is. Where, from that, do we draw the argument that, in fact, things would be better if it was within DETI?
480. **Mr Ennis:** That is a fair question. I asked our own team the same question because I am interested in it. It has taken us quite a number of years to get to where we are with DEL. If you do not mind, I will go back to the DEL thing, which is:
- "to promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy".*
481. The Department of Education's overarching objective is somewhat different to that, but there is a great commonality between where DEL and DETI sit, particularly with Invest NI working with it. I have named Tracy and Catherine Bell not to flatter them, but because they have worked tirelessly to make FE relate to business. Without that personal leadership from those individuals in those Departments, we would not have had the success that I alluded to.
482. **Mr Allister:** But that has happened in spite of it being separate Departments.

483. **Mr Ennis:** It has.
484. **Mr Allister:** So, if it ended up in the Department of Education, for example, would it make any difference?
485. **Mr Ennis:** It would, because the overarching policies and objectives are different. DEL's overarching policy objective is similar to that of Invest NI. It is about promoting work, creating jobs and preparing people for the workplace.
486. **Mr Allister:** Within the context of repressed budgets, would that commonality give rise to the elements that are now DEL-orientated becoming swamped?
487. **Mr Ennis:** I do not believe so. In fact, I think that you would get a more efficient organisation if you combined the Departments. I mean that in both human and budgetary terms.
488. **Mr Allister:** Do you mean job losses?
489. **Mr Ennis:** I think that there could be some. Regardless of whether the Department is combined with DETI or Education, I think that there will be some duplication of effort that will no longer happen. Whether there will be job losses or redeployments into new areas that we are not living up at the moment remains to be seen. I think that redeployments would be more appropriate. There are shortages. We are in a big competitive environment and we need the skills set to address it.
490. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you for your time and your presentation this morning. We are just within the time allocated, and I thank you for that.
491. **Mr Ennis:** Thank you again for the opportunity
492. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I welcome Alan McClure, James Bailey, Claire Lavery and Jackie White from Action on Hearing Loss. I remind you that this session is being recorded by Hansard. You have a 15-minute slot and we have received your written presentation. I ask you to make a short presentation, and we will then open it up to questions.
493. **Ms Jackie White (Action on Hearing Loss):** I am Jackie White, the director of Action on Hearing Loss. I am very pleased to meet you all, and I thank you for the invitation to come along. Essentially, Action on Hearing Loss is the largest charity in Northern Ireland that provides services to deaf people, hard-of-hearing people and those with tinnitus. To supplement what we have given you by way of a presentation, we thought that we might bring along some of the issues and experiences of how things are currently set up, and perhaps stimulate some thoughts on what the future might look like for a more positive experience for deaf and hard-of-hearing people through education and into employment. I hope that that will be useful. I will hand over to my colleague, Alan McClure, and then introduce one of our previous service users, Nicola Strahan, who will tell you about her personal experiences.
494. **Mr Alan McClure (Action on Hearing Loss):** Hello everyone, and thanks again for inviting us along. I will talk about transitions and education. The transition period for everyone is a very important, life-changing time. Currently, people with hearing loss are advised incorrectly by staff who are positioned to give advice. These staff suggest that those with hearing loss who are in transition could, if possible, become hairdressers or stack shelves in Tesco, and that type of guidance is very inappropriate. It does not recognise the skills that we all have, including deaf people. To try and support and develop the confidence of younger deaf and hard-of-hearing people, we have become involved in the transition phase of those people's lives. So much so that, a few weeks ago, we organised a four-day residential, at which we had a group of 14 people, all of whom attend mainstream schools and come from all parts of Northern Ireland. The evaluation was fantastic. All the feedback was very, very complimentary to us. One person commented that it was the best weekend of their life. That was said genuinely. It demonstrates that we have assisted them in building their confidence and let them see that they

- are not alone, as quite often they are in their mainstream school, where they do not know anyone else with some hearing loss. We have brought them together as a community to feed back to us what they want — the learner knows best.
495. Moving forward after transition into education, what we really want to see is that everyone, if that is their choice, has equal access, regardless of disability. Currently, that access can depend on which college you wish to attend and where you live. The support that is offered from the regional colleges is very diverse. It can range from some colleges not wishing to entertain deaf awareness training or deaf learners, to the other extreme, where we have people in learning support units contacting us for support. We are finding that, when we have that active partnership with our specialism, the student learns better.
496. DEL functions extremely well in lots of areas. One thing we want to see is that communication is continued throughout the learner pathway and those with the specialist knowledge are invited to participate in the decision-making in those people's lives.
497. **The Deputy Chairperson:** From your perspective of dealing with people with hearing loss, where do you see that responsibility being best placed, if it comes to the stage at which DEL is abolished? Is that with DETI or the Department of Education?
498. **Ms White:** Essentially, believe it or not, we do not have a very strong feeling as to whether it lives in one place or another. What we do feel strongly about is that whatever red tape is there is dissolved, and that the learner or person has a continuous pathway to move through. So, whether that responsibility moves to one Department or the other, the Departments must talk to each other. Nicola is going to tell us very quickly a little about her own experience, which shows that, when people do not talk to each other, the person is not at the centre of the pathway and things go a little bit wrong, to say the least.
499. **Ms Nicola Strahan (Action on Hearing Loss):** As Jackie has already mentioned, I am a service user of Action on Hearing Loss. I am deaf, so, if you have any difficulty in hearing my voice or understanding my speech — combined with my Ballymena accent — please let me know. *[Laughter.]* I have been educated in Northern Ireland, from a mainstream grammar school in Ballymena through to a postgraduate education at both the universities. I had difficulties when I moved from grammar school to university. To begin with, it is a culture shock for anybody. You are moving from a very small group of maybe 20 people to a lecture with 100-plus people. There were massive communication issues for me in being able to follow what was being said in the lecture, taking notes and progressing with my course. It took time to identify what the issues were going to be and put solutions in place to address them, such as communications support, in the form of note-takers, and purchasing equipment, like a portable loop, to enable me to continue with my studies. It was so difficult in my first year with the transition that I decided to change to a new course and start afresh from that point. I continued the course and graduated, and moved on to postgraduate study with the knowledge that I had of the issues and of the solutions that I could implement. I was able to hit the ground running on the postgrad course, and, two years ago, I decided to undertake more postgraduate study. I was very disappointed to find that, despite knowing what the issues were going to be and the solutions that could be implemented to address them, there were still difficulties moving back into further and higher education. That was partly because of disability advisers as opposed to people with specific in-depth knowledge of a disability. If people coming through the education system and moving from mainstream secondary education to further and higher education do not know what to expect or what the issues are and how to address them, it is very difficult to make that transition. There needs to be continuity through the whole education

- process, starting from secondary school and going right through, to address those issues.
500. **Ms White:** That is to demonstrate to you that, whichever decision is made, we implore people to remember the personal experiences of deaf and hard-of-hearing people through education and into employment and further education. It is really important that people talk to each other and that the person remains at the centre of the experience.
501. We have a very positive relationship with DEL on the sign language interpreting work and on the access to work scheme. If the work starts to be separated, we do not want to lose the relationships or the expertise that has been built up or the momentum that has been started.
502. **The Deputy Chairperson:** We hope that, whatever happens to DEL, that relationship will remain in place and you will continue to have a good working relationship with the people who mean so much to you.
503. **Mr McElduff:** I commend the presentation; it is a good idea to take this opportunity to highlight your issues in the way that you have. You are not very prescriptive about where the services or the responsibility should end up, but you are making the point that the person must be at the centre and that the communication must continue. Well done on your presentation.
504. **Ms White:** Thank you very much.
505. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you.
506. I welcome Tom O'Sullivan and Orla Corrigan from Parkanaur College. We are glad to have you here. We have a small presentation from the college in front of us, and we have a 15-minute slot to hear where you feel the functions of DEL would be best placed, whatever happens to it come the end of the term. I remind you that the session is being recorded by Hansard. We will leave the floor open to you for a few moments and then open up for questions from members.
507. **Mr Tom O'Sullivan (Parkanaur College):** You have met us before; most of you had a nice, sunny day out at Parkanaur College. We appreciate your invitation to convey our opinion. You will remember that what is unique about Parkanaur College is that it is the only specialist educational college in Northern Ireland. We are dealing with a niche area when it comes to individuals. Ultimately, we are looking at individuals who come to us from 18 years onward and who face some kind of unique challenge or obstacle that often puts them outside the mainstream, the main framework, in Northern Ireland. We work with individuals who often are to be found outside the educational set-up and are struggling with life skills, abilities, mental health difficulties or physical impairments. It might simply be about the motivation to get out of bed in the morning or achieving the skills that are necessary to be able to move into employment. That is where we are positioned.
508. In the last two paragraphs of Wilfred Mitchell's letter, which you have in front of you, he says:
"The attraction for alignment with the Department of Education is strong not least because the staff dealing with provision generally have related qualifications and is therefore more appreciative and supportive of College activities."
509. We appreciate that, when it comes to education, the skills, the qualifications and, to a degree, some of the experience are with the Department of Education. However, given the uniqueness of Parkanaur College, I would draw your attention to the last paragraph of the letter:
"Not with standing this transient future needs of young people into mature independent adults ought to be related to a sustainable quality of life in an integrated society. Young people ought to have outcomes that meet their needs and prepare them to maximise their independent living and employability skills."
510. In the last line of the letter, Wilfred expresses our view that the best set-up for us would be to be with DETI.

511. That last paragraph identifies the core issues. We are interested in getting people into employment, and that is where the majority of the challenge for us lies. That is where we need the support and help; we need to hit the outcomes there. We are helping those people with a degree of education through the core courses that we provide and the supportive frameworks, but it is all about equipping them with the skills to get into employment.
512. Because we are in that small niche, we feel that DETI will provide us with the best outcome and the best support. That is where we will get the links to the workforce and to placement providers and the opportunities for jobs in the community, and that is where the employment will be. It is about where these young people, who have real and difficult challenges in life, find themselves: they have come through the education system — perhaps the majority of their life has been spent there — and that is often where it ends. We need to make that transition, and we feel that DETI will help us to do that to the best of our ability and help us to hit the outcomes, most importantly, for the people who find themselves in that position.
513. I hope that we have conveyed the opinion of Parkanaur College and what we feel is best suited to us. Do you have any questions? Is there anything that we have not covered?
514. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I want to commend Parkanaur College for what it delivers. The Committee visited the college some time ago and saw at first hand exactly what is delivered there. I take your point about your focus being on getting people into employment and your point about where you feel that the functions of the Department should go.
515. **Mr McElduff:** I just want to note that it is a close call, in Parkanaur College's assessment. In the English and Welsh experience, for whatever reason, the 70 specialised FE colleges are clearly identified with the Department of Education. Did that not push you in the direction of DE?
516. **Ms Orla Corrigan (Parkanaur College):** One of our criteria is employment, and I do not think that the Department of Education is going to help us with that. Arlene Foster and her team are putting money into companies and organisations, and that is where we are at our weakest at the moment. I know that the economic climate is a factor, but they give us assistance in meeting our aims. It is employment and vocational training that we are looking for. I would say that the aim of many of the 70 further education colleges in England and Wales is maybe not as much about getting employment as our aim is.
517. **The Deputy Chairperson:** OK. Thank you for coming and speaking with us this morning. As I said, this session is being recorded by Hansard and the Hansard report will go into our submissions. I thank you again for your time.
518. **Mr McElduff:** Will you tell the students whom we met that we were asking about them?
519. **Ms Corrigan:** We will.
520. **Mr O'Sullivan:** Yes. They were very vocal on that occasion. Thank you for your time, folks.
521. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I welcome Caroline Rutherford, Louise Brennan and Conor Kennedy. We have received a briefing paper from you. We will give you the opportunity to expand on that a little if you wish and then open it up for questions. We have a 15-minute slot for this session, and I remind you that the session is being recorded by Hansard for our own submissions.
522. **Mr Conor Kennedy (Alternative Education Providers' Forum):** I think the handiest way would be to address each of the five questions and expand on them as we go along.
523. The first question asked was, given the functions and purpose of our organisation, which Department we think

- we should be aligned with. We would like to be aligned with the Department of Education, on the basis that we currently work mainly with 14- to 16-year-olds who have, for whatever reason, fallen out of mainstream education. We operate with a small 16-plus group, which may be extended under the 14-19 strategy. We have done a body of work with the Department of Education in trying to formalise working with those young people and in trying to bring in additional support services and the like that have not come from DEL entirely. We have found that, once we transfer those young people into further education or training organisations, the support services that we bring have not found a continuation. Therefore, that small transition in those guys' lives tends to roll back a little to previous circumstances. As I said, the Department of Education is currently reviewing alternative education. Some of the answers may be found in there, but it would add some sort of continuity to the thinking along those lines.
524. The second question asked was why we take the view expressed in the first answer, and I think that I have just covered that. Again, it comes down to having that body of evidence and work already through the Department of Education, in working through Every School a Good School, positive behaviour strategies that mention alternative education provision (AEP), and us trying to slowly but surely align ourselves with its vision of future alternative education provision mechanisms.
525. The third question asked was whether there were any experiences that influenced our preference, and the answer to that is yes. The main body of work that we have been involved with is in working through the board system and the Department system. In working with DEL, our work has been in bringing young people in through vocational enhancement programmes, looking at post-16 transitions and support services that may or may not be applied to young people in those cases and ensuring that the good work that we have done over the year or two years that we have those young students continues. Some of the anecdotal case evidence that we have suggests that a lot of the young people who we transfer into training organisations or into the *[Inaudible.]* or the like tends to roll back, and those guys do bleed. We have an open-door policy and those young people can come back to our centre and seek further advice and support, but if that were housed in DEL it would relieve the burden on us to focus on the guys that we will be educating the following year. DE has already outlined a lot of that support service, and, hopefully, through the AEP mechanisms that it is looking at at the minute, it will bring that on board through the 14-19 strategy.
526. What are our concerns about the dissolution of the Department? We are wondering where the responsibilities for monitoring that education continuum lie. As we send guys to training organisations and into the colleges post-16, where will that monitoring and evaluation come from to ensure that, as we move these guys forward, the work that we have done is continued with the support mechanisms in place? The multi-agency working should maybe be brought to recognise that those guys have come from a difficult place and worked back into education and have not fallen into a NEET category. They have remained in the education sector but may need additional support through some form of additional educational needs support, from counselling to family work and even the involvement of other agencies, be it Assert, Opportunity Youth or Include Youth to ensure that they continue with the work that they have done and do not fall out of the operating system of education again.
527. **Ms Louise Brennan (Alternative Education Providers' Forum):** Our big concern is about where the NEETs strategy will sit if DEL is abolished and whether the Department of Education will run with the same strategy that DEL has developed. We have worked very closely with Barnardo's and so on in coming up with a strategy, and

- we are concerned that the focus may well change. We work with what we term pre-NEETs. So, if we can work in a much more aligned way with pre-NEETs and NEETs, it makes sense for us to fall within the one Department. However, if that Department does not take responsibility in the same way that DEL has, we will have serious concerns about where those post-16 young people will be.
528. **Mr C Kennedy:** In operating with that group, we have around 150 young people outside mainstream education in greater Belfast in any single year. That will be quite a burden, in terms of resources and allocation of support services, for whoever picks them up post-16, and we want to flag that the guys who have already fallen out of the system have — *[Inaudible due to mobile phone interference.]* — to as many agencies as we possibly can. We need to maintain and continue that because it is quite a large category of people in the greater Belfast area. We also need to consider any other relevant comments, and we would reflect much of what we have said already. I have talked as fast as possible in the 15 minutes so that we get can as much out there as possible. We will leave it with questions, if you are happy enough.
529. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you for that; we will open it up.
530. **Mr D McIlveen:** Thank you for the presentation; it has been really useful and was very succinct. Conor, you mentioned the words “continuity” and “continuum” a couple of times, and we seem to put a lot of emphasis on that. You also said that a lot of your work is focused towards the post-16 transition. Although your work is mainly with 14- to 16-year-olds, it obviously has the end goal of the transition from education into employment. Given that DETI is responsible solely for job creation and economic enhancement, is there not a feasible argument that continuity towards the post-16 transition could be enhanced by being part of DETI as opposed to being part of the Department of Education?
531. **Mr C Kennedy:** We could, if we argued that a lot of our young people would go straight into employment. One of the difficulties we have is getting the young people even education-ready. By the time we have worked with them over one or two years, we can focus on everybody, from those with serious numeracy and literacy difficulties right through to higher-level GCSE students. However, in engaging them with education, it is about giving them catch-up time. They may have missed two or three years of education already, and they can sort of continue with those structures and continue on through. A small proportion of our young people go immediately into employment; we find that the majority of them go into training organisations or colleges, and some of them re-engage with mainstream education at a sixth form or seventh form, especially as the entitlement framework shakes out and gives them that. So, yes, technically, you could argue that DETI could, in creating jobs for these young guys, get them somewhere. However, it would be a small proportion of the guys that we work with, to take them through to that mechanism, and that is why we feel that it may be best housed in the Department of Education.
532. **Ms Brennan:** You have the whole thing too of emotional intelligence. A lot of the young people we work with are maybe not as emotionally intelligent as they should be with their peers. So, it is about creating stable young people who are able to go into work and continue in work. There does seem to be a time lapse; we need that extra time with them to allow them to develop. I am not entirely sure that, within the workforce, that would be the best way for them, but in education, within a zone where they can feel confident and comfortable, is. A lot of these young people have horrendous family situations. It is not just as cut and dried as giving them a job and they will be fine; a lot of other work has to be done as well. That could be housed more cleverly within Education than DETI.

533. **Mr D McIlveen:** I am possibly taking on the road of devil's advocate, but, if you do it that way, are you deferring the transition, because you are continuing along a pathway? Just by keeping them comfortable, is that possibly holding back the transition?
534. **Ms Brennan:** It is not about keeping them comfortable; it is about giving them support and bringing them up to a level at which they are able to compete with their peers. A lot of these young people have been seriously disadvantaged and come from families in areas of high deprivation. We talk about NEETs, but some of these young people come from families that are generationally NEET. It is not just about getting them a job. It is about getting them a job that they will be able to maintain for the rest of their life. We do not want some kind of a rolling door, where they are in for six months, out for six months, then in for six months. We want stable young people who can actually enjoy and welcome work and do it for a lifetime.
535. **Mr C Kennedy:** I think that what we are looking for with the deferral is a successful transition as opposed to a transition per se. It is about making sure that they are embedded, and not cotton-wooled within our organisations.
536. **Mr P Ramsey:** You are very welcome this morning. It has been an interesting discussion from David's probing, and one that is hugely important to the NEETs strategy. I take the point that you are dealing with the post-16 age group. Clearly, the Committee inquiry that we carried out into NEETs was all about trying to ensure that there is a much greater collaborative approach. Preventative action has to be the key. However, people are telling us that, unless further and higher education are synchronised in one Department, we will fail in delivering employment opportunities for our young people. For a lot of young people who are NEET, the tendency is to go towards further education rather than higher education, which will then hopefully trigger opportunities for work. It is difficult, even for us, to determine what the best model is. Clearly, Education has a fundamental role, but, following on from David's point, the economic driver has to be within the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, because the opportunities are there. There are established links now between further and higher education, which possibly were not there in years before, creating people to meet the need of a shortage in the workforce. You are the first group that has focused more towards the Education side, which we understand, but there is a clear need for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to have a role. Do you have any thoughts on that?
537. **Ms Brennan:** There is a need for joined-up thinking in government. In the alternative sector, we have been doing that for quite a while. I do not think that it is just the responsibility of DETI or just the responsibility of the Department of Education. We could bring in Health, Environment or the Department for Social Development; there is a whole list of Departments that need to take responsibility. Our concern is that the young people we are working with are not job-ready; they are barely education-ready. We need to work on that. If you are going to create skills, you need to create lifelong skills. You need to create young people who are able to sustain those skills. You need to create people who are emotionally stable and able to do that. The areas that we work in have high rates of suicide amongst young people, high rates of unemployment amongst young people and high rates of mental health issues amongst young people. That does not all come about because the young person happened to be born in that area. There are trends. There is a trend of a lack of support from when they are younger upwards. We need to step back and ask what the best way is for these young people. Within the alternative sector, we have youth workers, teachers and educationalists working together. I really do not see the problem in Departments coming together to work. Although I accept what you are saying — maybe

- DETI is the way of creating jobs — if these people are not ready for jobs, creating all the jobs in the world will not make them ready for employment.
538. **Mr McElduff:** It is really important to hear you say that the young people you relate to are not job-ready and, sometimes, not education-ready. That tells us where we are going. It must be very rewarding work when you make a successful transition. What are your current links with DEL and the Department of Education?
539. **Mr C Kennedy:** I will take that in reverse and deal with the Department of Education first. Every young person that we have is technically still registered at their school of origin. Therefore, technically, each school and each school principal still has responsibility, and all of the Department's papers and work come on top of that. Furthermore, the AEP review has been ticking over for quite some time and will hopefully come to fruition in the next six to eight months. We have been working with the Department and the boards on that to ensure that best practice by the Department and the board is manifested in our community organisations.
540. As to DEL, we work with them to place young people in vocational enhancement programmes. We also work with the careers service and all of the centres that we work with have full and invaluable input from that service. That allows the young guys that we work with to feel that they are not completely other, as it were; they are not outside the system per se. It is about ensuring that those mechanisms and the education side — we have talked about getting people education-ready — are aligned realistically to getting them into a job down the line. It is getting them through DEL mechanisms to say this is where it goes. That kind of sums it up. Louise, would there be any additional support?
541. **Ms Brennan:** There would. At the moment, I am working on a transition programme in west Belfast that will look at getting young people to the stage where they are capable of transferring from school into employment or training, which will prevent them from becoming NEETS. However, the training organisations are telling us that 70% of the young people that they get into their training programmes have serious literacy and numeracy problems. That is not just young people who are coming from alternative education, but young people per se who come into those training organisations. If the majority of those young people fall out of those training organisations — that is likely, and our experience is that, by October, we know who will be the keepers and who will go — then you are creating another year of NEETS. If we are serious about stopping that and putting in the mechanisms to do so, there has to be some kind of transition programme that works with schools, the alternative education sector, the training colleges and organisations, and further education. That will ensure that there is a smoother passage and that any relevant information relating to those young people is transferred, so that, for instance, you do not find six weeks after a young person joins a training organisation that he or she has literacy difficulties. That information should follow them. That is the type of joined-up work that needs to happen if we are really serious about tackling the growing number of young people who are not capable — I use those words very seriously — of maintaining themselves in employment.
542. **Mr C Kennedy:** In that regard, our discussions with DEL have not progressed as much as those with the Department of Education. DEL has not taken full cognisance of the 150 young people that we deal with each year in greater Belfast.
543. **The Deputy Chairperson:** OK folks, our time has run on a little. Thank you for coming along and giving us your presentation. No doubt your views will be taken on board.
544. **Ms Brennan:** We did a review of alternative education 10 years on. I

- have left some copies of that for the Committee.
545. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I welcome Monica Wilson from Disability Action. I am glad that you have been able to come. We have a 15-minute slot in which to hear from you on where you feel the — [*Inaudible due to mobile phone interference.*] — and areas of the Department that are most aligned when it comes to the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning. This session will be recorded by Hansard for our submission. We have received a paper from you. We will give you a few minutes to expand on that, and I am sure that the Committee will have some questions for you.
546. **Ms Monica Wilson (Disability Action):** Thank you, Chair. I understand from the number of people sitting in the waiting room drinking tea that your time frames are sacrosanct. Thank you for your indulgence. I will not speak directly to the letter that we sent; I thought it might help if I just talk more generally. However, if there are questions, I beg your indulgence as I have an ear infection, so you will have to shout at me.
547. To set the context, I will speak specifically about the issues for people with disabilities in relation to the potential dissolution. I will start with the statistic that there are 229,000 people with disabilities in the 16-64 age bracket. That information was not in the letter. I will not rehearse the £6 million budget or the 1,800 staff, but it may be something to consider in how the cake is portioned. For example, the employment service has around 1,200 staff, and the disablement employment service, which has had a number of names previously, is within that. That provides either direct service or service through third-party organisations to almost 4,000 people with disabilities. On the other side of that, 1,000 of those people are supported under the European social fund (ESF), and so the strategy, ESF and equality unit in DEL also has significant influence in relation to people with disabilities.
548. I do not think I need 15 minutes; I just want to talk about a few principles, the key one being cultural confusion. Originally, it seemed from the outside to be quite simple: split it between DE and DETI. However, there seems to be a debate that we on the outside are not privy to, which suggests that the Department for Social Development should play a part. That is why I am not speaking to the letter. I would like to say quite clearly that that would be very detrimental to people with disabilities, particularly in the context of the current welfare reforms.
549. We need to think about why the service is there in the first place: to encourage people to find jobs. The work is about enabling, supporting, developing and delivering, whereas no matter what the initial intent, the work of people in the Social Security Agency is about ensuring entitlement and delivery of service, tackling fraud and error, and all of those things. In a culture where people with disabilities already receive passive views, where we are thought of as fairly non-contributing and as not having much to give, that interface between benefit entitlement and ability and wish to work becomes very confused.
550. The disablement employment service and the employment service in total in the Department for Employment and Learning work with those who are furthest from the labour market and who face the greatest barriers. We think it would be absolutely detrimental if the employment service, including the disability employment service, is moved to DETI. Now, we have no particular comments in relation to FE and HE, except that —
551. **Mr McElduff:** Sorry, can I just check with you, Monica: it would be detrimental if it moved to —
552. **Ms M Wilson:** To DSD. Sorry, did I say DETI? I apologise; it would be detrimental if it was moved to DSD, in our opinion. There is a need to think about strategic alignment, never mind just cultural stuff, if there is some form of a Department of the economy.

- Although I have no fixed views, my presumption is that if the employment elements of DEL moved to DETI, then there would need to be some quite major structural reform, as my understanding is that DETI is quite a small Department with a lot of NDPBs. I understand that, but there needs to be a structural alignment if we are trying to create jobs and increase the economic prosperity of the country. If jobs are created, jobs will be filled. Perhaps that is too simplistic, but that is the way that we see it.
553. I made a point about offering services to the people who are furthest from the labour market. That would become even more complex if the DSD part were to come into play. We need the alignment with the skills and industry unit of DEL, because, for example, through the Training for Success programme, we support 400 people with disabilities in the mainstream. Our concept is that, quite clearly, people should be in the mainstream, if that is possible, with the supports that they need. It is about alignment with not only the employment service directly but the skills and industry side.
554. Finally, as we move into the next round of European social funding, you need to be aware that the underpinning programme for vocational training services for disabled people in Northern Ireland comes nearly exclusively from the European social fund. It is not quite as simple as considering just the disability employment service.
555. I will not repeat myself, but I am very happy to take any questions.
556. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you very much for your very good presentation. I note from your letter Disability Action's concern that, in this whole movement or transfer, the good relationship and discussions that you have with DEL remain and do not get lost or become stalled. That can be focused on and taken into consideration.
557. **Mr P Ramsey:** I appreciate Monica taking the time out to come here today.
- Other groups that represent people with disabilities, including MENCAP, have made it very clear that they want the responsibility to be in DETI. They see the employment opportunities and the economic driver. If they get any less than that, they will be the poor relation. As you said, the consistency of services in providing that additional support for people who have a range of perhaps complex disabilities could then be diminished or diluted.
558. **Ms M Wilson:** Although a lot of good work has been done, there is still a key issue about perceptions of disabled people being able to work. The welfare reform debate is making it much more difficult for people, and I am really concerned about the future for disabled people who are job-seeking. I have to be fair and say that a move to DETI would not be easy either, because there is a different culture there, and that culture merge would need to be sorted out. However, if we have a service that we know, we can try to build different relationships, and they will need to be different relationships. I am calling it a Department of the economy, but I do not know what it will be called. Pat, I do not underestimate the difficulties that can arise in any merged organisation, but I think that that is the best place.
559. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you, Monica, for coming to the Committee and giving your time. We appreciate that very much.
560. **Ms M Wilson:** That is OK. Good luck with the rest of your deliberations.
561. **Professor Peter Finn (St Mary's University College):** Good afternoon, everyone.
562. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Peter, you are very welcome to the Committee. We have a 15-minute slot for you. The session will be recorded by Hansard for our own submissions. We have had some correspondence from you, and we are happy to let you expand on that for a few moments. We will then open up the session for members to ask questions.

563. **Professor Finn:** Thank you very much, Deputy Chair and everyone, whom I know a little bit better now. I very much welcome the opportunity to briefly present the views of St Mary's University College on this very important issue, and I appreciate that I have only a few minutes to do so. So, I will be brief and will refer only to the future ministerial oversight of higher education arising from the dissolution of DEL because that is where my area of expertise and knowledge is. St Mary's will, of course, work constructively with whatever Department oversees higher education, but we have a view on the matter, and we understand that that view is not shared by everyone in the sector. That diversity of views is a good thing, but we believe that our view is worth your consideration.
564. I will make a general point about higher education at a high level of abstraction. It is a highly sophisticated and multidimensional phenomenon that covers learning and teaching, research, knowledge transfer, innovation, community outreach and a wide range of other specialist areas. It also has a very high degree of diversity in form and function, and its character in any place, including Northern Ireland, owes much to history as well to prevailing economic, social and cultural circumstances. I say that because it is not surprising that there is no perfect solution as to where higher education should sit in our local Administration. I believe that we should seek a best-fit solution where the local higher education sector could be aligned to a Department where the core business is either economic development or the education of people and related services. I understand the arguments for both, but the position at St Mary's — this has been agreed by our governing body — is that we believe that higher education in Northern Ireland is best served by an alignment with the Department of Education. We set that out in a very brief response to Basil, the Chair, arising from his letter of 26 January, and we also sent a response of the same nature to OFMDFM, which also had a consultation on the matter.
565. The position we have taken is based on five factors. The first is that the very nature of higher education, as we see it, is such that it has a focus on learning and teaching and the student experience at the very core of its mission. Higher education does many other things, but we believe that at its core are learning and teaching and the student experience. Lord Patten, chancellor of Oxford University, writing in the 'Financial Times' in February challenged the assertion that there is a direct relationship between higher education and economic growth. He referred to the work of Alison Wolf in her text 'Does Education Matter?' and said:
- "While she recognised that it would be stupid to suggest that education had no major economic importance, she demolished the naive and distorting belief that there is 'a simple, direct relationship between the amount of education in a society and its future growth rate, and the belief that governments can fine-tune education expenditures to maximise that self-same rate of growth'".*
566. So, the first point is that the nature of higher education suggests that at its core are learning and teaching and the student experience, and all that is best aligned with a Department of education rather than with a Department that is focused on economic development.
567. The second factor is the desire for greater integration of higher education with other strands of education. We believe that Northern Ireland could benefit from an integration of all aspects of learning and teaching and from all aspects of education being in one Department. We ask you to consider the public interest with respect to the annual £500 million spend on higher education. When Lord Empey launched the strategic review of higher education, he referred to that £500 million spend. At first, I thought that was enormous, but we then realised that over half of that sum goes on loans and grants to students to enable them to study in the higher education institutions, and of the rest, a very significant proportion goes directly to the institutions to support learning and teaching. So, I

- am presenting the thesis that public investment and, therefore, public interest in that £500 million is largely in the domain of learning and teaching, not in other areas of higher education. Therefore, learning and teaching belongs naturally in the domain of education rather than in the other area.
568. The next area is potential for collaborative work with the administration of higher education in other jurisdictions. I am looking at what goes on in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Dublin, and, in those three places, higher education is part of a bigger administration of all education. We have a different situation in Westminster, where it is based in a Department of business and industry, but I think Northern Ireland has to decide what is right for Northern Ireland: is it a methodology similar to that of the devolved Administrations in Edinburgh and Cardiff and the sovereign Government in Dublin or is it a situation similar to the Westminster situation? That is an important question. My view is that there could be great benefits to ongoing collaboration along those lines.
569. Then there are the priorities in the Programme for Government. I know that the Programme for Government very much emphasises the economic development of society, and, of course, I endorse that and think it is absolutely right. However, it also refers in large measure to the promotion of social justice, social cohesion and various other social objectives. My view is that higher education can play a very important role there as well.
570. I am not saying for one moment that it is a cut-and-dried argument. I am saying that there is a range of views on it. I am presenting a view from our perspective at St Mary's, and it comes down on the side of a Department of education, for the five reasons I have outlined.
571. I will conclude on the possibility of initial teacher education or teacher education somehow finding its way into one Department and the rest of higher education finding its way into another, should that be considered. It is a scenario where the two university colleges, because they specialise in teacher education, would perhaps be with DE, while the rest of HE would be in DETI, if that were proposed. There is an obvious link between teacher education and the Department of Education. There is a very obvious link with regard to the training and education of teachers along a continuum from initial through to continuing professional development, but it has to be fully understood that, in this country and in virtually every country in the world, initial teacher education is firmly embedded in the higher education sector. St Mary's, Stranmillis and Queen's, etc, are part of the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers. Teachers are educated in a university, higher education context. I say that because, if there were to be some thoughts around aligning teacher education with DE and placing HE elsewhere, that would have to be very carefully managed. The university colleges, for example, have been beneficiaries of very good initiatives in the HE sector in respect of human resources or in the centres of excellence in learning and teaching. We are absolutely embedded in the whole idea of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, which is part of the higher education sector. I am not opposed to any thoughts around connecting the university colleges in one direction and the universities in another, but, if that were to be, it needs to be very carefully managed and considered so that integral elements of the higher education sector do not find themselves isolated from mainstream higher education.
572. I appreciate that time is limited, Tom, so I have given you the context that we would like to bring to the deliberations. I thank you for that.
573. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you for your views.
574. **Mr Allister:** Your views are very clear, which is no less than we expected, and that is good. They were thought-provoking, in that you are swimming against the tide of believing that there

is this affinity between education and economic growth. That is an interesting perception. Other people say to us that when higher education was last within a greater Department of education, it turned out to be the Cinderella of the set-up, and they, therefore, fear a return to those days. Why do you not share the fear that the rest of the sector obviously shares?

575. **Professor Finn:** Thank you for the question, Jim. I will take you one step back. I, of course, recognise the affinity between higher education and economic growth. Even the quotation I gave makes it clear that having a good higher education and university sector is absolutely critical to the economy of any nation. I do not deny that; it is part and parcel of the case. What I am saying is that, on balance, as you clearly picked up, there are broader issues that lead our organisation towards the view that it should be elsewhere.
576. I suppose my answer, and I mean this to be very honest, is that we have to learn from that. There were experiences in the past where higher education was perhaps in what could be described as a Cinderella situation. However, the very fact that you, as an elected Member, are aware of this and that we are all aware of it is the best way of ensuring that it does not happen again. This has been the most constructive process of arriving at an outcome. If we were to arrive at an outcome that places the higher education sector in Northern Ireland in the Department of Education, we would be fully cognisant of the fact that it should not and cannot be a Cinderella area. Ultimately, it is down to those in the sector and the scrutiny Committee that will be in place to ensure that higher education has its proper place. So, I do not share those concerns. I think that the institutions are sufficiently mature to ensure that, in the future, that should not be the case — and by institutions, I mean the universities, higher education institutions and political institutions.
577. **Mr Allister:** I think the concerns are, in part, based upon the belief that, within

such a Department, the primary political pressure in severe budgetary times that would come from constituents through the MLAs would be about primary school education, secondary school education and grammar school education. At the end of the queue, as it were, would be the pressures on higher education. That, I think, in the past, was right. I am not sure that, just by being aware of it, that would change anything.

578. **Professor Finn:** There is no question that the thesis you are presenting, Jim, has great validity. One of the things that must happen is connectivity with other jurisdictions, which I referred to. We have, within the political dispensations in Northern Ireland, methodologies for the political system to outreach to other parts of the British Isles. There are ways and means of using those North/South and east-west connections to ensure that nothing would happen in Northern Ireland that was out of sync with what was happening in other parts of the British Isles. It is a matter of political will. I accept what you are saying, which is that, from the ground up, there will be pressures to put time and energy into some of the issues you have discussed. However, I am suggesting that there are also pressures that come downwards as well. The higher education sector in Northern Ireland will be very clear in its connections to the wider British Isles system. It should not be behind the door about making its own representations. If you look at it the other way, where would the evidence be to support the thesis that higher education will have a higher profile in the other Department? That is an unproven thesis. I accept that there is a background in scenario A, but, with scenario B, the proposition cannot be based on evidence.
579. **Mr Allister:** I accept that it is, in so far as it can be, based on what has happened in DEL, which is, of course, a much smaller Department than any new Department would be.
580. **Professor Finn:** But that is not what we are talking about. It is either A or B. DEL is gone. I accept that line of argument, but I would still argue that, on balance,

- the case is stronger for an alignment with the Department of Education.
581. **Mr McElduff:** You say that if, for example, teacher training and the university colleges go to DE and other aspects of higher education go elsewhere, that would have to be carefully managed and considered. How would it be managed?
582. **Professor Finn:** The first thing to realise is that the two university colleges make up a very tiny proportion of the higher education sector. So, the first issue is one of hiving off two very small institutions with very small amounts of public funding, relative to the larger ones. How we manage that is the big issue. In a sense, that is why I am bringing it to your attention. I am just pointing out that the university colleges are totally embedded in a higher education sector that has all sorts of dimensions that will have to remain. Otherwise, you will have a situation in which, de facto, students are not being educated in a higher education environment. That is not what we want.
583. It comes down to negotiations, and if there were to be negotiations and discussions about how this might happen, methodologies would need to be built in to secure the interests of a small higher education sector within DE, if the main part of higher education were to be placed somewhere else. That comes down to guarantees and very strong discussions with the university colleges about how that would happen. I cannot answer that today, Barry, but I can tell you that it is something that we will not walk into it blindly, because we could find ourselves in a situation in which it would be impossible to redress the issue after the event.
584. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Peter, thank you for your open and frank discussion with members today. We very much appreciate it. Your comments will be noted in Hansard.
585. **Professor Finn:** Once again, thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Committee. I thank the two members who asked questions. I am appreciative of the questions; they are important questions about the process.
586. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I welcome Julie Williams-Nash, Mike Larkin and George Dunn from the University and College Union (UCU). Good afternoon. You are very welcome. We have a 15-minute slot for this session. We have received some documentation from you. We will give you the opportunity to open up on that a little and then we will have some questions from members. I remind you that this session is being recorded by Hansard for our submission.
587. **Ms Julie Williams-Nash (University and College Union):** Thank you for inviting us today. I will go through our paper and the points that we want to raise today, which build on those in our submission. Afterwards, I will bring in Mike and George to answer any questions that you may have.
588. As you know, UCU has submitted its position paper on the dissolution of DEL. We feel that our view is solid and precise. Further education and higher education belong within the governance and jurisdiction of the Department of Education. We have only 10 to 15 minutes to reinforce our viewpoint. We hope that you will take our view on board, and we appreciate that you already have done so and have listened respectfully to us. I thank you again for providing us with this opportunity today.
589. We hope that when the Committee makes its recommendations to the Executive, it will reflect the view of UCU, which represents 4,000 educators across Northern Ireland, many of whom continue to face tremendous pressures and challenging times in their workplaces. UCU fully respects and applauds the synergies between further and higher education and economic development, enterprise and the private sector. We do not wish to be misrepresented on that point in any way. Our members are at the forefront of research and development, innovation and economic progress and advancement. That is at the core of

- any society and is not the issue here today. That is precisely why I feel that our vision on this issue is in danger of becoming blurred. Therefore, this is where I feel we need to focus.
590. We could debate and discuss the merits of economic drivers from here to eternity, but we have only 10 minutes to reiterate the issue as simply as this: within the Executive governing Northern Ireland, where should further and higher education be positioned? Clearly, we believe that it should be in the Department of Education. Why? Because further and higher education is not solely about the economy. Yes, it plays a pivotal and crucial role, but that is not the whole picture. In budgetary terms alone, the sums are skewed awkwardly. DETI has an annual budget of £207 million, and the FE budget alone is larger than that. DEL has an annual budget that is not that much under four times DETI's budget; I think it is £767 million for 2012-13. However, it is not just about the money. It is about taking further and higher education and placing it at the mercy of a private/business sector that, by its nature, exists to serve its own interests. We do not find fault with that; we are just making the point. We believe that the harnessing of our further education colleges to the economy has already been tried and has been found to be flawed. For example, the FE Means Business policy resulted in the incorporation model being implemented to make colleges corporate organisations run on a business model. This diverted those institutions from being a public education service, and UCU sees the impact of that day and daily. We deal with the fallout as colleges stumble from one crisis to another.
591. We are still waiting for the launch of the higher education strategy, which we look forward to. This morning, I found a quote in the introduction to the document, 'Report of the Review of Higher Education Governance in Scotland', which was launched in February of this year:
- "The 19th century Scottish metaphysician Sir William Hamilton wrote in 1835 that 'a University is a trust confided by the State to certain hands for the common interest of the nation.'"*
592. He went on to say that universities may and ought to be "corrected, reformed or recast" by the state, and that they must be able to "avoid undue influence from outside".
593. The same principle extends to further education. The FE sector in Northern Ireland has been through turbulent times, as has been mentioned. I will quote once again from the introduction to the Scottish report:
- "Universities in today's world play many roles of direct significance to society, going well beyond the personal interests of those embarking on higher education, well beyond the organisational ambitions of individual institutions, and well beyond the expectations of those who employ graduates. They stimulate economic development; they provide a focus for cultural growth; they are engines of social regeneration; they ... are vital assets for communities. They instigate and nourish public debate, and provide necessary critical analysis of the ideas and actions of public bodies and politicians."*
594. Universities and further education colleges are at the core of society. We represent, as I mentioned, 4,000 lecturers. Our members are educators, not businesspeople. Although UCU fully understands and appreciates the vital role that further and higher education plays in driving forward a vibrant economy, something that we all aspire to in Northern Ireland, our concern is that the shifting emphasis away from education and towards the business/private sector could have an adverse impact in the long term. This is a very real and genuine concern for UCU and for our members.
595. The Department of Education shares the mission of educators to impart knowledge and encourage learning by students so that they can obtain qualifications, develop skills and gather experience to equip them to progress in their chosen careers and as citizens.
596. Finally, UCU believes that the tribunal function of DEL would be properly located in the Department of Justice.

- We agree with the general consensus that teacher training would naturally fit with the Department of Education, which would end the anomaly whereby provision is set by one Department and funded by another. It is the UCU's passion and commitment for education, for lifelong learning, for womb-to-tomb or cradle-to-grave education for all citizens that is reflected in our vision of further and higher education sitting within the Department of Education.
597. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you very much. You said in your submission that HE is not solely about the economy. Do you not believe that it is a substantial driver of the economy?
598. **Ms Williams-Nash:** Absolutely, and I think I have made the point that we believe that it is a driver, but the issue is where higher education should sit within government, not whether universities and the economy are intrinsically linked, which they are. We are not dissing that in any way whatsoever. That is the point that I was trying to make; they are intrinsically linked, but it is an issue of where the governance should sit within the government structures of the Executive. It is about education: universities are educators.
599. **Mr Mike Larkin (University and College Union):** There is a lot of resolve within UCU to have an education-driven governance. That is unanimous across the local committee of UCU. My personal view is that the relationship between commerce, industry, the higher education institutions and research has to stay there, but, in the end, you are dealing with an educational institution.
600. **Mr McElduff:** It seems to me that there is real tension inside the higher and further education sector about whether it is business-driven or education-driven. You have set out your stall very strongly in paragraphs 3 and 4 of your written submission. You say that FE Means Business is a move away from a public education service. Are you a lone voice within the sector in saying that?
601. **Mr Larkin:** We have been very strong in our opinion, and we have let all our members know this. I do not think that we are a lone voice, but we may be the only ones who are making enough noise to be heard. I do not think that there is a tension. There is a clear mission to educate, and that is in our institutions. There is also a mission to innovate, and that will involve funding from a whole variety of sources, including DETI as well as other sources. There should not be a tension as long as you look at the governance of the institutions carefully. In the end, it is still an educational mission.
602. **Mr D McIlveen:** Thank you for your presentation. From the outset, I have struggled with the economic argument, and I am still struggling with it. I cannot get my head around why you would want to be part of the Department of Education, which is struggling despite having a budget that, at around £1.9 billion annually, is twice the next highest departmental budget. It needs more money. Just yesterday, we heard reports of possible school closures, which are largely economically driven. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has actually been giving money back because it has been managing its budgets relatively well. Why would you want to be part of a Department that, quite frankly, is on the verge of being broke?
603. **Ms Williams-Nash:** Up until the late 1990s, the Department of Education had further and higher education, and that was where it traditionally sat. DEL was created further on from that. If the functions of DEL were to go to DETI, they would go to a Department that has a much smaller budget and a clear focus on enterprise, investment and the economy and which does not currently have any remit for education. DETI is not about education but about enterprise, trade and investment, whereas universities and further education colleges are about education. That is not to say that there is not a synergy. I do not want to take away from that in

- any way at all, but they are educational institutions, not businesses.
604. **Mr Larkin:** Why should we, representing a lot of people and their futures, take the short-term view that there is an economic problem in one Department so we should go into another one? With due respect to you, you or the Executive will make a big decision. They may regret it. You have to look at the funding of the Department of Education and its structure, and that should not influence our view that the long-term future of higher and further education lies in the educational sphere. I would not let the economics interfere with the longer-term outlook.
605. **Mr McElduff:** Are you making a philosophical point?
606. **Mr Larkin:** That is a practical point.
607. **Mr George Dunn (University and College Union):** In addition, as our paper states, there is a fear that, if the functions of the Department were to end up in DETI, there would be a short-term focus on the development of education rather than research being more long-term. Ideally, it ought to be. It should be there for involvement with academic freedom and the ideals of a university, which should focus on that, not just on the economic issues, ie to be a provider of services for industry. It should be more than that.
608. **Ms Williams-Nash:** Under such a short-term approach, the private sector might say that it needs a certain course, which the college might provide. When that need is finished, that course is pulled, so you have a potential for patchwork short-termism to supply a particular need and then to withdraw it when that need is exhausted.
609. **Mr D McIlveen:** What if the short-term outcome was that the £787 million of DEL budget was gobbled up in the Department of Education?
610. **Ms Williams-Nash:** That would not be the case.
611. **Mr D McIlveen:** Do you think?
612. **Ms Williams-Nash:** If it were, that Department would have to answer for that.
613. **Mr D McIlveen:** We have to be realistic in that if universities and colleges had been represented in the Department of Education six months ago, a lot of your members would now be looking at redundancy, because there was such a huge gap in the budget.
614. **Ms Williams-Nash:** They are looking at redundancy already.
615. **Mr D McIlveen:** If that £40 million had not come through DEL, there would have been a lot more redundancies. We have to be honest and ask whether that outcome would have been achieved in the Department of Education. I do not believe that it would, because the money would not have been there to do it.
616. **Mr Larkin:** Surely, within a big Department of Education, you would ring-fence the further and higher education sectors as part of a review of the internal structure that you are bound to have to go through if you do this. You are representing the people of Northern Ireland, and they would probably expect you to look at this more rationally in that sense and not just allow it to be consumed. We expect that, and we trust you to do that.
617. **Mr Allister:** Your union, which represents so many lecturers etc who work in the universities, takes one view, but the leadership of the universities in which they work takes the opposite view. Why is that?
618. **Mr Larkin:** We do not know what the view is higher up.
619. **Mr Allister:** Have you not discussed that?
620. **Mr George Dunn:** At Queen's University, we have informed all our members of the proposal, and we have invited them to write letters to their MLAs. To date, we have had no negative feedback to argue against our position.
621. **Mr Allister:** Is your stance decided by the leadership of the union and passed down, or was it arrived at in consultation

- with the members from the grass roots up?
622. **Mr George Dunn:** It was formulated by the leadership first as a guide, but they have all been informed of that.
623. **Mr Allister:** So, it is the collective view of the leadership sitting together and coming to that view, rather than the result of a consultation with the staff and the staff advising the union that this is the way to go.
624. **Mr Larkin:** We have openly consulted with all the UCU members at our university, and I am sure that that has happened elsewhere. We have said, “This is the position”, and all I have got is positive support.
625. **Mr Allister:** You have said, “This is the position; do you have any view?” You have not said, “What should our position be?”
626. **Mr Larkin:** No, we have not put it to them.
627. **Mr Allister:** You have not talked to the universities either. So, we are getting quite a limited view in that it is the view of the leadership of the union that has not been countered by a grass roots rebellion.
628. **Mr George Dunn:** They have been informed of our position.
629. **Ms Williams-Nash:** There has been no opposition to that. It is the unanimous view of the regional council.
630. **Mr Allister:** Yes, but it is a regional council view.
631. **Mr Larkin:** A lot of people have approached me positively to say, “Yes, we must consider this to be an educational mission”.
632. **Mr Allister:** I will pick up on another point that we have heard from some others. You have experience in the past of being in a greater Department of Education. Some people have expressed to us that that was not a happy experience because higher education turned out to be the Cinderella in funding terms. David was alluding to matters such as that. Have you no fears in that regard?
633. **Mr Larkin:** I reiterate that the higher education universities and further education colleges are so important that any administration has to —
634. **Mr Allister:** They were so important 10, 12 and 20 years ago, yet they continually complained that they were the Cinderella in the Department of Education.
635. **Mr Larkin:** I have been in Northern Ireland teaching in university for 32 years, and I have no experience of that being the case. I have never felt that.
636. **Mr Allister:** Then someone was crying wolf, because that message was certainly conveyed loud and clear.
637. **Mr Larkin:** By whom?
638. **Mr Allister:** In an Assembly that existed here between 1982 and 1986, a constant theme was that higher education was the forgotten side of education, got the raw deal on funding and was regularly neglected. That is in consequence of the fact that most constituents have children at school and fewer constituents have children at university. When times are tight, the pressure is maximised by those who have kids at school through their MLAs.
639. **Mr Larkin:** Of course, we have far more students now —
640. **Mr Allister:** We do.
641. **Mr Larkin:** The dynamic of the electorate has surely changed.
642. **Mr Allister:** OK.
643. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Folks, we have exceeded the time. Thank you for coming along and for the discussion, which, no doubt, will be taken on board.
644. I welcome Brendan Clarke and Patricia Short from Open Colleges Network Northern Ireland (OCN). We are glad to have you here. We have a 15-minute slot. We have a written submission from you, but we will give you the opportunity to expand slightly on that if you wish,

after which we will open it up for members if they have any questions. I remind you that this is being recorded by Hansard.

645. **Mr Brendan Clarke (Open Colleges Network Northern Ireland):** Thank you, Chair. I am Brendan Clarke from the Open Colleges Network, and this is my colleague Patricia Short. You will have had the opportunity to read our paper. We are an awarding body that is based here in Northern Ireland, one of only two independent organisations that offer qualifications across the qualifications and credit framework (QCF). We grew out of the Open College Network movement, which originated in the 1970s and 1980s and was about recognising learning wherever it took place. Over a number of years, we have grown and developed partnerships with our colleagues in England and Wales. We have now established ourselves as one of the leading independent awarding organisations in Northern Ireland. We recruit and work with a number of organisation centres, including government organisations, employers, training organisations, schools and colleges. Last year, we supported 29,000 learners in achieving a number of qualifications. The commentary that we have to make, particularly about learning across a broader range of opportunities, comes from a position of significance in terms of the number of people we engage with.

646. The opportunities that are presented by the dissolution of DEL are significant. There is an opportunity for the Committee to paint a broad picture of the future of learning for life in Northern Ireland. The opportunities that other devolved Administrations in Scotland and Wales and our partner organisations in the Republic of Ireland have taken in terms of moving forward with the issues of lifelong learning across a broader perspective have reached beyond where we are in Northern Ireland. For example, our colleagues in Scotland have recently established Education Scotland. That is not quite like the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) that we propose; it is

an amalgam that looks at curriculum, learning and inspection and looks to establish policy. It has a framework for learning that is inclusive of the Scottish Qualifications Authority and Education Scotland. Our colleagues in Wales have a credit and qualification framework, whose website recognises all learning through education and training. Our colleagues in England have a framework, and we have borrowed from them. The opportunity for us to establish ourselves on a clear path for learning for life, which is inclusive from the cradle to the grave and recognises the opportunities, for example, in family learning, and moves through primary and post-primary education and into adult life, is significant. We encourage the Committee to take that on board.

647. I do not know where your commentaries about the future of learning for life will take you. The lesson that seems to be coming from the devolved communities is that learning for all needs to be grasped. The split in respect of the Department for Employment and Learning and Department of Education in Northern Ireland will have suggested that there are certain policy drivers working in competition with each other, and I know some colleagues who will have already presented that to this group and to the group downstairs. That has been difficult for those involved in learning and education to overcome. We feel that Northern Ireland needs to establish a framework for learning. We may draw upon the opportunities for learning of our colleagues in Scotland, England and Wales, but we need to have a framework that respects our history, cultural community and needs in relation to our national and international opportunities.

648. We also think that the opportunity provided by the potential dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning provides your Committee with an opportunity to blaze a trail with regard to the future for learning. In our statement, we commented on the possibility of a commission for learning. The learning that we engage in through

- our lives is usually identified through a transition from one stage to another — from primary to secondary to adult to marriage to having children. There are lots of situated learning opportunities. They are covered by a range of ministries in Northern Ireland, but there is no one cohesive force that draws all of them together. We feel that a lasting legacy from the Committee might be the establishment of a commission for learning which would start to look at the opportunities provided throughout the different ministries associated here in Northern Ireland. It would provide an opportunity to bring those together, be able to answer questions that are at the root of our learning and provide opportunities for significant dialogue and discourse to take place.
649. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you for your presentation. You have expressed fears in your written submission about how further and higher education might be eroded if it were to be moved into the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. Why do you think that would be the case?
650. **Mr B Clarke:** The focus on the economy and skills is an important one for us, but, equally, the focus on the human capacity and the social capital of learning is important. We use the notion of a river, with lots of tributaries. The route to skills and economy is one type of learning, but it is not the only type that takes place. There is a broader community of learning in terms of situated learning, whether that be in school, college, through adult and community opportunities, working in hospitals or working wherever. The single focus on skills will not engage sufficiently with the broad range of learning opportunities that are, first, necessary to address the skills, because, in a sense, the focus on skills generally starts at 16, and the focus on learning needs to start a lot earlier. Secondly, it will not necessarily address the issues relating to our history, which we still struggle with. We feel that a single focus is insufficient in its capacity to drive us forward in learning for the future.
651. **Mr McElduff:** I think you have answered my question in your last part there. I was going to refer you to question two and your answer that DETI could speak to only one main sort of learning that is focused on employability and addressing the needs of the economy. I was going to ask you what the other types of learning are. I think you have answered that.
652. **Mr B Clarke:** The other types of learning are those situated wherever they are. Family learning, for instance, is a perfect example. We have engaged in a number of activities in relation to working with families and communities, particularly families, who struggle with a cycle of disadvantage. International experience from across the world, and established in many ways in Brazil by Paolo Ferrer, shows that the mother, particularly in a family, is the root of a great deal of learning. Family learning is not exclusively focused on the opportunities that a mother can bring to the learning in a family, but it is often rich in that. Family learning is an important activity in breaking cycles of disadvantage and in bringing people into a community of learning that is not exclusively age-related but which looks at where people are situated in their learning. A focus on skills and learning would only ever exclude that sort of activity and would never discover the richness that it provides.
653. **The Deputy Chairperson:** OK. Thank you for your presence this afternoon and for making your presentation. No doubt your thoughts and views will be taken on board as the Department seeks to move out of where it is and in somewhere else.
654. **Mr B Clarke:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you. As I said, if there is anything that we can do to assist the Committee in taking forward any ideas that align with our charitable objectives, we are more than happy to commit to that.
655. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I welcome Koulla Yiasouma and Sara Boyce from

- Include Youth. We have received your written submission. We will give you the opportunity to expand on that if you so wish and then open it up to questions from members. We have a 15-minute slot for this session and it is being recorded by Hansard for our submission.
656. **Ms Koulla Yiasouma (Include Youth):**
Thank you. I will make a brief statement, and I am mindful that we are the last in what must have been a very long line. I will set our stall out quickly and hopefully you will still be in the mood for a discussion.
657. On behalf of Sara and me, I thank you for inviting us. Obviously, we will concentrate on young people who are not in education, employment or training, who are called NEETs, and our presentation will focus on them. As the Chair has said, we submitted a written response in February and our paper is based on that.
658. This is not the first time that we have met with the Committee. First, we want to commend the Committee for its work in addressing the issue of young people who are NEET, and particularly its work on extending EMA or training allowance for young people on pre-vocational training projects such as our Give and Take scheme. We encourage the Committee and Committee members to continue with that very positive work. It has succeeded in bringing the issue to the fore, but there is still some way to go.
659. We enjoy quite an effective relationship with the Department on a number of levels. We are funded by it, we are in partnership with the careers service and we are involved in skills, training and policy development. However, at the outset, it should be noted that, although DEL has certainly had a lead role on the issue of young people who are NEET, responsibility for addressing the needs of that group lies with a number of Departments and, crucially, with the Executive as a whole. Indeed, recognition of the cross-cutting nature of the issues that are faced by young people forms a central tenet of the Pathways to Success strategy, which, as you know, is still in draft.
660. The previous Committee's inquiry highlighted the fact that young people face the risk of becoming NEET for a range of complex and interrelated reasons. The issues that affect those young people do not fit neatly or solely under the remit of either DE or DETI and span education, family support, health, youth work, skills and training, welfare support, employment and enterprise. It is quite complicated. Although we accept the logic of assigning lead responsibility to one Department, addressing the barriers faced by those young people requires a strategic, co-ordinated and adequately resourced response that is driven by the Executive as a whole. Therefore, in our view, it is simply not a matter of identifying whether DETI or DE would be best placed to take lead responsibility for that group of young people. Despite positive statements by the Minister for Employment and Learning regarding his prioritisation of this issue, coupled with his recent announcement of a policy framework for youth unemployment as well as an employer engagement plan, there is little evidence in either the Programme for Government or the economic development strategy that the core group of young people who are NEET will receive the level of attention and support that they require over the lifetime of the current Programme for Government. Indeed, our understanding is that the main policy instrument, Pathways to Success, will not have any funding attached to it. We are, therefore, concerned that this issue will be further marginalised, whichever Department it finds itself in.
661. The Minister's recent comments to this Committee about the £26.5 million Barnett consequential whoever thought we would say words like that flowing from the youth contract across the water serves only to underscore our concerns. However, notwithstanding our criticisms of DEL's response to the issue of young people who are NEET, it has, as a Department, built up a level of policy

- understanding and analysis around the issue which will be very much lacking in DETI and, to a lesser extent, DE. Although we recognise that key DEL staff will transfer to other Departments, taking with them their current responsibilities, there will inevitably be a loss of knowledge in the process.
662. In view of the concerns that we have just outlined, Include Youth wishes to see the following issues addressed in any decisions taken concerning the transfer of DEL functions to other Departments — this is our shopping list, if you like. First, the weakness to date of the ministerial subcommittee on children and young people must be fully addressed if it is to function as an effective oversight mechanism for work on the issue of young people who are NEET, including the Pathways to Success strategy.
663. Lead responsibility for the issue of young people who are NEET and for the implementation of the Pathways to Success strategy must sit with one named Department. That Department must be adequately resourced to do the work, including through the provision of ring-fenced funding and the establishment of a dedicated unit. Additionally, the Executive should commit to the ring-fencing of the youth contract Barnett consequential the total £26.5 million to that Department if it is to have any chance of successfully addressing the issue.
664. It will be critical that the continuity of focus and provision is maintained during the transfer of DEL's powers and the subsequent bedding-in period. There will be a need to quickly build the knowledge and skills of any new staff who are tasked with working on the issue of young people who are NEET. The focus must be evident in the relevant Department or Departments across all levels, including at ministerial level.
665. Include Youth, along with others in the children and young people's sector, believes that the time is right for government to seriously consider the need to introduce a statutory duty to co-operate for children and young people.
- The Programme for Government must be amended to reflect the expected shifts in departmental responsibility for delivering on key commitments contained within it.
666. The extremely valuable role that is played by the Employment and Learning Committee, not only in effectively scrutinising the Department for Employment and Learning's work on the issue of young people who are NEET, but in proactively undertaking its own inquiry, must be replicated by the relevant statutory Committee or Committees in the future. Members of the current and previous DEL Committees built up a level of expertise and displayed a commendable commitment to this issue, which has been most impressive. Include Youth is concerned that that expertise and focus will be dissipated in the transfer of DEL's functions across other Departments.
667. Again, I want to congratulate you. On behalf of the young people that we work with, I want to say that they have been incredibly pleased and impressed by the commitment that all members of the Committee have given to this issue, and that they want to thank you for that. The question is this: how will we keep the momentum going?
668. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you very much for your kind words. I note your concerns about the dissolution of DEL and the transfer of its functions and how that might impact on the discussions and the work that you have been doing with the Department. That fear and concern has been expressed by some of the other people who we have had before the Committee today regarding the good work that has already been done and how that can be continued and not just swallowed up or lost when the functions are moved. It is something that we will have to take into consideration and keep in mind when things move on.
669. **Mr McElduff:** I commend you on your presentation. There are some very strong points on page 3 of your written presentation. One point you make is

- that, despite the good relationships with DEL in the past and at present, that has still not led to a proper prioritisation of the needs of young people. I suppose that you have not called it by saying which Department or Departments responsibility should go to; you are essentially making a legacy statement to an incoming Department. I do not really have a question; I am just absorbing the points that have been made.
670. **Mr P Ramsey:** I have a couple of points. I want to thank Include Youth; it has been very helpful over a long period and has helped a number of Committee members to have a stronger and more appropriate understanding of NEETs.
671. We agree with you; all of us on this Committee share your concerns about what is going to happen to all the good work that has been done around NEETs. David, for example, has a motion, and hopefully we can get all-party agreement on it to keep that momentum going. Clearly, it is up to the Minister, through his exit strategy, to ensure that the most appropriate strategy is in place to serve our young people. We have not seen that yet, but it is important. The Minister tells us that the Executive are required to approve the strategy, but we can assure you individually that, now that we are involved in this, we will stay with it, because it is important to keep the campaign going.
672. Barry rightly pointed out that you have not made a definitive statement about where the NEETs issue should sit, but it is clear that a number of groups that have made presentations to us, including those from the higher and further education sector, want it to sit within the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. Aside from Include Youth, colleges are the main player in providing training opportunities and education for young people. On the one hand, there is growing momentum behind the proposal that the DEL functions should all fit into the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. On the other hand, a huge swathe of the voluntary and community sector believes that education plays a huge part in preventing young people becoming NEET. That is important to us as well. It is about getting in at an early stage. I am sorry for rambling on, Chair.
673. **Ms Yiasouma:** I think that that is right. You can make a case for both DETI and DE. The issue around young people who are NEET is cross-cutting. It obviously has to go somewhere, and it will go into these huge Departments. We have struggled to get the focus that is needed with DEL, and we are beginning to see some inroads into that. Can you imagine what it is going to be like when responsibility for this issue, which is perceived to be a small one, moves to these huge Departments? That is why, although I understand what you said about the Minister, we think there needs to be a steer from the Executive, and particularly from OFMDFM, to say that they need to have the issue of young people not in education, employment or training at their table on a regular basis so that they can keep an eye on it. We have been toing and froing about DETI and DE and what have you, and we have said that it will go where it will go, but it needs to be ring-fenced. If it brings a load of cash with it, that will focus their minds.
674. **Ms Sara Boyce (Include Youth):** To add to what Koulla said about the Executive level, our concern is in relation to the Pathways to Success strategy. The officials have said in recent months that there is a plan to establish an additional subgroup of the ministerial subcommittee; a sort of implementation subgroup for the NEETs strategy. Our worry about that at the moment is that the track record of the ministerial subcommittee has not been great. I think that that is widely accepted. The OFMDFM Committee has been scrutinising that as well. Our concern is that, if it has not delivered well for children and young people to date, we do not want to see another subgroup tacked on to it until the problems are resolved. I know that there has been a review of the mechanisms within OFMDFM, and Koulla made a point about that earlier. If we are to get the

joined-up approach and connectedness that we need at Executive level, it is so important that the ministerial subcommittee works effectively.

675. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you for your presentation to the Committee today. You are no stranger to the Committee; you have been with us on various occasions. Your views and presentation will be taken into consideration.

18 April 2012

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Basil McCrea (Chairperson)
 Mr Sammy Douglas
 Ms Michelle Gildernew
 Mr Chris Lyttle
 Mr Fra McCann

Witnesses:

Mr Brian McAreavey	<i>Confederation of British Industry</i>
Mr Mike Mullan	
Mr Nigel Smyth	
Mr Tom Mervyn	<i>Employment Services Board</i>
Mr John Simpson	
Mr Alan Carr	<i>Forum for Adult Learning in Northern Ireland</i>
Mr Colin Neilands	
Ms Ann Osborne	
Ms Linda Brown	<i>Institute of Directors</i>
Ms Joanne Stuart	
Ms Penny Holloway	<i>Labour Relations Agency</i>
Mr Jim McCusker	
Ms Liz Aiken	<i>Mencap</i>
Ms Cathy McCloskey	
Ms Joanne McDonald	
Ms Jenny Ruddy	
Mr Pat Conway	<i>Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders</i>
Mr Gareth Eannetta	
Ms Fiona Browne	<i>Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association</i>
Ms Hilary Harbinson	
Ms Cathy Moore	
Dr Anne Heaslett	<i>Stranmillis University College</i>
Ms Margaret Haddock	<i>The Orchardville Society</i>

676. **The Chairperson:** Hello. You are very welcome. This is a special meeting. We do not have a quorum requirement. Members will be coming in and out. It is an evidence-gathering session that will be reported by Hansard. This is a chance for you to talk to me, and, hopefully, some of the others will be here shortly. We have 15 minutes, and the floor is yours.

677. **Mr Jim McCusker (Labour Relations Agency):** Thank you for the opportunity to give our views on the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). I am the chair of the Labour Relations Agency, and Penny Holloway is our director of conciliation and arbitration.

678. The Labour Relations Agency is in the business of employment relations. By that, we mean that we are involved in the relations between employers and unions and employers and employees. Part of that business is employment law, but it is by no means the whole business. We appreciate that, as a legislative Assembly, you normally come at that question from its employment law aspect, but it is not the totality as it relates to our business, which is employment relations.

679. We have a statutory duty to promote the improvement of employment relations. As we see it, good employment relations relate directly to one of the key problems of the Northern Ireland economy, which is our lower rate of productivity compared with the UK economy as a whole. Better employment relations raises productivity and higher productivity can be built only on good employment relations. Therefore, employment relations has an organic connection with the economy, and we take the view that, if DEL were to be abolished, employment relations should go the Department that, in the future, will have responsibility for the economy. Before DEL was created, employment relations rested with the Department of Economic Development. Our experience of that arrangement was that it was beneficial for employment relations.

680. Currently, employment relations, as you know, is brigaded with higher and further education, but we feel that there is no natural affinity with higher and further education. Nor, indeed,

- is there an affinity with education generally. We provide a service to the education sector, but we do that along with all other sectors such as manufacturing, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which we are particularly interested in, and micro-businesses. So, we believe that, if there is a reorganisation of government functions, it would not be appropriate for employment relations to be brigaded with education.
681. The Committee asked about our concerns on the dissolution of DEL. We have three primary concerns. First, we fear that there would be a loss of focus at ministerial and departmental level on employment relations. Among other things, that could have consequences for our modest budget, which is currently £3.5 million annually and places us in the minor league of public bodies. There is a tendency in government circles, especially in these times of more limited public resources, to equate importance with the size of your budget. Therefore, there is a danger that we would be regarded as an even smaller fish in a bigger pool. Our second area of concern is about the loss of expertise on employment relations that has been built up in the Department for Employment and Learning. Thirdly, we are concerned about the possible diminution in the relationship that we have built up with departmental officials. The mutually beneficial relationship that has been created has been good for employment relations and, consequently, the economy.
682. I hope that my remarks have indicated how we have addressed your five questions on the possible dissolution of the Department. I invite my colleague Penny to make some remarks.
683. **The Chairperson:** Penny is about to come in, but be aware that we have about seven minutes left, and I want to get some questions in.
684. **Ms Penny Holloway (Labour Relations Agency):** I have nothing to add.
685. **The Chairperson:** Colleagues, questions should be tight, because we will be moving on at 10.15 am. Questions should be short and to the point.
686. Do you think that it is a good idea per se that DEL be abolished?
687. **Mr McCusker:** As I have said, we have reservations about that. We are concerned that the focus on employment and particularly employment relations will be lost. At the same time, we have never been comfortable about being attached to higher and further education. There is no natural connection there, but there is a natural connection with issues relating to the economy.
688. **The Chairperson:** So, you would like to move to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) regardless of whether DEL stayed or not.
689. **Mr McCusker:** I would not say that, Chairperson. We are equivocal about that. We see ourselves faced with a political decision to abolish the Department, and we have to live with the consequences of that. If we were asked whether we would wish to stay with the present arrangement, we would be inclined to say that we think that there might be some case for reorganisation of functions because we do not rest easily with higher and further education.
690. **The Chairperson:** I am happy for members to come in. We are short of time, so speak if you want to speak.
691. A political decision was taken to remove a Department, and, at the moment, the finger is pointing at DEL. This is an opportunity for you to say that perhaps it should not be DEL. Perhaps there are benefits in having a Department for Employment and Learning and something else should be amalgamated. You said in your brief that you see yourself quite closely aligned with DETI.
692. **Mr McCusker:** We see ourselves quite closely aligned with the economy. The Department with which the economy should rest is a political decision. I think that we would be uncomfortable, for

- example, with a transfer to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment as presently named, because we believe that the focus on employment and the economy may be lost.
693. As a board, we have not addressed the question of the proper distribution of all government functions. To some extent, you could argue that to do so is outside our remit. Our remit is employment relations, and we have to look at where that best fits with other government functions. We see it veering towards the economy, wherever that rests.
694. **Mr Douglas:** I am sorry for being late. I will address this to you, Jim, or maybe to Penny. You mentioned the importance of the economy, and we all believe that. You may have mentioned this, but what are your views on a new Department of the economy? That has been mooted in some areas.
695. **Mr McCusker:** We are essentially saying that wherever the economy goes, employment relations should go too. We do not have a strong view on whether that should be to a new Department or an extension of DETI. I have been around for a long time, and there was, at one stage, a Department of Manpower Services. That was in the context of a much greater number of Departments, but political decisions seem to be to move to a smaller number. When we had a Department of Manpower Services, I think that we had about 10 Departments.
696. **The Chairperson:** Chris, do you want to say anything?
697. **Mr Lyttle:** I am OK. I am appreciating the comments.
698. **The Chairperson:** Would you care to express an opinion on the efficacy of reducing the number of Departments, given that you have experience going back some years?
699. **Mr McCusker:** We have not addressed that question as a board. We have accepted that it is a political decision that is being taken, and we have approached it from the point of view of where employment relations best rests. I invite Penny to go into the details.
700. **Ms Holloway:** I agree with the chairman; the board has just looked at where, if there is a reduction in Departments, a movement around or a change in functions, employment relations would best sit in the context of a rearranged set of Departments. We are saying that employment relations is a fundamental part of any economic strategy, particularly in terms of productivity. That is where we see it.
701. **The Chairperson:** Penny, we have got that. We understand your position: given what you do, it is one of the more self-evident ones. The point that we come back to is that there is a general opportunity to say what you think. Whatever happens, this is going to be it. You cannot look back in three or four years' time and say, "Well, if only they had asked us, we would have told them." This is the chance; this is where you get to say whether there are areas that we need to look at or to think about again, because sometimes decisions are taken that need to be reviewed or that need to be taken along with other decisions. What I want to get out, in the last few minutes that we have, is whether you are excited or apprehensive at the prospect of the proposed changes to DEL.
702. **Mr McCusker:** We are apprehensive. Change is always something that people are apprehensive about. We have three primary concerns: the loss of focus on employment in the situation of being put into a much larger Department; the possible loss of expertise that rests in DEL on employment relations; and the possible diminishing of our relationships with officials through any reorganisation.
703. **The Chairperson:** OK. In that case —
704. **Mr Lyttle:** Chair, may I sneak in one last question?
705. **The Chairperson:** You cannot, Chris; I am sorry. It is 10.15 am, and we are finished. That is how it is; apologies for that.
706. **Mr Lyttle:** Fair enough. No problem.

707. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much for your submission. If you think of anything else or if you feel that we did not give you the chance to say something, you are more than welcome to write to the Committee about it.
708. **Mr McCusker:** Thank you very much, Chairman.
709. **The Chairperson:** We move now to the second session. Nigel, Brian and Mike, you are very welcome. We have 15 minutes, and we will go through it fairly tightly. It will finish exactly on the minute, and your time starts now.
710. **Mr Nigel Smyth (Confederation of British Industry):** Thank you very much for providing us with the opportunity to meet the Committee. Mike Mullan chairs the CBI employment affairs committee and is the group HR and business improvement director at Moy Park, and Brian McAreavey is a director and site head of Citi. I will make a few introductory comments, and I look forward to taking questions.
711. This is a very important issue for our members. The success of the economy is largely dependent on the supply of talent. Ensuring that that supply is as closely aligned with the needs of the economy as possible is essential, not only for businesses but for individuals.
712. We have welcomed the commitment to look at the number of Departments overall. Clearly, the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) has come about for other reasons — sooner than the broader review. In principle, the CBI has supported having a smaller number of Departments. We believe that that will lead to more joined-up government, more effective policy-making and, importantly, better outcomes.
713. There is a unanimous view across CBI members regarding the dissolution of DEL, and I believe that it is shared more broadly in the business community. We believe that the core functions in DEL should be transferred to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). In recent years, we have seen encouraging co-operation between those Departments. We have seen greater responsiveness between the FE and HE sectors and the business community. So, there has been significant progress, and we need to build on that. We have also seen increasing links between business and the colleges and universities in research and development.
714. The four key functions of DEL are, therefore, unambiguously linked with economic development. We believe that their effectiveness will be enhanced through closer integration with DETI. That clearly extends to the roles that FE and HE play in developing and promoting knowledge transfer, innovation and product process development, as well as in skills. I think that there would be a disappointment in the business community if those functions were to be transferred to the Department of Education. The move to DETI came forward from the independent review of economic policy two years ago, when, on the back of that, there was a strong view of support for the creation of one Department of the economy — possibly a Department of the economy and skills.
715. The education system is critical overall, and there are significant challenges there. We need to realign the schools system better with the needs of the wider economy. Young people need to be better informed; we need to increase standards; and we need to have more science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills. There are, therefore, significant challenges already within the education piece.
716. **Mr Mike Mullan (Confederation of British Industry):** Our vision must be to grow jobs and opportunity through developing and harnessing the talent of our people at direct entry or through upskilling. I think that we have a big challenge. In leadership, core management and qualifications, we are, sadly, not at the top of the league table. How do we perform better? I suggest that we need three things: one integrated skills and support interface with government; local regional skills

- partners; and closer links between colleges and companies that are aligned. We also need to drive our colleges towards preparing our people for work, which means the economy and skills, and, in parallel, to allow schools to focus on the education agenda, which is well established.
717. I have a couple of practical examples. I am the deputy chair of the skills action group for the food industry. Agrifood is accepted as the largest opportunity for growth. We have people there from DEL, and we have people there from Invest NI. We should have one. We should optimise that and have a more integrated approach. Moy Park — I am pleased that Moy Park is identified as Northern Ireland's leading company — employs 5,000 people in the North and another 5,000 in GB. We are engaged at a local level with colleges in respect of business improvement, upskilling and flexibility. I would like to see more of that focus.
718. I am basically saying three things: I want to see skills at the heart of job creation; I want to see colleges at the centre of skills; and I think that colleges and skills need to be part of the economy. I am saying that the drive and the vehicle is to put colleges into the economy.
719. **Mr Brian McAreevey (Confederation of British Industry):** Citi Belfast is part of Citigroup, the global bank. We have over 1,000 staff in Belfast, with the vast majority of them educated to third level. We support the view articulated by the CBI; that DEL should move to DETI. That support is driven by two factors: focus and connectivity.
720. The point on focus is that, as an employer, we feel that the focus of skills development and further and higher education should be preparing young people with the skills they need to move into the workforce, to add value to employers and to take their place in the workforce in order to drive forward economic development and growth. Economic development is obviously the primary focus of DETI, and we feel, therefore, that there is a good fit between DETI and DEL.
721. The second point is around connectivity. As a private sector employer, we are known very well by DETI and DEL. There are lots of examples of our having worked closely with both of them on skills development. We meet them regularly and at all levels. They talk our language and understand our business and business needs. They also understand what employers like us need from Northern Ireland plc in order to be competitive in what is a very global marketplace for jobs. Those relationships and that level of understanding have been built up over years. We simply do not have the same network of relationships with the Department of Education.
722. For those two reasons — focus and connectivity — we feel that DEL would be a better fit for DETI.
723. **The Chairperson:** Why do you think that it is right for DEL to go to DETI and not for DETI, which is a much smaller Department, to come to DEL?
724. **Mr Smyth:** We were not asked that question. Ultimately, we are seeing a coming together into one Department. We are not arguing that the skills agenda is coming in underneath or at a lower level; what we want to do is to put them together. We see them conjoining, as it were. We do not see one coming in and overtaking the other. We see them joining together overall. As we have emphasised, the issue of skills is critical. That is where our competitive advantage is.
725. **The Chairperson:** There is an argument made by others that the FE Means Business programme has become more business-oriented to the disadvantage of adult learning, community learning and various other things, and that what you will get if you go down this route is a very narrow and short-term issue that could best be dealt with by the Assured Skills programme that already exists.
726. **Mr Mullan:** What I am trying to do in any of our sites or any of our business

- is to build capability, make us more competitive and win more business. If you do not win more business, you do not create jobs. Who are the partners that I want to talk to about that? I want to talk to Invest NI about strategic stuff. I want to talk to skills providers, and the best provider for me to talk to at a local level is the college. I want to be able to do that by talking to one body, not talking to three different bodies. What you mentioned, Basil, in relation to upskilling, adult learning, qualifications and flexibility, should come from one delivery partner based within a coherent strategy —
727. **The Chairperson:** Mike, it could be argued that where a company, which is the size of yours or the size of Citi, has very specific requirements in respect of software engineering or whatever it happens to be, the best way of dealing with that is through an Invest NI-led Assured Skills programme that finds out exactly what it wants and gives it exactly what it needs. On the other hand, a wider debate goes on about how we lift the whole raft of human endeavour and include people who have not been engaged in education. That would say that education for education's sake is a good thing, and it may not be appropriate for that to be in a target-driven economic Department.
728. **Mr Smyth:** We have welcomed the restructuring that has gone on in the FE sector. We have definitely seen a more responsive sector. There were always some FE colleges that were closer to and more responsive to business needs. We believe that the individuals going through that system would probably have a better opportunity of getting employment at the end. The issue is about relevance and priorities. We think that the most important priority for most individuals will be getting a job at the end of their training and skilling. That is not to say that there are not other areas that are important, but we have to prioritise. Ultimately, Northern Ireland has to compete. We have to earn our living. Several years ago, we had concerns that too much money was being spent in areas that were not relevant to the needs of the economy, when there were job and skills shortages. We believe, therefore, that the realignment was beneficial not only to business and the economy but to the many individuals who were going through the system.
729. **The Chairperson:** Do colleagues have any questions? I do not want to hog the questioning.
730. **Mr Douglas:** I have one quick question to be answered from a business point of view. If we were not making this decision for the future, and if you were in our position, would you think that it is a good idea? Forget about all the reasons why it has happened. Do you think that it would be a good idea to merge the two Departments, bearing in mind the arguments made about the benefits for businesses and the economy?
731. **Mr Smyth:** There was a significant amount of consultation just over two years ago, when the independent review of economic policy (IREP) report came out. It contained 54 recommendations, and that was one of them. In all the consultation at that time, there was very strong support for that idea. Indeed, there was some concern that, subsequently, nothing happened with it. I said that the view was unanimous, because nobody said that it was a foolish thing to do and that we should not be doing it. Ultimately, it is about structures. It is about the vision coming from the political leadership on the importance of education and the importance of skills and ensuring that they are aligned with the needs of the economy. That is for the benefit of not only businesses but individuals.
732. **Mr Lyttle:** My question flows on from that fairly well. How important is it to the individual and the wider economy that we realign the school system, training provision and skills more closely with economic need and opportunity?
733. **Mr Smyth:** Absolutely critical. There is a big challenge there.

734. **Mr McAreavey:** I agree with that. In the six or seven years it has been here, one of the things Citi has learned is that there is a big difference between talent and skills. Talent was the original value proposition. Companies were told to come to Northern Ireland because there was lots of great talent coming out of the universities, and so on. Lots of places can deliver talent. Our internal competitors — Budapest, Poland, India — can deliver talent. If we can help to bridge the gap between talent and skills, it is enormously helpful. We need that alignment and focus.
735. We do not have time to talk about them now, but there are numerous examples of where we have worked closely not only with DETI and DEL but, through them, with the universities on different programmes to help convert the raw talent into marketable and relevant skills that can add value to our business and, indeed, help attract other companies, such as Chicago Mercantile Exchange, New York Stock Exchange and others, into Northern Ireland. They will be attracted if they can see a skills base that they can tap into. From a Northern Ireland plc point of view, it is hugely critical.
736. I would not discount what the Chairman says about the other aspects of education and lifelong learning and development. That is all very important, but I am presenting the view of employers and driving the economy forward. I cannot comment on those other things. They will be important, but my focus is on relevance and alignment for the economy.
737. **The Chairperson:** Are you excited or apprehensive about the opportunity that is presenting itself?
738. **Mr Mullan:** Absolutely excited. It will replace frustration with opportunity and potential.
739. **The Chairperson:** Thank you for attending this morning's session.
740. **The Chairperson:** We now move to evidence from the Institute of Directors. Good morning. You are very welcome.
- We are operating to a very strict timetable.
741. **Ms Linda Brown (Institute of Directors):** I can see that. It is very impressive.
742. **The Chairperson:** We will finish at 10.45, so you have 15 minutes, starting now.
743. **Ms L Brown:** Thank you for the invitation. As you probably know, I am the director of the Institute of Directors in Northern Ireland, and Joanne is our immediate past chairman and a member of the Northern Ireland committee. She is also a past chairman of our education and skills committee and a current member of that committee. For a long time, we have been concerned about the overgovernance of Northern Ireland, and there is a recognition that we have possibly too many Departments. We understand the reasoning behind that. However, we have made a submission to the Assembly and Executive Review Committee on the number of government Departments. We put that in after we sent the letter to this Committee. We feel that there is potential to reduce the number, possibly, to seven Departments and that there is a need for rationalisation, mainly due to the duplication that we have noticed, which is confusing and not very efficient.
744. Our especial concern about the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is that its aim is to support the economy, and we feel that, if the Department is to be dissolved, its functions mainly belong with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). The particular concern that we have come across is in relation to leadership and management development, where you find the functions in both DETI, through Invest Northern Ireland, and DEL. Often, businesses do not know which one they are going to. They do not know whether they are eligible for support from one or the other, so we feel that the natural home for those skills and, indeed, for other skills, lies in DETI.
745. Further education and higher education, which are other functions of DEL, have

- made exceptional efforts over the past number of years to align themselves with business, and all the skills that are being developed through those sectors would naturally lie with DETI as well. We see that the schools system up to secondary level prepares young people for life and the further and higher education sectors prepare them for work. We feel that teacher training and careers advice lie more naturally with the Department of Education.
746. Joanne has some particular interests on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects.
747. **Ms Joanne Stuart (Institute of Directors):** A lot of work is going on to develop our skills in the area of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Through MATRIX and the Northern Ireland science panel, there is a focus on industries that require STEM skills, and, again, a lot of work is being done through the STEM review and the creation of the implementation steering group, the business group and the government group to look at how we drive forward the STEM strategy. Again, it is important that we do not lose that work, because all of that requires business to be engaged in both the school sector and in further and higher education to ensure that we have people coming out with the skills that will give them the best potential to get jobs and develop their careers.
748. **The Chairperson:** I will ask a few questions. Members, we are tight for time, so let me know quickly if you want to ask a question. There will be no messing around.
749. There is a concern that the FE skills agenda may have become too narrow and that it is just a business-orientated facility. More work used to be done on community learning, adult learning and lifelong learning. All of those things had a general good, and some fear that, if those were put into a Department of the economy, they would be dissipated completely.
750. **Ms L Brown:** Who do you think would fear that — the colleges or their users?
751. **The Chairperson:** Some of the submissions we have had from other people talk about education as a lifelong experience. The unions, for example, would be more concerned about the generality of education and that it should not be just a short-term issue to achieve business targets.
752. **Ms L Brown:** What the colleges are delivering at the minute seems to us to cover lifelong learning, certainly for adult education and numeracy and literacy, whether through the colleges themselves or through their outreach programmes. They cover that aspect of lifelong and adult education. I cannot see it being lost just because the colleges may be governed by DETI.
753. **The Chairperson:** Your submission states that you were surprised by the sudden proposal to dissolve DEL, yet the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) mentioned that such a proposal was suggested a couple of years ago when they were looking at economic development.
754. **Ms L Brown:** It was not the suggestion, rather the speed at which it suddenly appeared.
755. **Ms Stuart:** It is also the fact that it is being done in isolation. Business organisations had called for a rationalisation of Departments. We called for a Department of the economy, which would bring skills and the other economic functions together into one Department. Therefore, you would also be looking at the functions in DETI, some of which we do not think necessarily align with a Department of the economy. It was put in the context of a wider rationalisation. What is happening here is that we are doing it in isolation and looking at only one Department rather than looking at the functions as a whole across all of government.
756. **The Chairperson:** I will come back to that point, but I am keen to bring members in.

757. **Ms Gildernew:** You are very welcome. To follow on from the Chair's point, one area that I have been working on over past years was agriculture. We brought it so far, and some functions were carried out by DETI, sometimes well and sometimes not so well. I do not think it a good idea to put all of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's (DARD) functions into DETI. Joanne, you mention a Department of the economy, but agriculture is our biggest economy.
758. **Ms Stuart:** Yes, absolutely.
759. **Ms Gildernew:** Do you see it fitting within a Department of the economy? A lot of areas of work done by DARD would not have been done at all, I believe, if DETI had have been in charge of all of them.
760. To follow on from the Chair's point, businesses will focus on business, and businesses are there to make money, but sometimes people have other needs as well. Those needs also have to be met in an appropriate fashion. There were many times when I was frustrated at DETI's approach to carrying on what we had done. We got traceability from the farm to close to the fork, but we did not get the whole way. It was one recommendations of a very important report that came out during my time that all of the functions of agriculture should be in one Department, but DETI refused to let go of the import side. It is just an illustration of how things are not always as simple as they seem.
761. **Ms L Brown:** In our other submissions on the number of Departments, we would have said that the agriculture function — not all of it, but some of it — would also go into DETI as well as the rural development and regeneration sides, and that perhaps a different Department could encompass the urban regeneration part.
762. **Ms Gildernew:** Do you know what would happen? Urban regeneration would happen and rural regeneration would not. I am telling you that for a fact, because I was on the Social Development Committee a number of years ago as well. We cannot be too fixed on a single goal, because other things will suffer as a result.
763. **Ms L Brown:** Can you see a junior Minister having responsibility under the new restructuring? Say there was to be a Department of the economy; do you see a junior Minister having a portfolio specifically for the agriculture side?
764. **Ms Gildernew:** I do not think that would work.
765. **Ms Stuart:** This raises the point that functions need to be looked at as a whole, and more work needs to be done on the different functions to see which ones can move. I agree and we always know that we are facing challenges around joined-up working. We saw that with DETI in the creative industries and with the skills agenda between DETI, Invest NI and DEL. However, those were identified, and a lot of work has been done to ensure that those working relationships are in place.
766. I take your point; it is very difficult when you move functions around, but I think that is what we have to look at. We have to consider how best we can join up that working so that we are not losing work that is being done specifically, say, within agriculture, but maximising it with regard to the economy.
767. **The Chairperson:** Just to develop that theme, Joanne, you obviously have a huge interest in the STEM subjects. I was at a very inspirational presentation by the man who discovered the wreck of the Titanic. He said that at P7, maths is the most exciting subject for students, and, by the age of 14, it is the worst. You might argue that if you really want to get STEM-orientated, you need to get writing to the education system to say that there are some benefits in that.
768. **Ms Stuart:** There are two aspects to the STEM agenda: the current skills gap, and the development of the STEM skills. There is an absolute role to play in our education system. There is agreement that we need to start our STEM education a lot earlier — in primary school — to get pupils excited. Then, there is the area on which DEL has been

- working in STEM. We have jobs available now, and we do not have the people with the skills, so we are looking at retraining and how we train more quickly to get people in STEM. There are two aspects: the current need, and the demand that we will have in the future. We have to develop that.
769. **The Chairperson:** We will come back to that.
770. **Mr Lyttle:** How damaging could it be for individuals and the economy if this restructuring is done in isolation rather than as part of the wider review?
771. **Ms L Brown:** We proposed, as part of a wider review, that most of the functions should go into an economy Department anyway. It would make more sense to have a wider review done, because you could make sure that there was no duplication or overlap if it were done all together.
772. **Mr Lyttle:** Am I right in saying that you are suggesting that FE should be in the Department of Education if this proceeds in isolation?
773. **Ms L Brown:** No.
774. **Mr Lyttle:** That is understandable. That is fine.
775. **Mr Douglas:** Joanne, at some stage in your presentation, you talked about how there are some things in DETI that should not be there. I know that this is not about DETI, but it is a bit of a mix and match in some ways. What are the main areas that you have concerns about that DETI is responsible for that should not be there in respect of the overall economy?
776. **Ms L Brown:** Energy, in particular, is one area. It is Northern Ireland-wide and applies to community as well as business. Obviously, the cost of energy is a major factor for businesses. We proposed a new Department called strategic development, which would take in the likes of energy, transport, planning and those sorts of policies.
777. **The Chairperson:** Is there a danger, though, that, in doing all of this, we are just rearranging the deckchairs? Are we going to take any savings out of the changes? I am not so sure that we are; it will just be a transfer of function, budget and personnel, so there will be no savings per se. The only thing that you will see is perhaps more efficient working because you are reducing silos. Is that what we are looking at?
778. **Ms L Brown:** How it is managed is not for us to say. There is a potential for making savings, but that would most likely involve staffing losses by just bringing functions together, which is not necessarily what we are saying at all. It is about better effectiveness and making sure that we are economy proofing decisions. If fewer Departments are all focused towards the economy as the number one priority, it would be easier for them to join up to discuss things than if there were 12.
779. **The Chairperson:** You could lose focus. Our Committee spends a lot of time looking at young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), STEM and a whole range of issues. If you were to have one Department of the economy — let us say, for the sake of convenience, that you just merged DETI and DEL — you have half the amount of people looking at an issue. The actual driver in that regard is more problematic. Maybe there will be a call some time later to say that we need a Minister in charge of skills and one in charge of R&D. In our drive to concertina the Departments, I wonder whether we will end up losing focus rather than gaining it.
780. **Ms Stuart:** As we said in our response, work needs to be done to really look at the different Departments. There is not necessarily a problem with having more junior Minister portfolios; we see that in other Governments. You have a Minister who has overall responsibility. It is like a business organisation in that you will have a chief executive, but you will also have a senior executive management team that works with him or her. I do not think that that would be a bad way to move forward. The bigger the Department you have, the more

- you will need to have heads of specific functions.
781. **The Chairperson:** This is the last question. In general, are you anxious about the proposals or are you excited?
782. **Ms Stuart:** There is anxiety because we are not sure what will happen. From talking to staff with whom we work in the Department, we can see that it is a concerning time, because people do not know what will happen. However, as with anything, I would like to think that if we are doing something different, it is an opportunity to look at how we do things and do them better. It depends on the outcome, but we have good relationships with the people currently in those roles and we have to maximise the opportunity.
783. **Ms Gildernew:** If I may make one tiny observation —
784. **The Chairperson:** No, sorry.
785. **Ms Gildernew:** It is a tiny observation. If I say it as the witnesses are walking out, they can listen. The worst Department for working in silos is also the biggest one — the Health Department. Just bear that in mind.
786. **The Chairperson:** You are awful. I made the rule that we would finish this session at 10.45.
787. **Ms Gildernew:** That is how you do it, Chris. *[Laughter.]*
788. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much.
789. **The Chairperson:** We move now to evidence from Mencap. You are very welcome. Ach, there is Joanne. It is nice to see you.
790. **Ms Joanne McDonald (Mencap):** Hello, Basil. It is nice to see you too.
791. **The Chairperson:** Now, folks, we have 15 minutes. As you have probably gathered, we are trying to run closely to time, because we have a lot of people to hear. So, when the 15 minutes are up, I will tell my colleagues that that is it and we have to finish. Your 15 minutes start now, if would you like to have a little chat, and then we will ask questions.
792. **Ms Cathy McCloskey (Mencap):** Hello everybody, my name is Cathy McCloskey, and I am the sector manager across the south and west for employment and transition services in Mencap. With me are Joanne McDonald, equality officer for Mencap, and she will speak in a few moments; Jenny Ruddy, Mencap campaigns officer; and Liz Aiken, who is the parent of a son with a learning disability. You will hear Liz speak about the importance of specialist support in employment, and Joanne will talk briefly about her journey to work.
793. Mencap is a learning disability organisation, and it has more than 20 years' experience in supporting people with a learning disability across Northern Ireland in finding and keeping a job. We believe that the Department's function should move as a whole to one Department, preferably the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), because of the link with the economy and the link between work and inclusion. A key role of specialist agencies in supporting people with a learning disability into college and into work needs to be recognised and funded in the new structure or structures.
794. I will hand over to Liz, then Joanne will speak, and then we will be open to questions or continued discussions, and Jenny will close our submission.
795. **Ms Liz Aiken (Mencap):** I am the mother of a son who is soon to be 29 years old and has a severe learning difficulty and autism. I wear another hat in that I am deputy head of school at the Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre. As such, I see a disproportionate number of young people in there who have, as opposed to a learning difficulty, a social impairment such as ADHD, Asperger's syndrome or some other difficulty that has caused them problems through school and probably out of school. From my point of view, because of my own son and those other young people, I really do not want them to be lost in this change. They are a small group, and I feel — just

- as a mother — that my son Ryan, through school, when he was in severe learning difficulties (SLD), was in a cosseted environment. He was not particularly challenged there. At transition into the adult training centres, which are abysmally funded, there was not the drive, ability or capacity to stretch Ryan in any way into making him inclusive within the community or a work placement. He was a young person who got on that yellow bus to school and who now goes on a white bus to the resource centre.
796. Fortunately, in the past year or so, my husband came into contact with Mencap and its employment scheme. He told Mencap that Ryan had very complex needs and would be a challenge to them, because he is very limited in his social skills and in what he would be able to do, but he managed to convince them, and they decided that it was a challenge they were prepared to rise to. I know that it does not sound like a lot, but, now, Ryan is out in the community for an hour and a half a week in a Red Cross placement. It is about trying to encourage employers to take on our young people. A lot of work needs to be done there. You can see that Ryan's self-esteem has risen from being there. He is going to work. I know that people can say it is tokenism —
797. **The Chairperson:** We take the point that it is very good for Ryan, so we are sympathetic and supportive, but we would like to know how moving DEL into DETI or the Department of Education might affect you. What are your concerns about that?
798. **Ms Aiken:** My concern relates to the transition within education. It does not continue to have a role. No one has ever tracked Ryan to see where he has gone. He has left school and gone into an adult training centre, where there is a need for the careers advice and all of those functions that DEL would have been responsible for.
799. **The Chairperson:** Do you think it would be better if the functions of DEL were in the Department of the economy, the Department of Education or somewhere else?
800. **Ms Aiken:** I think that, historically, the Department of Education has not taken on that mantle, and I think this group would be lost in the Department of Education, because they are not into university and higher and further education.
801. **The Chairperson:** That is lovely; we will come back in a wee bit.
802. **Ms McDonald:** I would like to highlight the importance of support and opportunity for all people with learning disabilities to go into training or further education to get the skills and the opportunities to gain experience and to progress in employment like anybody else in Northern Ireland. I am going to talk for a few minutes about my personal experience. I left school and went on to do an NVQ level 1. At the end of my level 1, I was told that they had a lot of concerns about progressing me on to level 2. I had to fight for my right to progress to level 2. May I point out that I was in a class with a lot of people who did not have a learning disability, and they did not have to battle? When the course was over, I progressed to employment, and a lot of individuals in the course who did not have a learning disability did not progress to employment. I was the one who had to fight for my opportunity to progress to get the skills, with the support of my family and other individuals in the community. It is very important for people to see people with a learning disability as a valued part of the workforce in Northern Ireland. The workforce should reflect the diversity in our society and the abilities, skills and qualities that people with a learning disability have. All people with a learning disability should be fully supported and encouraged to gain employment. The links between further education and employment should be fully supported for people with a learning disability, and they should be made accessible. I would like to ask the Committee to ensure that, whatever change is made, it is vital that people with a learning disability

- do not get lost or forgotten about in whatever system is put in place.
803. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much, Joanne, and I doubt that anyone can forget you. Joanne, you did not mention that you had two days of work experience with me.
804. **Ms McDonald:** Yes, I forgot that.
805. **The Chairperson:** I will allow Chair's prerogative a bit. This shocked me. Tell them where you lived at the time and what you had to do to get here.
806. **Ms McDonald:** I still live there. I live in Tyrone, and I have to get the bus from Pomeroy to Dungannon, and then I have to get the bus from Dungannon to Europa Buscentre. I then have to get a taxi or a bus to get me to Stormont.
807. **The Chairperson:** She did all of that on her own to be here for 10.00 am.
808. **Mr F McCann:** Then she had to stick you for the day. *[Laughter.]*
809. **The Chairperson:** She did. That was a great eye opener for me, and I draw that to your attention. We have a bit of time here. Michelle will come in. It is all right. I see the time.
810. **Ms Gildernew:** Thank you, Basil. The whole area of learning disability and vulnerable adults and young people has not had the focus that it should have had in DEL. I have been concentrating a good bit of work on that area. Parkanaur College is in my constituency, and I work closely with it. I know that that area has been the poor relation in DEL. I am telling you now that, if it goes into DETI, you will never get a look in. By the time the Institute of Directors, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and all the rest of them have the Minister's ear, very little time, resource or care will be taken with the sector, and I believe that it needs special attention. Just be careful what you wish for.
811. **Ms McCloskey:** Do you believe that it will get the special attention that it needs in DE?
812. **Ms Gildernew:** There is more chance of it happening in DE. I am delighted to hear that Ryan is making a contribution, because that is where he is at now. Liz, it is very hard when they turn 19. The first day and the last day in the special school are the two worst days of a parent's life. Education's responsibility ends and another Department takes over. Education cannot follow Ryan's progress at the minute because it is another Department's responsibility. I can understand the frustration at that gap, but I definitely think that there is a much better chance of that attention being given in DE than there would be in DETI.
813. **Ms Aiken:** Then we need DE to take a lifelong-learning approach. There should be no cut-off age at, for example, 25.
814. **Ms Gildernew:** You made a point about Ryan not getting challenged.
815. **The Chairperson:** I want to bring Fra in. We are a bit tight for time.
816. **Ms Gildernew:** The point that you made about Ryan not getting challenged also needs to be made very clear to DE, for the children who have not got to Ryan's level yet.
817. **Mr F McCann:** I agree totally with what Michelle has said. I am on the board of a community health facility in west Belfast, and a number of people with learning difficulties work and help out in it. I agree that lifelong learning is important and that there needs to be a fluency to it. An element that we have not been through yet is that some elements of DEL should be moved into the Department for Social Development (DSD), such as jobs and benefits offices, job training and perspectives and putting people into training. The other end looks after benefits. There is an attachment there. Most people have the idea that it should be divided in two, but I think that a third element there could be advanced to help.
818. **Ms Jenny Ruddy (Mencap):** Our concern about the functions being transferred to DE is that there was no mention of special educational needs

- within its targets in the Programme for Government. DE already has a big area of responsibility for children with a learning disability, and our concern is that, if it gets more functions, people with a learning disability will continue to be invisible within that Department. I understand that you could say the same for DETI, in that it does not have experience of working with people with a learning disability. I suppose that you could go either way.
819. Our main concern is that the specialist support that Liz talked about is maintained, no matter which Department it goes to, and that any links that DEL has been able to develop with the voluntary and community sector continue; for example, with the disability liaison group.
820. Our other main concern is that equality screening of the transfer of functions be carried out in order to assess the impact on the section 75 groups, especially on disabled people. That needs to be monitored to ensure that people are not worse off, whichever Department receives the functions. Joanne raised a really good point about moving from further education into employment, because that was a vital stage for her. If part of those functions went to DE and part to DETI, we would be concerned that there would not be the link between learning and the employment opportunities and career guidance that Joanne received. We are concerned that such support would be lost.
821. **The Chairperson:** I have to draw this session to a close, so let us be fairly snappy. Do you think that it is a good idea or are you not sure about the idea of reducing the number of Departments per se? Would you prefer to see the number of Departments retained?
822. **Ms McCloskey:** It is more the case that we feel that it would be better to keep the transfer of DEL's functions to one Department, rather than splitting them among different Departments. Our main concern is that people still get the specialist support that is required wherever they go.
823. **The Chairperson:** OK. I have asked most people this question. Are you anxious about the proposed changes or are you excited about the opportunity?
824. **Ms Ruddy:** We have mixed feelings. We are anxious about how any change would impact on people with a learning disability, especially when you have got used to a system. Change can be difficult. We hope that, whatever Department takes on the functions, it will see it as an opportunity to improve on what is already there and to ensure that there is no detrimental effect on any of the groups that are represented within that.
825. **Ms McCloskey:** The knowledge, expertise and relationships that the voluntary sector has built up with DEL should not be lost whichever Department it falls to. We can build on that and not lose the expertise that we have invested in.
826. **The Chairperson:** Thank you all for your time. I assure you that members of this Committee are very supportive. We wish Ryan well and hope that he enjoys his one and a half hours. Joanne has been up from time to time as well. We will do our level best as individuals.
827. **The Chairperson:** We will now hear from the Orchardville Society. You are very welcome. We have 15 minutes in which to hear from you, Margaret. So, without further ado, if you talk to us for a wee bit, we will then ask some questions.
828. **Ms Margaret Haddock (The Orchardville Society):** OK. I did not prepare a formal speech or anything because the content of what I wanted to say was in —
829. **The Chairperson:** That is all right. You just talk to us.
830. **Ms Haddock:** — my response. It said “informal”, so I thought that I would keep it informal.
831. **The Chairperson:** It is indeed.
832. **Ms Haddock:** I am here today representing the Orchardville Society in my role as deputy chief executive, and I also have my hat on as the

- president of the European Union of Supported Employment. I have concern with both hats on about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning, starting from a strategic point of view, in that the EU says that, for people with disability, employment should sit in the Ministry for employment. If we do away with our Ministry for employment, we could fragment the work that we do for people with disability. That is the overarching, strategic issue.
833. Given the nature of the work that the Orchardville Society is involved in and the questions that were asked, we feel that, if the Department is to be dissolved, the best fit for us — as an organisation, not as a sector, as I referred to in my letter — would be the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). Our reasoning for that is several-fold. First, we are working mostly with adults. We are usually dealing with people whom education has failed, so we are trying to fill a gap and move forward. The Department for Employment and Learning has offered programmes and facilities that have filled that gap accordingly. Secondly, through the type of interfaces that we do and the interventions that we offer, we already have relationships with DETI because we use social economy as an intervention. The community and voluntary sector, in our type of work, is being continually encouraged to look at social economy as a way forward for the creation of employment in Northern Ireland and inward investment. It seems that, if we are creating jobs and upskilling people, that should sit in that area.
834. One of our main concerns is about the kind of precedence that DEL's strategy, if fragmented, would be given in any new Department. If it goes in pieces to different Departments, it could become a very small part of a larger Department. If the strategic plan is disseminated all over the place, its interlinkages may not be seen very clearly by those of us who work in the area.
835. As I said in my letter, it is not a sectoral issue; it is an activity-related issue. Orchardville currently works with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Department of Education and the Department for Social Development (DSD), and we already have difficulties in that arena because of the silos that we have here. The fragmenting of one of those silos is a main concern. An individual may access some of the current disablement advisory service programmes and some health service care and benefits, so there is a lot of interface already with different Departments. It is very time-consuming.
836. From a funding perspective — I am sure that you expected that — we rely heavily on EU funding currently, and we have match funding from the Department for Employment and Learning. If it goes, and we do things like essential skills and Departments, sourcing that match funding will prove to be very difficult for voluntary and community organisations' engagement. Is that enough for you?
837. **The Chairperson:** It is enough to get us started. Any questions from colleagues?
838. **Mr Douglas:** Margaret, thanks for your presentation. Obviously, you are involved in quite a number of very successful social economy initiatives. You said that you have a good relationship with DETI. If the two Departments merged, do you think that that would make your job easier and it would be more productive, effective and efficient than it is at the moment?
839. **Ms Haddock:** If DEL has to merge anywhere, that would be our choice. We run several social economies, Mr Douglas, and —
840. **Mr Douglas:** Sammy. *[Laughter.]*
841. **The Chairperson:** Margaret, we do not know who Mr Douglas is.
842. **Ms Haddock:** We run several social economy businesses, and, currently, they sit within our main European Social Fund (ESF) programme. It is our intention to make them self-sustaining,

and we are moving towards that quite successfully. If all of it is sitting in one area, it is, therefore, easy to talk to people who understand. There are other issues for the expansion of social economy businesses. We have had DETI and, in particular, Invest NI out to look at issues around capital, which is a huge issue, as we are currently mostly funded for revenue only.

843. **Mr Lyttle:** I am finding the presentations useful and informative. You are answering questions in your presentation. It is very helpful. It is encouraging to hear that a level of expertise with regard to working with people with disabilities exists in the Department. It is helping me to realise that, whatever happens here, we need to redouble our efforts to ensure that that remains in place and, as Michelle alluded to earlier, is improved even further. It is extremely useful to hear from you today.
844. **Ms Haddock:** We promote supported employment, which is a model of intervention. Currently, it is not funded anywhere in Northern Ireland. We do not have a government programme for that, but other European countries do. A big EU study is about to be published directly from Brussels. It recommends that the supported employment model be used not only for people with a disability but for the disadvantaged, the long-term unemployed and ethnic minorities, for instance. The disability advisory service could take an holistic lead on that key area in the Department for Employment and Learning, because it has the experience of working with us and with that product — so to speak — for the past number of years. Due to Northern Ireland's economic situation and the fact that we are trying to get unemployed people back to work, that model of supported employment, which is diverse, needs to move to other sectors of unemployed people. Keeping employment with DETI would make sense for the upskilling of the whole community. It is not just a disability issue.
845. **Mr F McCann:** All the discussions with people who have come to give evidence

to us have been about trying to make things better, easier and more effective. You talk about disadvantage, disability, access to benefits and various aspects of employment. For me, looking at it, you look at the education end of it. You talk about a fluency of education that, more or less, takes you from the cradle to the grave. We talk about two aspects of the division of DEL. However, there may be a third option lying with DSD, which, together with DEL, runs the jobs and benefits offices. I asked a question about this previously, because there is a very close connection there between jobs and benefits and trying to get people into employment. Do you see any role there, because the two seem to work hand in glove?

846. **Ms Haddock:** That works very well with the jobs and benefits offices, at an operational level. However, if we go higher than that to a strategic level and look at how each Department currently measures its outcomes, we will see that one is not about getting people into jobs. The way in which they measure what they do is very different, and I am not sure if that match would sit well together. To put employment with jobs and benefits, at a strategic level, could give the wrong message and create a fear factor among people.
847. **Mr F McCann:** One of the aspects of what you and other people are saying is that it is not only about unemployment but about how you deal with deprivation and disadvantage. The Department for Social Development has the remit for dealing with disadvantage and deprivation, and, in the social security offices, DEL has within its remit the responsibility of trying to get people into training and employment. They work along with their colleagues in social security offices to make it happen. There seems to be a wee bit of fluidity between what is provided there, so, perhaps, you could get people into proper training and then into employment.
848. **Ms Haddock:** I do not disagree that there is some fluidity there, but I feel less favourable towards seeing the likes

- of the disablement advisory service (DAS) aligned, at a strategic level, with DSD. I have been working in the community and voluntary sector for 20 years. The sector's engagement with DSD is the least engagement, believe it or not, although we all know that getting people into employment will take people out of poverty and deprivation. The assistance has come from the Department for Employment and Learning through a disability advisory service and through Invest NI.
849. **Mr Lyttle:** I want to build on the point about welfare reform and the timing of the dissolution of DEL. DSD and DEL are endeavouring to work closely together to ensure that there is as much mitigation as possible of the feared changes. How much of a problem, therefore, would the dissolution of DEL be in ensuring that we achieve the best that we can for local people on that issue?
850. **Ms Haddock:** Welfare reform is the biggest issue facing the population at the moment. We do not have the final detail of that, and, until we do, I have been attending some information sessions on things such as the new universal credit. More questions than answers are coming around. There is a lot of fear about the welfare reform changes. None of us doubt that welfare reform is required, but some of the way that the disabled community has been attacked in the press has not helped the fear factor. The disabled community has come a long way in the past 20 years, and there is a fear that, with the new welfare reform, we are going backwards. A lot of people feel that.
851. I am conscious of my time, and I will give you one very quick example. As the head of the Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment, I had a phone call this week to say that, under the new reform, a young woman who works in Tesco for 14 hours a week has had a letter asking who is supporting her. She used to get support and came through the new deal for disabled people, which, as you know, was dissolved some time ago. Under the new benefits system, she has been asked who will support her. Currently, no organisation receives funding to support people who work for fewer than 14 hours. We are about to see that change with the work connect programme. This young woman is having to give up work. So, we have someone who works 14 hours who will have to give up work. She wrote to me to see whether there was anything that I could do.
852. **The Chairperson:** It is always the danger when you introduce change that —
853. **Ms Haddock:** People fall through the cracks.
854. **The Chairperson:** People fall through the cracks.
855. **Mr F McCann:** Huge numbers of people, thousands and thousands, will be affected by the changes to family tax credits.
856. **The Chairperson:** Absolutely.
857. Margaret, you have been a most excellent witness. It has been really informative. Almost everything that you have said has caused me to sit and think. It has been really great to have you here. I will close on a general question that I ask people. Are you anxious about the proposed merger or are you looking at it as an opportunity to get things better?
858. **Ms Haddock:** In the community and voluntary sector, we believe that it is out of our hands. We are nervous and anxious because it will cause us to build even more new relationships, especially around funding issues, for our organisations. However, the community and voluntary sector is always open to challenge, and with every change comes opportunity. Therefore, we see ourselves as ready to take any opportunities that present themselves. We probably all like status quo at times, but change can be good. We have put our concerns to you. We await the decision on what is happening, and, as the sector continually does, we will work with whatever the changes bring.

859. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much indeed for your contribution, and we will do what we can for you.
860. **The Chairperson:** We move now to evidence from the Forum for Adult Learning in Northern Ireland (FALNI). You are very welcome. We have a 15-minute slot. We are trying to get a lot of people in, so we are trying to keep it tight to time. It is much for my colleagues' benefit as for yours. When the 15 minutes is up, I will pull down the guillotine. I do not wish to be rude, but if we do not do that, we lose a minute here and a minute there and the whole thing gets out of kilter.
861. Without further ado, the floor is yours. Tell us what you would like to tell us, and then we will ask a few questions.
862. **Mr Colin Neilands (Forum for Adult Learning in Northern Ireland):** No problem at all. Thank you, first of all, for the invitation to come here. You have the letter, so you have the basic response from FALNI. It is a forum that stretches across the sectors, so we represent the statutory and the community sectors. We have representatives from different organisations: Ann comes from the Educational Guidance Service for Adults, I am from the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and my colleague Alan is from the Open University, so we have a broad cross-section. We have been operating since January 2011. We came together to try to have a voice for adult education because the different players have rare opportunities to come together and look at issues of common concern. We also want to advocate for the learner as much as possible. That is one of the voices that we want to represent here today, and we want to try to encourage the Committee to take a learner-centred approach to decisions.
863. In response to your letter, you will notice that we ignored your question to some extent. Our group has different members, many of whom are probably presenting to you today. They have different views around which Department would best suit their particular purposes, operations and responsibilities. FALNI is interested in talking about where Government can best support adult learning and trying to return in many ways to the manifesto, which we sent out to all of you last year, prior to the Assembly elections. The main points that we want to emphasise include, first, the concern around access. Regardless of which Department takes lead responsibility, how can we best ensure that access is available for all? We are talking about access in the broadest sense of the word. Secondly, we are concerned about the broad sweep of curriculums. It is about learning that supports citizens' work and life. Thirdly, we advocate for a lifelong strategy for adult learning, which does not currently exist. That would be a great way of pulling together the disparate Departments and not just the two that are currently under discussion.
864. The fourth point is that, perhaps more than ever, with the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), we advocate for there to be an all-party group to look at adult learning. As perhaps is evident from the letter that we presented, adult learning crosses many Departments, not just those discussed in this room but others, including Health, OFMDFM and Justice, and you sit on the Committees for those Departments. You can see that adult learning touches upon almost every Department, and there has to be an opportunity for those disparate voices to come together and talk about the best way forward and the best investment that can be made in adult learning. I will leave my voice silent at the moment, but my colleagues can certainly chip in.
865. **Ms Ann Osborne (Forum for Adult Learning in Northern Ireland):** For an adult to be fully capable of managing everyday life and work, they need to have various key capabilities. Obviously, that includes literacy and numeracy skills, health literacy skills, financial capability skills and media literacy skills. When you think of things such as the welfare reform agenda, people will have to be more able to manage budgets and more able to manage online

- applications for benefits and so forth. Looking at a person in that respect, responsibility falls across so many government Departments. It is not only about the skills that they need for work. If a person is upskilled in that way as a person, they will function better in all of those areas of life.
866. **Mr Alan Carr (Forum for Adult Learning in Northern Ireland):** I will develop the cross-cutting theme. For us, the issue of which Department is responsible for adult education is a second-order issue. The more important issue is that there be a distinct line of responsibility for adult education in whichever Department ends up having responsibility for it. Even more important than that, there is a recognition that it is not just an issue for one Department but is an issue that cuts across them all. Adult learning can not only contribute to the education of adults but can improve their employability and help promote community cohesion in a more civilised society. It can lead to people developing healthier lifestyles and so on. The list is almost endless. Adult learning can and should involve every Department, not just the Department that has the lead role on the issue. That is why the idea of an all-party Committee that focuses distinctively on the issue of adult education would be very useful in bringing all of that together.
867. **The Chairperson:** You could argue that the Department for Employment and Learning is pretty close to a Department for adult education in the sense that the current Department of Education could be renamed the Department of schools. Are we in danger of having what you already want and then losing it?
868. **Ms Osborne:** We may have had that in the late 1990s when we had a lifelong learning strategy that was broad enough to cover that and recognise the value of lifelong learning. We now have a very narrow skills agenda.
869. **The Chairperson:** There are two things here that we need to talk about. I understand the argument that has been made by others that the FE Means Business policy has resulted in a more narrowly based outcome. Whether that is the right policy or not is one thing. A different question is on the structure and whether the FE colleges, the higher education establishments and the training organisations should come together in a single Department. If you could get the policy sorted out, would you be better to keep with the current arrangement, or would you tilt towards some other format?
870. **Mr Carr:** There are dangers and threats to adult education wherever it ends up. If it goes to the Department of Education, there is a danger that it would be regarded as peripheral in relation to its mainstream activity, which is looking after schools. If it is in a primarily economic Department, there is, again, a danger that the exclusive focus would be on training that is related to enhancing people's employability. That is important, but there should not be an exclusive focus on that. Adult education deals with all of the other issues as well. The more important thing for us is not the Department that it is in; it is having a clearly demarcated responsibility for the promotion and oversight of adult education —
871. **The Chairperson:** You called for an all-party group on adult education. There is no stronger all-party group than a Statutory Committee that oversees a Department, which is currently what we have, albeit, as you see it, not appropriately focused. Others have said the same thing.
872. **Ms Osborne:** It might be worth looking at the English model and how it operates, where, within the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), you have a Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning. Lifelong learning is still protected; it is separately funded and recognised. That Department is currently carrying out a consultation and asking communities what adult learning they need. You talked about whether it would be the right thing if DEL had the policy right. The English model appears to be working well there because there

- is recognition of the value of lifelong learning.
873. **Ms Gildernew:** I like the line in the last paragraph that states:
- "the responsibility of one department and the duty of all"*.
874. I agree with that. I am glad that the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) got a mention, because it recognises the needs of rural communities. There are quite a few all-party groups, and we are all members of them. They do not have teeth; they have no powers. There have been times when this Committee has come close to exerting powers that an all-party group does not have. I do not see that as the panacea, but there needs to be responsibility for it somewhere. We recognise that there are myriad reasons why young people do not achieve in school. They may be in care. We see the educational attainment rates of young people in care, young people in the Travelling community, young people who are carers and young people who suffer mental health issues. There is definitely a need. We do not need to say that the Department of Education has failed those young people; we need to recognise the complex myriad reasons why someone may leave school without proper formal qualifications. No matter how good our schools are, there will still need to be some form of adult learning.
875. **Mr Neilands:** Absolutely.
876. **Ms Gildernew:** We will need to decide where it goes. It is interesting that your paper did not indicate which Department you would like to be in. It shows a fear, I suppose, and that you are not sure where would be best. I feel that it would be better placed in the Department of Education than in DETI. You made the point about the strategy and the policy and the fact that we can get it right. The bigger the Department, the harder it seems to be for the minorities in that Department to have a voice. If a lot of functions go to DETI, I worry that the business areas will drive the agenda and that adults who need additional
- skills or basic skills will be forgotten about.
877. **Mr Neilands:** That is a particular worry of the community sector. As I said, we represent different sectors; I am singling out the community sector because that is where my work is based. We worry that that would be an even more skills- and employment-driven agenda, which does not recognise the supportive role of a lot of community based adult learning. It supplies people with that first step, which is often non-accredited. At present, the only sources to support that come from outside Government. We go for grants and Lottery funding and the like. That is not really sufficient, and it does not tie in to a strategy. That is where it kind of falls apart. It falls apart for the young people who you are talking about as well, because they come out of the statutory sector and they then fall into an abyss sometimes. The community sector and so on tries to pick up on that, but where does that tie in to something that is lifelong? We need to see a path for that individual that does not just end at 16 or 18 or whatever point at which they leave statutory provision.
878. **Mr F McCann:** Thank you for the presentation. You said that there is a danger that the exclusive focus would be on training rather than on learning or education. For me, that says it all: whether it is through lifelong learning, there needs to be a pathway for people.
879. Alan, you raised the point that there are many parts of that and different Departments see that they have small pieces of it. The big problem, however, is that none of them sees ownership of it. Therein lies the problem. One thing that it brought to mind was the whole question of neighbourhood renewal. First, it was seen as a great concept in how to deal with social deprivation and how to move things on. However, because it was seen purely as the Department for Social Development's focus, but requiring departmental backing from all Departments, it did not come to fruition. That led to almost complete failure of neighbourhood

- renewal across the board. Therefore, we need to be careful that we do not just lift adult learning and put it into DETI or a Department of the economy, and it loses out entirely because that Department does not see ownership of it or ownership lies elsewhere.
880. **Mr Neilands:** Yes.
881. **The Chairperson:** Our time has ended. I am sorry that it was so brief. It has been interesting to hear your perspective. As I general point, for what it is worth, the focus on lifelong learning and community learning has been lost over the past number of years. Although there have been great successes in other areas, we have not recognised the benefits of community cohesion that come from that. Therefore, regardless of what happens, you have an opportunity, at least, with the discussion to come forward. You should make your voice heard on the matter. We will do our best to help.
882. I will finish with this question: although you did not commit yourself in the paper, are you anxious about the proposed changes or do you view them as an opportunity to put right some great wrongs?
883. **Mr Neilands:** It is probably both. *[Laughter.]* You probably keep getting that answer. Sometimes, it is a case of better the devil you know, of course, and to reform within that. There are opportunities because we are getting the chance — perhaps, like this one — to actually put forward some challenging views and to get down to fundamental questions about what we want for adult learning in Northern Ireland. There is that opportunity. I do not know whether my colleagues want to be pressed on that question either. *[Laughter.]*
884. **Ms Osborne:** The chance to take a fresh look at things may be useful.
885. **The Chairperson:** You should note that there is an opportunity to talk not only to us but to the general public. You need to win the argument, because resources are tight in a lot of areas. For what it is worth, I believe that it is a worthwhile investment. Therefore, carpe diem, as they say. *[Laughter.]* With that, thank you very much for your contribution.
886. **Mr Neilands:** Thank you.
887. **The Chairperson:** We will now hear evidence from the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO). Pat, it is good to see you again. We have fifteen minutes. Michelle wants you to get stuck in because apparently she thinks that I do not leave enough time for questions. *[Laughter.]* Anyway, get stuck in, Pat.
888. **Mr Pat Conway (Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders):** I will do a very quick presentation followed by questions and answers.
889. I thank the Committee for the opportunity to outline concerns about the potential changes to the Department for Employment and Learning. I am director of adult services in NIACRO. Gareth is responsible for looking at programmes through our Jobtrack programme. We know that you have a copy of our written submission. Rather than repeat the points that we made, we will amplify some of them. We are aware that representatives from Include Youth will provide evidence today. We broadly support the issues that they will raise. I will explain a little about NIACRO and how we work with the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL); outline our concerns about the impact on front line service delivery of any potential restructuring of the Department or its functions; and hope to facilitate a discussion on any aspects that the Committee wishes to probe further.
890. Most people will know that NIACRO is a voluntary organisation that has been working for 40 years to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities. We work with children and young people, adults in the community, and people in prison and their families. We deliver a wide range of services across Northern Ireland to prevent offending or reoffending and to support

- effective resettlement of people in communities.
891. We have worked with DEL and its predecessors for over 10 years. We know that employment is a significant factor in reducing the risk of offending or reoffending. Over the past 12 months in particular, DEL has, in our view, developed a greater understanding of and a closer relationship with NIACRO on the issue of accessing employment opportunities involving applicants and employers and the contribution that can be made to reducing crime and the number of victims of crime. There has been a greater recognition of the barriers — legislative, structural and attitudinal — that currently exist for people to access services, and, more importantly, we have seen considerable progress in attempting to address these.
892. A key thing for us has been a greater alignment of the elements within DEL — further and higher education, individual beneficiaries, employers and careers advice through job centres. The European unit of DEL has, in our view, been a sectoral driver for change with regard to recognising the linkage between developing employability and a way to reach marginalised people such as those with criminal records or disabilities and lone parents or other socially disadvantaged groups.
893. Also of importance is the relationship between the long-term unemployed, employment opportunity and the welfare system. Put simply, NIACRO's view is that individuals benefit from employment per se. There is a tension between a low-wage economy, where most of NIACRO's clients are located, and the welfare system that can, on occasion, act as a prohibitor or an inhibitor, particularly to short-term employment opportunities. The location of the Social Security Agency (SSA) within job centres makes it more likely that this difficulty would be addressed based on two Departments working side by side. However, we must remember that, in a time of full employment a few years ago, Jobtrack, which is our major employment programme, got 30% of those who completed it into employment. That is now down to 22% and is decreasing because of the economic situation at the moment.
894. Research has shown beyond dispute that there is a causal link between employability and crime reduction. That is our primary interest. DEL is the only Department beyond the Department of Justice (DOJ) that understands that connection and is willing to play its part. This connectivity or cultural synergy of employment and justice is an example of cross-departmental activity that, in our view, was continuing to evolve positively.
895. We have some concerns for the future. Should the decision be taken to abolish DEL, we would be concerned about the loss of intra- and interdepartmental working, DEL being only one of the Departments that recognises and acts on its responsibility in delivering a safer society. We would also be concerned about the loss of momentum with regards to the gains recently achieved, because there is likely to be a loss in the short-to-medium term. The cultural re-alignment or the likely swamping that will take place is a concern. By that I mean that the dominant culture in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), we would argue, is attracting investment, and the Department of Education provides mainstream academic provision to the exclusion of vocational courses and essential skills for adults.
896. There is also the question of where responsibility for young adults not in education, employment or training (NEET) will be located in future arrangements. Let us be honest; the reason why they are not in education, employment or training in the first place is because they have been failed by mainstream education provision. At least, that is the argument that NIACRO would advocate.
897. Further questions arise over the future roles of the Department for Social Development (DSD), which is currently responsible for welfare, and the

- Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which is responsible for the provision of social housing. NIACRO's experience is that the Housing Executive is the leading example of an agency with a greater understanding of and willingness to play its part in the reduction of crime. It has a clear understanding of the benefit to its core business of engagement with organisations such as ourselves.
898. A clear example of the lack of understanding of crime across Departments can be seen in a cost of crime survey published by the DOJ. The headline figure was £2.9 billion in 2006-07. Of all the Departments, I think there were six that provided no information to this survey, one of which, unfortunately, was DEL, but they also included the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS), DETI, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) and DSD. If you were to look at the Department of Education, which provided no information, it is clearly a nonsense, because we all know the damage that attacks on schools and damage to property are probably a weekly occurrence, yet the Department of Education could not quantify the impact of crime on it as a Department. So, for the purposes of that survey, guesstimates were made, and that is where the figure of £2.9 billion turns up.
899. Concerns regarding the transfer of functions to the Department of Education include swamping, because of the way that the Department operates culturally, its academic mainstream focus and its history of exclusion. There is enough turmoil over selection without increasing the burden, and we argue that, whatever Department the elements of DEL's current functions are transferred to, they need to be ring-fenced and resources need to be placed on a par with other agencies. There are concerns regarding the transfer of functions to DETI. Culturally, DETI is tuned into attracting blue-chip businesses. It is not orientated towards people who have been socially excluded or marginalised, and, therefore, resources need to be ring-fenced on a par with other agencies.
900. Finally, I will mention the future. We can talk only in broad terms, but we want to see the retention and the development of the alignment that has occurred in the past 12 to 24 months. The elements of successful employment and that connection with the reduction in offending behaviour requires essential skills; vocational qualifications; innovative and flexible access; access beyond the mainstream; the need for specialist intervention; the strengthening of the relationship with employers; the maintaining and the developing of the discourse between wage and welfare levels; building on gains made to date; equality of access; upskilling with connectivity to a changing labour market; and driving that potential. There are other things that need to be addressed that we think could benefit the bigger project that we are pursuing. The greater use of and access to, for example, the social investment fund that is being talked about at the moment. Another is the development of apprenticeships. That does mean a return to the ACE scheme of 20 years ago but real apprenticeships and changing that landscape and the development of social firms, which would assist in the current economic environment.
901. **Mr Douglas:** Thank you, Pat, for your presentation. You mentioned that you fear a loss of momentum. That has been expressed by a number of organisations that have built up relationships with key people in the Department. Do you see a danger in that DEL and DETI have a different culture in their attitude to ex-prisoners? You work with a number of people in DEL, but you might not have the same accessibility or find the same culture on the issue of ex-prisoners with DETI.
902. **Mr Conway:** I cannot underestimate the difficulties that we had around five years ago in our relationship with what we describe as "domestic DEL". It was not open to advances from us. We had and still have a very good relationship with

- what we call “European DEL”, but, until fairly recently, European DEL, did not really connect with the mainstream part of DEL. I recall being at a meeting about five years ago, when a fairly senior official in DEL informed us that we were part of a periphery of a periphery. I think that that has changed and we have come more into the core. In the past 12 to 24 months, there has been a recognition by DEL that there needs to be specialist intervention with that client group — people with a criminal record. That does not need to be carried out by NIACRO, and this is not an argument by NIACRO for more resources. It is an argument for more resources for the project; it is about keeping people out of the criminal justice system and tying that into the costs of crime as it affects Departments and society in general. I make it clear that this is not a plea for more resources for NIACRO but for a realignment in the Prison Service so that it realigns security, care and resettlement functions so that people are actually prevented from going back into prison and so that it understands that an element of good prison practice would be to reduce the number of people going back to prison through employment measures. That needs a connection with DEL or whatever the subsequent structure is.
903. I said in the presentation that, from the outside, it looks like DETI is in the business of attracting external blue-chip investment companies to the jurisdiction and developing more home-grown investment opportunities. I am not sure that our client group would be perceived as the most attractive group for that project, and we would be concerned about that cultural imbalance.
904. **Mr F McCann:** Pat, that was an extensive presentation. I heard you holding your breath a couple of times to make sure that you got everything in. I have to say that this is the first meeting I have been at where you have not made a play for resources.
905. I could not work out at the end where you were arguing that, if DEL was to go, its functions would be properly placed.
- Members around the table probably have a range of opinions on that. However, I think that all of us would argue that there is a need for lifelong learning.
906. I take on board NIACRO's good work across many fields. I have worked with it on a number of projects.
907. You talked about domestic DEL. I have never really had any connection with European DEL, but I know that domestic DEL is not held in very high regard by many working-class communities throughout the city. In fact, they see many difficulties with it. We have discussed the whole issue of NEETs. DEL may sing the praises of the work done to help NEETs, but, when you go into certain areas, you see that that work is not making a big impact on the ground.
908. I would argue that DEL's functions need to be divided among not two but three Departments. You touched on DSD and how certain functions would fit into the jobs and benefits offices.
909. You also spoke about ACE. I know that there were difficulties with ACE and the way in which it was run. The concept, whereby young people were able to obtain a wage and were given focused training to take them through their apprenticeship, was surely a welcome one.
910. **The Chairperson:** Can I just encourage a wee bit of focus because of the time?
911. **Mr F McCann:** I was focusing myself to finish.
912. **Mr Conway:** It is ironic that the demise of ACE saw a great outpouring of grief, because the alternative —
913. **Mr F McCann:** A great outpouring of emotion.
914. **Mr Conway:** That is right. We think that some pilots being run in England and Wales look suspiciously similar to ACE. A lot of people benefited from ACE: they had money coming in and the opportunity to gain what was essentially work experience, which was a good thing.

915. **Mr F McCann:** For the first time, for many of them.
916. **Mr Conway:** Yes. That cannot be denied. However, I recall that the Divis area, for example, had the highest number of HGV-qualified drivers and no HGV lorries. So, there was a kind of mismatch between training and the labour market at that time. There was great emphasis on people getting employment opportunities, and the training was piled in without regard to the employment landscape at the time. We know that IT upskilling is a big thing now and that we should push people in that direction to open up opportunities. I am not just talking about the Divis area. I was involved in running eight ACE projects all over Northern Ireland, one of which was in Omagh. We were turning out people there who were supposed to be joiners, but the area had the highest number of unemployed joiners on the planet practically, which was inappropriate. We could not change that.
917. **Mr F McCann:** Training them for the hidden economy.
918. **The Chairperson:** A couple of members have indicated. I am letting this session run on a bit, because one of the groups is not here. So, we might have a wee bit of flexibility. Frankly, I hope that they do not turn up now.
919. **Mr Lyttle:** I agree that it was an extremely helpful and perceptive presentation. You went through your preferences. Your first preference seems to be the retention of DEL; the second, to retain a link between school training opportunities and economic opportunities in the labour market, which seems to point you towards DETI; and the third, that, if training and skills is placed within the Department of Education (DE), there should be extremely strong protocols between the Department of Education and DETI. You also point to the potential need for considerable changes in ethos, structure and attitudes within DETI and/or DE, if it goes there. You rightly point out something that we, and other people, have not focused on just yet — the considerable cost of that type of reorganisation in terms of training, rebranding and the transfer of knowledge and information. You point to some of the concerns around doing the transfer in this way. Have you any comment on the timescale that should normally be applied to this type of endeavour and/or whether it should be conducted as part of a wider review of Departments?
920. **Mr Conway:** I think that the culture of the Departments needs to be centre. Unless we get that right, we will have to deal with the legacy for years afterwards. Certainly, in another context and another Department, our client group — this was in Health — was described as “not deserving”. That phrase was used, and it was about people appraised for access to mental health services. So, every Department has its own culture. When you get into the business of DETI, for example, which is about developing the economy, attracting business and all the rest of it, our client group is a very hard sell. There is a rational argument, but it is a complicated argument. It is not like saying, for example, “We have a pool of people who are ready to go and are desirous of getting into the IT sector.” We have people who we train up to get involved in that part of the labour market, but it is not something I imagine that DETI would rush over to Washington with and make as a first pitch.
921. **The Chairperson:** Just a final bit, Pat, because we are under a bit of time pressure.
922. **Ms Gildernew:** Did you forget about me?
923. **The Chairperson:** No, I did not forget about you.
924. **Ms Gildernew:** Thank you, Basil. I am starting to get paranoid.
925. Pat and Gareth, you are both very welcome. The spake about Health, and their saying that your client group was not deserving, beggars belief, but I am not really surprised, given my —
926. **Mr Conway:** I think that you were there.

927. **Ms Gildernew:** If you look at the number of prisoners who are on medication of one sort or another, you see that it is staggering. In some of our prisons, the proportion is 80% plus. So, in a lot of ways, your client group is there because society failed them. The Health Department failed them and, possibly, the Department of Education did too. Certainly, we failed them, and that is why they end up being your client group. You do not usually hear about DETI and social disadvantage in the same sentence. From that point of view, and I thought what you said was very powerful, it is interesting that DETI is still your second preference and DE is your third. I understand, very much so, the cultural difficulties that you would have with DETI. However, DETI still scores higher in your opinion than DE. That is worrying, too.
928. **Mr Conway:** It is mainly because the client group is in an employment market or setting. The essential skills element, you would think, would sit with the Department of Education, but because that Department is mostly about mainstream primary, secondary and university education, in a sense it is too late for the adults, the over-18s. So —
929. **Mr Lyttle:** You say that the cultural difficulty in DE is the focus on mainstream education. It is focused on academic achievement as well, which would mean that a huge change in cultural ethos would be required. It may be that that is where it goes and that is what is needed, but it is interesting to hear the points raised, with regard to both of those Departments, about what changes are needed to help the people you are dealing with.
930. **Mr Conway:** Whatever way it is split, we will have to have relationships with other Departments. What we are saying is this: maintain the alignment that is evolving at the moment and make sure that there are protocols and understandings in place to ensure that resources are ring-fenced and kept as close as possible to the core of the Department's business. If it becomes marginalised, everybody loses. By that, I mean that a failure to address
- that is likely to lead to an increase in offending behaviour. So, if it is lost in the transition —
931. **Mr Lyttle:** May I ask a really quick question on NEETs? The Employment and Learning Committee's inquiry's number 1 recommendation, which is not talked about a lot, was that the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) junior Ministers should oversee the NEET strategy. Do you have a quick comment on that?
932. **Mr Gareth Eannetta (Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders):** In our Choose to Change programme, which took over from our Youth Employability programme, we, again, commented on the NEET strategy. However, it is a difficult nut to crack, and the issues are with the training and supply sides of things. The point needs to be made that any employment interventions must be led by the needs of employers rather than the other way round, by which I mean training people to do things that there may not be jobs for. It very much has to be led by employment need.
933. **Mr F McCann:** Just a very —
934. **The Chairperson:** You have been really awful, the whole lot of you, this particular session. Go on.
935. **Mr F McCann:** I was a bit concerned; I thought that we were talking about lifelong learning, but Pat seems to be writing off people aged 18 and over.
936. **Mr Conway:** No. We would have supported organisations — for example, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), the Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA) and the Ulster People's College — as potential vehicles to develop lifelong learning opportunities. What seems to have happened — we are not that close to it — is that all of that was switched to FE colleges. We are having real difficulties with some of the FE colleges about people, because of their criminal records, getting access to those courses. We think that that is a lost opportunity.

937. **Mr F McCann:** There is a difference between what I picked up on and what you are saying.
938. **Mr Conway:** No. We totally advocate lifelong learning for everybody, not just our client group.
939. **The Chairperson:** I have taken a bit of latitude with this session because somebody else has not turned up, but we have to close it now. However, it strikes me that we could be looking at creating a Department of the community. There is something else missing in this. I am not sure that you really fit into DETI, to be honest. Why did you not suggest aligning with the Department of Justice?
940. **Mr Conway:** For us to put all our resources into Justice would be reverting to a silo situation, because that is what has previously happened. We have been trying to get out of the silo of the Department of Justice. You cannot even get some of the elements within the Department of Justice to step outside their own boxes, yet that is what is clearly required. That is why my opening comment was about the intra- and interdepartmental elements that have to happen here. If everything goes back to Justice, it is seen as a Justice problem, and it is not a Justice problem. Look at the effects of crime in respect of all the other Departments, yet they cannot quantify what those effects are. In our view, that is a serious problem.
941. **The Chairperson:** OK. I acknowledge that that is your case. However, on the record, I think that there is a case for a Department of community cohesion. Whether we are talking about lifelong learning, health education or basic skills for living, there is something in this that we are not getting right, which is outside the debate that we are having about what we should do about the economy, and that is an important debate in itself.
942. Pat, we have had a fair whack at it. Thank you very much for the detailed nature of your submission. As you know, I have had a long association with NIACRO over many years. You have my full support, and I commend you for your work. I am sure that NIACRO will carry on, regardless of what else happens around the Departments. If you are having difficulties with people failing to properly respond to the culture and nature of your clients, you should talk to your political representatives and be assured that we will take that up. For everybody's sake, it is very important that the people who you look after are dealt with in the most appropriate manner. So, thank you very much.
943. **Mr Conway:** We would like to thank DEL for its interest and contribution to NIACRO's work, particularly in the past 24 months.
944. **The Chairperson:** Good afternoon, Anne, and thank you for coming. We are running to a strict timescale of 15 minutes, although we let the previous session overrun a wee bit because someone will be missing later on. I say that as much for my colleagues as for you. You will have a chance to say a few words, after which there will be a few questions. Fire ahead; the floor is yours.
945. **Dr Anne Heaslett (Stranmillis University College):** Thank you for the opportunity to expand on a couple of points. We have already responded to the Committee and to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on this particular matter.
946. Stranmillis University College's position is very clear. We feel very strongly that, because all our major policy drivers emanate from and are initiated by the Department of Education (DE), that is our natural home. In fact, we feel that, with much of our current work, we sometimes do not make the progress that we would like because of our not being firmly located in that Department. When we review our key programmes in teacher education, we benchmark them against all the key policies with which the Committee is familiar, such as the literacy and numeracy strategy and Every School a Good School. That seems to be completely natural.

947. Secondly, we are quite concerned that we are in danger of creating a negative narrative around some of the debate, because there is a tendency to make a distinction between teacher education programmes in Stranmillis and the so-called diversified or non-teaching programmes. This is a critical point. We feel that that is very damaging because, in practice in the college, our programmes are interrelated. People teach across different teams because we see them as complementary professional-related programmes. In particular, our early childhood and our health and leisure programmes connect to key policies in the Department of Education.
948. We could potentially lose sight of something that is very important to Northern Ireland. Stranmillis caters for people who wish to work in settings from early childhood through to post-primary education. Therefore, we really should be held up as exemplary in addressing the 0-6 early years strategy as well as primary and post-primary teacher education qualifications. If we narrow the debate and use the language of teacher education versus diversified courses, we will be asking the wrong questions and will likely lead ourselves into a cul-de-sac. That is an incredibly important point, and it is one of the reasons why we would emphasise the point about our home Department.
949. We also feel that there is an issue about seeing teacher education as being not just about initial teacher education. That point has, for example, even come up in the context of the Education Committee. It is actually the beginning of a professional journey, and you need to connect into induction, early professional development and continuous professional development.
950. We had the opportunity to share our annual report with the Committee for Employment and Learning. In Stranmillis, we are increasingly also focused on the professional development side. We are seeing professional development linked to issues that emerge from our partnerships with schools, our stakeholder groups that we have set up with key stakeholders in schools and beyond, and our own research base in creating tailor-made courses that meet needs. In fact, looking at the Hansard report of evidence given to the Education Committee, we could provide evidence that Stranmillis is already doing many of the things that are hailed as desirable.
951. We want to get that much more holistic view and to make those links. In that respect, it is also important to note that our recent history has demonstrated that, although we may be one of the smaller institutions, we have competed and been successful in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise. We will make a small but specialised return, hopefully, in 2014.
952. Therefore, an important point to make about the restructuring of Departments, in respect of putting down a marker, is that in any changes envisaged, although we see our natural home in terms of the policy drivers, we also want to defend our position in relation to the line of research income that we share. Ourselves and the two universities are the three institutions that benefited from that. Our amount may be relatively small but —
953. **The Chairperson:** Anne, time is a bit tight, and I want to come in with a point. In your submission, you state that you see your home as being with DE. Do you see your home being with DE whether or not the universities and FE colleges go elsewhere? Would you go individually to DE?
954. **Dr Heaslett:** Ultimately, that is a Government decision. That is why I just made my last point about what is important in terms of our home being in DE. Other institutions have different views. Thought has to be given to the restructuring so that we do not get disconnected from other important elements of higher education (HE).
955. **The Chairperson:** You can surely apply. I got the point about the research income. But you are applying on your own merits

- for research funding, are you not? Does it matter?
956. **Dr Heaslett:** No, there is an element of the research funding that currently comes through the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) research budget.
957. **The Chairperson:** Yes, but your argument, as I understood it, was that because you are dealing mainly with schools and policy and continuous professional development etc, you would be better off with DE. However, then you said that the caveat is that you would not want to be cut off from research funding that may come from higher education institutions.
958. **Dr Heaslett:** The point I am making is that there is scholarship and research practice that underpins that work. We are just making the point that that needs to be recognised, and, if there is a line of funding that continues for research, we would want assurances that there would be a mechanism to allow that to continue.
959. **The Chairperson:** Yes.
960. **Dr Heaslett:** It is an operational thing. We are just making the point that it is important.
961. **The Chairperson:** Yes, but it is not just you and St Mary's that provide teacher education. Other universities have institutions. There is a question about what happens should two of the institutions go into the Department of Education and two do not — or three do not, if you take all five. In your opinion, does that pose problems for the way in which the sector operates?
962. **Dr Heaslett:** You cannot answer that question directly with a "yes" or "no". It depends on the operational structures. As I pointed out in my submission, we have the unhelpful situation in which certain numbers are determined by one Department and other numbers are determined by another, and funding is separated from allocation of numbers. Some careful thought needs to be given in the restructuring to how all those things are operationalised. As regards shaping that future, another point that I made is that one of the problems in the current structures is the fact that the voice is weakened, in a sense, because you are always trying to address different audiences. If there was greater coherence, planning and operating might be made easier. I think that it is my job to alert the Committee to the issues that we think are important.
963. **The Chairperson:** OK; that has been duly done. I am sorry, Anne; I want to push through.
964. **Mr Lyttle:** Concerns were raised in other presentations today that the prevailing culture of the Department of Education is one of achieving mainstream provision and solely academic achievement. Your presentation stated that the Department of Education has the responsibility for improving pupil performance. I am still a bit concerned that the curriculum and our schools are not as relevant to the real world and the employment opportunities that are out there as they could be. How exactly will that problem be dealt with by moving teachers' knowledge of the real world of curriculum-setting back into a Department with that culture?
965. **Dr Heaslett:** The Department, in inspection reports, has commended us for our practice and what we have done to address the issues that you have mentioned. We have developed strategies and programmes, such as the alternative placements programme, in which we give our students on the BEd course opportunities to look at a whole range of teaching and learning experiences with different organisations. We work with over 80 voluntary, community and business sector organisations. All our courses have placements.
966. Much of the innovation and the outward-looking strategies in teacher education have not really been accounted for in some of the debates. In the past year, between 25% and 30% of our students have experienced an international setting for education. We also have major incoming students. When they

- come in, they mix with our students. Through what we do, how we develop our courses and how we review them, we are changing the notion that our students have a very narrow and limited view of the world. I think that where we are not being successful is in communicating that, reassuring Departments and getting that message across. It is like, for example, the comment that was made about the recruitment of teachers —
967. **The Chairperson:** Anne, can I just ask you to draw your remarks to a close? Somebody else has asked to come in, and I am a bit short of time. Chris still has the floor.
968. **Mr Lyttle:** I do not want to open this up too much, but where does careers guidance lie? Is the Department of Education able to do careers guidance by itself?
969. **Dr Heaslett:** As an institution, we take responsibility for giving careers guidance and advice and opening up opportunities to our students. We do not see that as being solely the remit of the Department. OK, the Department gives us the key issues and policy, but we make that operational in reality and try to take it forward in an innovative way.
970. **Mr Douglas:** Thank you for your presentation, Anne. In your letter to the Committee, you talked about the importance of the realignment of the college with the Department of Education. At a previous session, you talked about the importance of the college merging with Queen's University. Representatives from Queen's University have made presentations to us, and they are at odds with you in relation to what Department the responsibilities of DEL should go into. They feel very strongly that this should be located in DETI. If, in the event that there was a merger further down the line, where would you stand on that?
971. **Dr Heaslett:** We would have to look at that context as it emerged. In the Chairman's letter, the invitation to this Committee meeting was for us as a college to express a professional opinion. What I have shared with the Committee is my professional opinion, as someone who currently has a leadership role in higher education with a very considerable remit for teacher education. Therefore, I give my submission to the Committee on that basis.
972. **Mr Douglas:** There is a possibility that, further down the line, the college could merge with Queen's. That is what I am trying to tease out —
973. **The Chairperson:** I would just say, Sammy, that the vice chancellor of Queen's did say that most of Queen's could go to DETI, but that the education bit could go to DE. It may not be black and white.
974. **Mr Douglas:** All I am asking is whether it would be a shock to the system if the college were to merge with Queen's and end up in DETI. You are saying that that would not be the case?
975. **Dr Heaslett:** I think the overwhelming evidence is that our policy context and natural home is the Department of Education.
976. **Mr Douglas:** Thank you.
977. **The Chairperson:** Maybe we should move Greenmount to DARD.
978. **Ms Gildernew:** To where? Greenmount is in DARD. *[Laughter.]*
979. **The Chairperson:** Oh, is it? *[Laughter.]* Anne, I am sorry that the time was so short. We are trying to do so much. I do appreciate you coming in. Thank you so much.
980. **Dr Heaslett:** I hope that I have been of some help.
981. **The Chairperson:** You have certainly clarified some matters. Obviously, the debate will carry on.
982. **The Chairperson:** We will now hear from the Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association (NISCA). You are very welcome. Unfortunately, we are cantering through this. We are pushed for time, and we are trying to keep it fairly succinct at about 15

- minutes. You can say a few words to set the scene, and we will then ask you a few questions. I say that to my colleagues more than to you because, at the end of 15 minutes, I have to tell them, “That is enough”, because we have some other people coming through. The floor is yours.
983. **Ms Cathy Moore (Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association):** I am the chairperson of the Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association, and we represent statutory education and the further education sector and any careers work that comes in line with that. You have our report and what NISCA represents.
984. We were asked to respond to the consultation on the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), and we stated quite clearly that we believe that, in the Department of Education, there is learning at all ages and, therefore, post-16 education and higher education should probably be allied with the same Department for the continuity of young people. Learning takes place in many different environments and throughout life and, therefore, should stay with the Department of Education.
985. We also do a lot of work with the Careers Service Northern Ireland, which currently sits with the Department for Employment and Learning. It has very strong, long-standing partnerships with further education colleges and statutory education. We have a concern about where that would lie in the scheme of things upon dissolution, and we want to ensure that the partnerships will continue to be strong with the schools. However, we believe that the work that the Careers Service does would fit very well and be allied with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) because of the labour market information. For example, a DEL economist will be coming to address our conference in May. Anything that lies within economics and the labour market information fits in very well with DETI, and, therefore, we feel that the Careers Service would be well aligned there.
986. **The Chairperson:** OK. Any questions, folks? That was very succinct and to the point.
987. **Mr Lyttle:** Careers guidance interests me and exercises me an awful lot. One outcome of the Committee for Employment and Learning’s exploration of the Careers Service over recent months and years has been that DEL Careers Service has a menu of options and tools that schools can avail themselves of in delivering careers guidance to pupils. However, as far as I can see, there is a bit of a disconnect between that menu of tools or options and the obligation on schools to avail themselves of it. We have no real control or monitoring over how much they use those, and, therefore, there is a bit of concern about the reality of careers guidance delivery in the schools. Are there any comments on how that should be improved in line with the review of Departments?
988. **Ms Fiona Browne (Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association):** Every school has its own service level agreement with the Careers Service, and it is up to each individual school to see what opportunities or help they need from the Careers Service. The three of us are sitting here nodding. My careers adviser is certainly in all the time, and we use that service very much from a guidance aspect. We feel that, in our school — you two jump in if I am speaking out of turn — we provide the information and advice, but it is very much up to the Careers Service to take the time to delve deeper into the guidance aspect. My careers adviser is very open to whatever we need and will provide anything that I request. She has never said no to any of our requests. However, I take what you are saying in that there is no obligation on a school to take a minimum and that it is very much negotiated between the two.
989. **Ms Moore:** It is a problem not just with career guidance but with careers education throughout Northern Ireland. We cover all of Northern Ireland, and we find inconsistencies. Each principal guides each school and will allocate

- the budget and decide how high on the agenda careers will come. If the principal does not give value or weight to careers education or guidance, they will not allocate the resources, especially in the current economic climate when budgets are becoming much smaller. We feel really strongly about that. There should be a statutory obligation on every post-primary school and further education college to provide at least a minimum of the career guidance from the Careers Service. It can prove impartiality, and, with the entitlement framework and so many changes in education, it is really important that young people understand the full menu of options of the types and levels of qualifications. That also applies to adults, and the Careers Service also gives guidance to adults. There are so many different types of qualifications, and how is one supposed to negotiate one's way through them?
990. There is an implied obligation in Preparing for Success, through which DEL and DENI work together on careers. It is a step in the right direction, and we had an update from the two Departments on the progress of the implementation of Preparing for Success. We would like to see more of that.
991. **Mr Lyttle:** This is not a criticism of you but a criticism of what is out there. You are able to raise the point that it depends what weight the principal adds to careers education. Especially in the current economic climate, I cannot imagine any alternative but for that to be a high weight. Your point is quite concerning.
992. **Ms Moore:** Completely.
993. **Ms F Browne:** At my school, careers is very high on the agenda. We are on the school development plan, and we are on the action plan every year. Money is getting tighter, but, if I need something, the resources are there. I do not have a budget any more as such. It is promoted and pushed at every opportunity, but, on the other hand, we know from our experiences in NISCA that there are an awful lot of schools where that is not the case.
994. **The Chairperson:** There is still a bit of criticism from certain quarters that our schools are not producing the types of candidates that the economy is looking for.
995. **Ms Moore:** Yes, that view is very common.
996. **The Chairperson:** So, who is responsible for addressing that shortcoming?
997. **Ms Moore:** That is a good question.
998. **Ms F Browne:** For me, school is not about books as such. Yes, you have to pass your exams and so forth, but school is about preparation for life in general. We currently have an education system that is very much driven towards results at the end of the day. When teaching, I try to broaden my kids' outlook and try to give them different stuff, but, ultimately, the feeling is for them to question whether they need it for their exam. There needs to be a change so that breadth and depth is valued as opposed to ticking the right box on an exam paper.
999. **The Chairperson:** If that is the case, will it be your organisation that, ideally, will promote such a change of perception?
1000. **Ms Moore:** Not necessarily on our own. The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) introduced GCSE and Key Stage 3 Learning for Life and Work. Entrepreneurship and employability is a key element of that. That is delivered across all schools in Northern Ireland and is a way forward, but NISCA could not necessarily do that on its own. It is an initiative that needs to be taken, probably by the Department of Education.
1001. **The Chairperson:** At the weekend, I was at a very inspirational talk by the man who discovered the wreck of Titanic. He is really into geology, which is his real work. He said that, at P7, maths is the most popular subject and by the age of 14, it is the least popular subject. He was making the pitch that, if you do not get kids interested in

- their first three years of big school, as it were, you lose them. All the jobs end up requiring those subjects. He said that he has science jobs left, right and centre. Someone needs to direct people, at that age, that that is where they have an aptitude and that that is where there is a need. We hear all the time about the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) agenda. I do not know whether the responsibility is with you, but someone has to do it. The question is: if it is not you, who is it? Whoever it is, are they better in a Department of Education, a Department of the economy or some other Department?
1002. **Ms Moore:** It is probably the Department of Education. If an edict does not come from the Department of Education, some schools will not pay any heed. They will say, “Yes, we know” but still stick to what they have to do with limited budgets. I do not know whether I am talking out of turn, but I think that, unless something comes from the Department of Education that provides funding for statutory education, it is not going to happen.
1003. **The Chairperson:** They are very schoolmarmish, those schools.
1004. **Ms Moore:** They can be.
1005. **Ms Gildernew:** To follow on from that, I think that “schools” is too generic a term. The grammar sector is a law unto itself, and a lot of the academically driven stuff comes from that sector. I went to St Catherine’s College in Armagh, which is a comprehensive, and it prided itself on turning out capable, well-rounded young women who were ready for the labour market, further academic study or whatever it would be. We were all educated together, and our abilities were honed towards where our careers were going to take us. There was a different focus in a school like that, where not everybody was going to get three or four A levels and go on to study law or medicine. We need to be more discerning about the term “schools”.
1006. Pardon me for going on about it, but one of the biggest areas for jobs at the moment is the agrifood sector. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) did a piece of work, in partnership with other organisations, headed up by Tony O’Kane from O’Kane’s foods. Those organisations decided that they needed to go out to schools and tell young people that agrifood is an industry in which they can travel, in which there are science and technology jobs and which is not all about hairnets and wellies, and that there are career opportunities that girls in particular were not hearing about, because it was not a very sexy industry for careers advisers to point them towards. We have more scientists and computer technicians in the agrifood sector than in any other sector here. However the industry had to do that itself.
1007. **The Chairperson:** I need to draw the session to a close, because the time is against us. You have certainly given us food for thought on the idea that, if it is not from the Department of Education —
1008. **Ms Moore:** Apologies if I spoke out of turn. It is the reality in schools of any type.
1009. **The Chairperson:** It was useful to have it. We do detect —
1010. **Mr Lyttle:** Ask the question. *[Laughter.]* There is a generic question that he has asked everybody, but he has stopped asking it in case we were making fun of him.
1011. **The Chairperson:** I will ask it, actually, since I have been hammered on it. I will conclude by saying that we do pick up your sense of frustration, so we have got that, and we will see how that comes forward, but it leads on to the question that I have asked a number of people. Do you see the proposed changes as something that makes you a little bit anxious, or do you see it as an opportunity to get things right?
1012. **Ms Hilary Harbinson (Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association):** Personally speaking, it

- gives me a sense of anxiety when I think about the provision that DEL and the Careers Service provide to a head of careers like me. I come from a mixed-ability, small, integrated college, and I find the impartiality of the Careers Services's support invaluable. I feel anxious about how that provision will change and how that may affect my day-to-day working life.
1013. **The Chairperson:** So you are not sure that it is change other than for change's sake?
1014. **Ms Moore:** I think that, if our voices are heard here and our concerns are taken on board, we will all agree. There are so many inconsistencies in our speciality of careers throughout Northern Ireland that I am hopeful that there could be a potential to change things for the better, because I am not sure how long they can continue the way they are.
1015. **The Chairperson:** Time has beaten us. I do not know what the length of time is for the Committee, because it is an ongoing thing, but we may look again at the careers issue in a bit more detail.
1016. **Ms Moore:** You have our contact details.
1017. **The Chairperson:** We will bring you back for that.
1018. **Mr Lyttle:** That would be great. I would be keen to do that.
1019. **Ms F Browne:** We would love to.
1020. **The Chairperson:** Your comments will be listened to. We appreciate you taking the time to send us the paper. Thank you ever so much.
1021. **The Chairperson:** We will now hear from the Employment Services Board. It is very good to see you. We have 15 minutes or thereabouts, and the floor is yours.
1022. **Mr Tom Mervyn (Employment Services Board):** Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.
1023. **Mr John Simpson (Employment Services Board):** I just want to introduce Tom, who is the hard worker who has lived through an experience which is incomplete. We are here because we are saying that there is more work to be done. Tom is the product of the creation of the Employment Services Board, covering west Belfast and the greater Shankill area, which, in turn, was an outcome from the task force of early 2002, when we wrote our words of wisdom, which are not yet as fully implemented as we would wish. Nevertheless, part of our case to you today is that there is ongoing work here, and we would like to see it given some mention so that it continues. Tom will make the case to you.
1024. **Mr Mervyn:** Before we get into the issue of the potential dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), I will give you a brief overview of the Employment Services Board and the area that we represent. West Belfast and the greater Shankill area has around 50% of Belfast's unemployed, its worklessness and its income support and incapacity benefit claimants. It has worklessness rates of over 50% and as much as 65% in some individual wards. That means that almost 65% of the working-age population in those areas, including the unemployed and the otherwise economically inactive, is not working.
1025. Given Belfast's importance in the region, the employment and employability issues that exist in west Belfast and the Shankill are not just a city problem; they are a regional problem. If we do not crack it, the region as a whole suffers, not just Belfast and certainly not just our areas, although the coal face in our areas is where the problem manifests itself most.
1026. We also have to remember that the areas that we represent amount to the size of the city of Derry/Londonderry. It is not a small area or a neighbourhood renewal area, which is what we keep getting thrown back at us from DEL's point of view. It does not like area-based initiatives; it prefers city-based initiatives. We just want to make the point that our area is very substantial, not just in the city but in the region.

1027. The Employment Services Board was established in 2003 and was incorporated in 2004 as a direct result of approaches from DEL. Yes, its creation was a recommendation of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill task forces, along with the employers' forum, but it was the initial contact with DEL, when it established its employability and unemployment task force at around the same time, that led to our establishment. The early funding came from DEL through the Targeting Initiatives programme.
1028. In the early days, there was a very collaborative approach with very strong partnership working. We had a genuine problem on which the mainstream services had failed to have an impact, and DEL was very keen to work with us, because we had plenty of ideas at a local level, to see what could be done. Unfortunately for us, over the past number of years, from 2007 onwards, there has been a complete change in DEL's attitude towards working at a local level with local partners, despite the success that we had over the period until then.
1029. The key to our approach was the acceptance and acknowledgement that the task force area required a co-ordinated approach, not just with DEL and other statutory bodies but with community partners, local businesses, a range of providers in education and training and employment, and specific groups that worked with the likes of political ex-prisoners and people with disabilities. We wanted to use our combined expertise to make a real difference. As I said, our early evaluations showed that we were successful in doing that.
1030. The relationship with DEL took a dip from 2007 onwards, but the other parts of that initial partnership have stayed in place. The Employers' Forum for West Belfast and the Greater Shankill still exists and is very much behind what we are doing, working with the major employers across the city. The forum is chaired by Michael Ryan from Bombardier Aerospace. We still have our providers on the ground, and, more recently, we have had a far stronger engagement at a local community level with the likes of the neighbourhood renewal partnerships, who recognise that, within the context of neighbourhood renewal, they cannot improve employment and employability on their own at a local level. So there is renewed emphasis on looking at a collaborative approach locally across west Belfast and the Shankill. It seems that there is strong support for that approach from everyone bar DEL. That is the history —
1031. **The Chairperson:** Is that a natural break, Tom? I want to get a few questions from these folk, and then you can talk a wee bit more.
1032. **Ms Gildernew:** I think that you just cut him off in his stride. I happy to wait a wee minute if Tom wants to finish that point.
1033. **Mr Simpson:** Say something about the future of DEL. Are you getting to that?
1034. **Mr Mervyn:** I was getting to that. That was the historical background.
1035. From our point of view, none of the options arising from the potential dissolution of DEL is ideal. One of the options is to split DEL's functions. DEL used to be more naturally split between the FE and HE sectors and the preparation for work side, which looked at skills and unemployment. It would be a bit unjust to say that DEL has not made great strides in realigning the areas more appropriately over the past number of years, particularly in respect of the FE sector, where the types of courses offered are a lot more aligned to the current and future skills needs of employers. That said, we have a lot further to go, so that work is by no means done.
1036. There has also been closer alignment of the preparation for work side, or the employability services side, with the FE and HE sectors, and that is to be greatly welcomed as well. However, again, there is a lot further to go. For us, one of the pitfalls of putting the FE and HE sectors under the Department of Education's

- control is that we could undo the progress that has been made to date, despite the fact that we still have a lot further to go. There is also a greater need for the preparation for work side, or the employability services side, to be far better aligned with those involved in job creation, namely the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and Invest NI. There is massive disjointedness between what DEL does and what DETI does, and there is not enough work across the two. So, there are pitfalls and problems, but there are also opportunities across the two options for the way DEL is to be split.
1037. **Ms Gildernew:** That actually helps because my question follows on from that. DETI has not been that impressive over the years, given the decades of underinvestment in west Belfast and the Shankill, multigenerational unemployment, etc. Invest NI has not exactly covered itself in glory either. I think that we can be fairly robust about that. So, I am sure that you do have anxieties. If we were to look at the unemployment rates in the area in which you work, we would see that there has not been an awful lot done to counter that. It is very worrying that there are families facing with further multigenerational unemployment. If the DEL functions that relate to your organisation were to go into DETI, would that be the best option, or do you think that there would be a better option elsewhere, be it in the Department for Social Development (DSD), the Department of Education (DE) or whatever? Do you think that DETI is where you want to be?
1038. **Mr Mervyn:** It would seem to be the best option for the preparation for work side. DSD does not have a track record in creating employment or dealing with people with employability issues. In fact, as Fra knows, we are having difficulties at the minute because DSD is withdrawing funding from some of the neighbourhood renewal area initiatives that had been doing some employability stuff, albeit on the advice of DEL. That is one of our other issues. Invest NI does not have a very good track record in respect of the number of jobs created in west Belfast and Shankill. However, it is the best of a bad bunch. It seems to be the only viable option for that section. However, there is an awful lot of work to be done.
1039. One of the key opportunities of this whole process is to look at where some of the issues with DEL have been and to try to do something about them in the process of repositioning its functions. Among them is the fact that DEL is both poacher and gamekeeper. It makes policies, and it is, by and large, the main deliverer of those policies. When we try to point out or suggest things that could be done better, it is often seen by those in the Department as a criticism of the Department and they tend to close ranks. That is why we feel that we find ourselves in such a position, where the Department has withdrawn a lot of its support, at the minute.
1040. **Mr Simpson:** Incidentally, that is a criticism of the Department.
1041. **Ms Gildernew:** You are more diplomatic, Tom. That is why you are doing most of the speaking.
1042. **Mr Mervyn:** It is a reality. We feel that DEL has withdrawn its support for resourcing us because we challenge what is being done and how it is being done. In the early days, that was done collaboratively and positively, because the relationship was good. However, if you change people in that relationship, you can end up with a different dynamic, and that is where we find ourselves now.
1043. Another key thing related to that is that DEL has a rule that it does not fund organisations or initiatives unless they fall within one of its programmes. That assumes a couple of things. First, it assumes that its programmes cover everything and do so suitably. Secondly, it assumes that its programmes are suitable in all circumstances and for all areas. If you look at the history of west Belfast and the Shankill, you see that that is clearly not the case. In its early days, DEL recognised that, which is why

- it worked so collaboratively with us. Moving forward, we worry that it seems to have backtracked from that point of view.
1044. **Mr Lyttle:** That has also been an issue with alternative education and training provision. Does that problem pertain just in DEL or in Departments in general?
1045. **Mr Mervyn:** It can be argued that it pertains to Departments in general. Particularly when facing funding cuts, Departments tend to look to their own stuff and what they provide in-house. Collaborative working outside tends to be the first thing to fall, which is unfortunate because if we did more of that, especially at the minute, we would probably get better results in the long run. Look at the impact of the downturn on west Belfast and the Shankill — other areas may have had a higher increase in the unemployment rate, but we still sit a good three or four percentage points above other areas of Belfast.
1046. Not only that, the types of people that we have on our unemployment register are moving further and further from the labour market. We need to keep doing the collaborative work for those people, in particular, for whom mainstream services are not having the desired impact or as great impact as they should. If we do not keep up that work and invest more in it, we will have an even bigger differential when the economy picks up again.
1047. **Mr Lyttle:** Make sure that you bring those issues to the attention of the Committee involved in whatever Department this falls to down the line, because I reckon that that has been an issue.
1048. **The Chairperson:** I think that it is fair to say that there has been a certain amount of disappointment, though, Chris, that they have not been able to get their message across. It is recognised and on the record that there is something of a problem in how we deal with that. It is almost what I was talking about earlier, that we need a Department for community regeneration or something like that.
1049. **Mr Lyttle:** I have direct experience of a group trying to put forward a tailored solution to meet needs that was outwith the departmental programme. So, it is an ongoing issue. Keep bringing it forward. We need to know about such issues.
1050. **Mr Douglas:** I thank John and Tom for coming along this afternoon.
1051. There has been some success in the social economy and community tourism in west Belfast and the Shankill. It appears to me that the likes of DETI and DEL worked fairly well together recently on the Titanic Belfast model in trying to engage communities and getting people into training and employment. At the launch, I was encouraged to meet young people from east Belfast who had been unemployed. Would that have been your experience in west Belfast, including the Shankill, Tom?
1052. **Mr Mervyn:** I sat on the Titanic Quarter work group, and to be blunt, no, it did not have the desired effect that we would have liked. We should have been doing more to make sure that investments on that scale had a greater impact on those further removed from the labour market. We put a number of people through pre-employment training programmes and stuff, but we were really not thinking far enough ahead. We are still in the mode of reacting to opportunities as they come up and not working far enough ahead. When you look at the Oxford Economics predictions, you see that the number of entry-level jobs further down the line will reduce year by year moving into the next 15 or 20 years. That puts us in a particular position, with more disadvantaged people with lower skills. More of them will be competing for fewer jobs. We really need to use opportunities like Titanic Quarter to do longer term programmes to get people up the skills ladders, not just preparing them for the entry-level jobs. Due to the economic situation, we had unemployed people who were unemployed for longer than they would have been a few years

- ago. A lot of people who were termed as unemployed had pretty good work histories and success in employment in the past, whereas the ones we are really trying to target are those who are further removed from the labour market.
1053. **Mr Douglas:** Could there be potential for improvement along the lines that you talked about if DEL merged with DETI?
1054. **Mr Simpson:** The thrust of what Tom was saying and what is in my mind is that DEL has been moving in that direction at a pace that we would criticise very heavily. Moving the subjects towards the Department of Education would mean a change of direction. It will certainly mean that we will have to rethink things and start again. That sounds like the wrong answer. If DEL has to disappear, it is a pity. If it has to disappear, somehow or other, make the momentum of what they are trying to do even greater and tell those who are responsible for the change —
1055. **The Chairperson:** John, it seems, though, that it is not tackling the same question. If you are looking at local solutions for local unemployability issues, that is more like community regeneration. I know that you do not want to be put in a neighbourhood thing because it is too small, but I am not sure whether lumping it in with DETI, which has a focus on enterprise and, perhaps, reduced labour, is the right thing to do. I am not saying that it should not be done; it needs a different type of structure.
1056. **Mr Mervyn:** That is the difficulty, because neither of them has a good track record of doing things more locally. DETI does not, and we have only recently heard DEL even talking about city strategies around employment and employability. Until very recently, both said that they were regional organisations that promoted the region or employment or employability in the region. Their programmes were cut accordingly. There was not that much tailoring for local needs, local opportunities and local circumstances.
- It is only very recently that we have even had some meaningful-ish engagement with Invest NI about how it operates in west Belfast and Shankill, but, again, there is still a very long way to go.
1057. **The Chairperson:** They focus in a different way and their outputs are on a different thing. It needs a rethink.
1058. I have to make sure that everybody gets equal time, so I need to bring this to a close shortly.
1059. **Mr F McCann:** I welcome the presentation. I know the organisation well. I think that it will be giving us a presentation in the near future about some aspects of DEL.
1060. **Mr Douglas:** That is breaking news, Fra.
1061. **Mr F McCann:** Sammy talked about the Titanic Quarter. When Belfast City Council was just starting to discuss the whole question of the Titanic Quarter and the new building was going up, one of my concerns was that the wonderful building would mean nothing to the communities that lived about it, even though tens of thousands of people would come to see it. One of the arguments that I made was that you needed to meet organisations in east Belfast, west Belfast and across the city and further afield — rural areas too, Michelle — to try to ensure that employment benefits would be gained and that people would feel ownership of the thing. After all the publicity dies and everything goes away, I am not sure whether that will be the case. You may have lost another golden opportunity.
1062. From what Tom has said, I believe that DEL has been a fairly difficult organisation to deal with; certainly, that is the case in many working-class communities. Departmental officials sat here and talked about NEETs, praising the work that they had done on that issue. However, organisations that they represent had very bad experiences. It is sad to say that many of those groups had to think outside the box to try to create employment opportunities. They were told that the Department does not

- think locally; it thinks regionally. That has been a major difficulty and problem.
1063. You talk about 7%, 8% or 9% unemployment. We live in areas where there is 50% and 60% unemployment. As Michelle said, it is generational. It is about how we deal with it.
1064. **The Chairperson:** I think that the point you are making, Fra, is that we need some sort of mechanism or structure for reactive local initiatives that think outside the box. I understand why Invest NI has to do what it does in certain circumstances and, even, what DEL has to do because it is macro-managing stuff. However, we all know that one size does not fit all. We have to find some sort of structure that supports real regeneration.
1065. **Mr Lyttle:** Chair, we are advised that the social investment fund is set aside for that, without a great deal more detail on exactly what that will look like or what it will do. I know that we are running out of time, but it would be interesting to hear the Employment Services Board's thoughts on how that project might assist it as well.
1066. **Mr Mervyn:** It is basically our lifeline. Over the past wee while, we have been running from pillar to post to try to get funding. Nobody wants to fund anything strategic. Unless you have x number of people doing x, y and z and getting x, y and z, they do not want to invest in the strategic side of things. It is one of our great hopes that there will be a more co-ordinated approach moving forward. Key to that is the word that Fra used: "local". We see local problems on the ground. Yes, they are also regional problems. However, if we are not involved and do not have some sense of ownership, not just of the solutions but of the problems, how will someone who comes from outside and fires a regional strategy on top of us make meaningful difference and change? The social investment fund is a great hope for us.
1067. **Mr Lyttle:** So, you are hopeful about the social investment fund. Fair enough.
1068. **Mr Simpson:** I want to add a couple of thoughts, Chairman. First, as we try to find a place for this thing — you, Chairman, were struggling with where we would put the centre of action — there is a temptation to say that DSD tends to work locally. However, bear in mind that its title is the Department for Social Development. This is a mixture of economic and social development. DSD does not necessarily lend itself to the sort of things that we are talking about.
1069. Secondly, in the process of running this separate organisation over the past 10 years, we have had our disagreements with Invest NI and, indeed, quite bitter arguments with it about what it might or might not have been doing. The short answer is that we needed to keep it involved. The more that we got it involved, the better. To take that away would be a mistake. Changing the structure of DEL must leave us arguing about how Invest NI is linked into the actions.
1070. Thirdly, we started this exercise 10 years ago. By now, we should be living with the extension of the University of Ulster campus on the west Belfast/Shankill site. That died a death. Indeed, for many months, it was a misplaced emphasis. However, we still have the right emphasis on further education and the enterprise, entrepreneurship and employability (e3) project, which is now on the site. That is the right idea. It now needs to be developed and fulfilled. However, that calls for Belfast Metropolitan College to do its job even better. We are saying that we must engage further and higher education to do better, but not by splitting it away from where we think that it needs to be placed.
1071. **Mr Mervyn:** And do it in partnership with us.
1072. **Mr Simpson:** Preferably, yes.
1073. **The Chairperson:** OK. We have got the point. I will give Fra the last word.
1074. **Mr F McCann:** I know that we have been talking about DEL being divided in two between DETI and DE. However, there is

- another element, which is the jobs and benefits offices.
1075. **Mr Mervyn:** I would put them in councils.
1076. **Mr F McCann:** They complement DSD. Given that DSD deals with benefits and is supposed to deal with deprivation, there seems to be a disconnect between DEL and DSD with regard to their offices. Could you see that fitting in with a DSD approach so that the approaches were complementary?
1077. **Mr Mervyn:** It is possible that it could. However, one of the worst things to happen to our local communities as a result of trying to help them move out of unemployment was the co-location of services. That worked in getting statistics down from a Government point of view —
1078. **Mr F McCann:** Speculation at its best.
1079. **Mr Mervyn:** Absolutely. It failed for us because, before co-location, people were engaged with DEL through the job centres — people did go into the job centres, so DEL always had a reputation for helping — but, once job centres were co-located with the other services, they became more part of the system. That was probably more detrimental to the Department than anything else over the past 10 or 15 years, because it put people completely off engaging with it if they did not have to. That is why the work that we do is so important, because we are dealing mostly with the people who will not, unless they absolutely have to, go into a jobs and benefits office.
1080. **Mr Simpson:** In the process of talking to you this morning, we have not mentioned the job assist work that has been going on, which is a fundamental building block of what we have been working with.
1081. **Mr Lyttle:** So, putting the job centre and the benefits office in the same building has put people off availing themselves of it as a job centre. Is that what you are saying?
1082. **Mr Mervyn:** That is our experience. They feel that, if they go in to look for help in looking for a job, it is connected in some way with their benefits, and they are afraid of saying or doing something that will have a comeback.
1083. **Mr F McCann:** That is more to do with the system that has been developed —
1084. **The Chairperson:** This was a 15-minute résumé that Michelle managed to get into 45 minutes for me.
1085. **Ms Gildernew:** Do not blame me.
1086. **The Chairperson:** Yes, you. I tried to stop and you said, “No, no, no”. So, I just said, “OK”. I am the Committee’s servant.
1087. **Ms Gildernew:** This is sexism.
1088. **The Chairperson:** It is as well you have the Health Committee at 2.00 pm.
1089. **Ms Gildernew:** I have the Health Committee at 2.00 pm, aye.
1090. **The Chairperson:** Thank you both very much, Tom and John. A report of the meeting will be published by Hansard. We will be producing a report on the deliberations. You have given us much to think about, and there may be individuals who wish to follow up. Thank you very much.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 3

Written Submissions

Appendix 3 – List of Written Submissions

1. Action on Hearing Loss
2. Alternative Education Providers Forum
3. CBI Northern Ireland
4. Construction Employers' Federation
5. Colleges NI
6. Disability Action
7. Forum for Adult Learners NI
8. Irish Congress of Trade Unions
9. Include Youth
10. Institute of Directors
11. Invest NI
12. Labour Relations Agency
13. Law Centre NI
14. Mencap
15. NASUWT
16. NIACRO
17. NICCY
18. NIPSA
19. NISCA
20. Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce
21. Open Colleges Network Northern Ireland
22. Orchardville Society
23. Parkanuar College
24. Queens' University Belfast and University of Ulster
25. St. Mary's University College Belfast
26. Stranmillis University College Belfast
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29. Ulster Supported Employment Ltd
30. Ulster Teachers Union
31. Departmental Senior Management Team
32. Departmental Analysis of Staff Responses
33. Staff responses to the Departmental survey on the Dissolution of the Department
34. Proposed dissolution of the Department Responses by Grade in Tabular Form

Action on Hearing Loss

Basil McCrea MLA
 Chairperson
 Committee for Employment and Learning
 Room 283
 Parliament Buildings
 Ballmiscoe
 Stormont
 Belfast BT4 3XX



9 February 2012

Dear Mr McCrea

Thank you for your letter of 26 January giving us the opportunity to contribute to the discussions around the proposed dissolution of the Department of Employment and Learning and the realignment of its functions.

We would firstly like to record our thanks to the Department of Employment and Learning, its Ministers and officials, for the fruitful and longstanding relationship we had over the years. In particular, the commitment made in 2008 by Sir Reg Empey to the development of local sign interpreting training and the provision of teacher training to deaf sign language tutors. These courses are now coming into fruition and we are hopeful that the outcome of the Department's commitment will be significantly improved access to communication for deaf sign language users across Northern Ireland, to enable improved access to everyday services.

To take your questions in turn;

1. Given the functions and purpose of your organisation and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

As an organisation representing the broad spectrum of deaf and hard of hearing people and dealing with a wide range of issues, we think we will have reason to engage with both the Departments of Enterprise and Education.

We have a long-established Employment Advice service, providing specialist support to deaf job seekers and students, young deaf people in transition and employers and organisations. We are committed to promoting excellence within post-primary education, special education, and access to learning within people's communities. We aim to increase the number of deaf people in employment and training, and to ensure access to opportunities which will increase their capacity and ensure inclusion in the world of work and education. As such, we can see that both Departments will be key partners in the delivery of these aims.

Also, as outlined above, we have been leading in the work around the development of local training to increase the numbers of communication professionals, which involves further and higher education. We assume this will be subsumed by the Department of Education.

We are currently campaigning for an increase in the number of qualified lipreading teachers in Northern Ireland, which we have identified as a joint opportunity for both the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, and the Department of Employment and Learning. Given the possible dissolution of DEL, we would be keen to ensure that this issue is

Patron His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh KG, KT
President The Rt Hon Lord Ashley of Stoke CH
Chairman Gerald Corbett **Chief Executive** Jackie Ballard

Action on Hearing Loss is the trading name of The Royal National Institute for Deaf People. A registered charity in England and Wales (207720) and Scotland (SC038926). Registered as a charitable company limited by guarantee in England and Wales No. 454169. Registered office: 19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL.



addressed from a training perspective via DENI, and as an employment opportunity as could be the responsibility of DETI.

2. Why do you take the view expressed at 1 above?

Without knowing the detail around the proposed realignment of the functions, our views are suggestions at this stage.

3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

Not specifically – again these are suggestions.

4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

We would have some concerns about the fact that the staff at the Department of Employment and Learning have built up a good level of knowledge of issues affecting people who are deaf or who have a hearing loss, through close working with ourselves, and that this may be lost. We are likewise concerned that staff within the other Departments may not have had the same exposure to these issues, and that it will take some time to build up levels of awareness and understanding.

We are also concerned that progress made to date on issues such as access to employment and training, the development of interpreting and lipreading, may be slowed by the impact of the change in Departmental responsibilities. We would recommend that the transfer of responsibilities be managed in such a way to ensure consistency in the management of partnerships and relationships going forward.

On a positive note, we would be hopeful that by combining all levels of education, from 'cradle to grave', within one Department, transition through the education system for people who are deaf or have hearing loss would be more consistent and could assist learning providers, standards and learners.

We are happy to discuss any of these issues with the Committee in more detail.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Claire Lavery

Communications and Campaigns Manager

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Formerly known as RNID

Alternative Education Providers Forum



Dear Chairperson of The Committee for Employment and Learning

RE: Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Thank you for your letter dated 26/01/2012 regarding the above. The Alternative Education Provider's Forum would like to submit the following response to your questions -:

1. *Given the functions and purpose of your organisation and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?*
 1. The responsibility for Alternative Education for young people of compulsory school age lies with the Department of Education and it is to this Department we feel our sector should be aligned.
2. *Why do you take the view expressed at 1 above?*
 2. We take this view because we work primarily with young people aged 14-16 who are disaffected from mainstream education, with education for employability and lifeskills being our primary function. We feel this clearly lies within the remit of the Department of Education.
3. *Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?*
 3. Our experiences from the past are that when advocating for services for a young person over compulsory school age but still in need of support from AEP Providers was highlighted, there was often confusion about which department had responsibility for that young person. If the Department of Education is to have responsibility for the 14 – 19 Strategy then quite clearly the work we do should come under Education.
4. *What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?*
 4. Our primary concerns are twofold -:
 - a) Where does responsibility for Training Organisations lie and who will be responsible for their monitoring and tracking? The AEP Forum believe that It is crucial that monitoring, evaluation and review (MER) mechanisms are integral to the delivery of education/training
 - b) Who will now take responsibility for the implementation of the NEETs Strategy previously led by DEL and will the Department who take over responsibility of the strategy be committed to maintaining the focus of resources to that particular group?

5. *Any other relevant comments?*

5. From a purely practical point of view, it will be easier and more effective for the AEP Providers to work with one Department, however, we would hope that the needs of the young people we work with are considered important enough to receive adequate mainstream funding across the entire Alternative Education Sector and further supported to allow for the dissemination of acquired knowledge and good practice with Schools, Training Organisations and Further Education Colleges on successful pre NEET/NEET interventions.

Signed on behalf of the AEP Forum by:

Caroline Rutherford

Caroline Rutherford (Chairperson)

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CBI Northern Ireland

Mr Basil McCrea
 Chairperson
 Committee for Employment and Learning
 Room 283
 Parliament Buildings
 Stormont
 Belfast BT4 3XX



10 February 2012

Dear Basil,

Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Thank you for letter of 26 January and request for views on the dissolution of the Department.

The issue was considered in some detail by CBI members over two years ago, during and after the Independent Review of Economic Policy (IREP). The views of the business community remain very clear.

The CBI supports the merger of DEL with DETI – bringing these two key departments together under a single ‘Department of the Economy’ makes a great deal of sense, and should be a priority for the Executive if they are serious about putting the economy as their top priority.

The business community will be concerned if DEL is split up on political grounds, rather than on what is in the best interests of the economy. There should be no salami slicing – the key DEL functions, including Further and Higher Education should be merged with DETI. It is vital that we have the right skills to underpin the Economic Strategy. We have long argued for training provision and skills to be more closely aligned with economic needs – progress has been achieved but we believe moving the core functions of DEL into DETI will be a further significant step forward.

CBI members believe the four core activities currently undertaken by DEL are strongly linked with the development of the economy and a merger with DETI will be a welcome progression. DEL’s key activities are:

- Enhancing the provision of learning and skills, including entrepreneurship, enterprise, management and leadership
- Increasing the level of research and development, creativity and innovation in the Northern Ireland economy
- Helping individuals to acquire jobs, including self-employment, and improving the linkages between employment programmes and skills development and
- The development and maintenance of the framework of employment rights and responsibilities

These have clear unambiguous links with the economy. We believe the effectiveness of policy will be improved through these functions being integrated with DETI, and its more direct engagement with the enterprise sector. Our members believe that this closer integration



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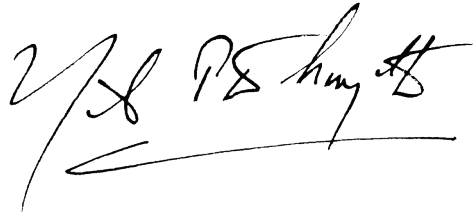
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will lead to more relevant and responsive training and skills provision. We must build on the progress achieved in recent years and both widen and deepen the linkages between skills and the enterprise sector.

In terms of names we believe there is merit in calling the new department the Department for the Economy and Skills (ensuring that the skills aspect of the department is reinforced in its title).

On a broader note the CBI does support a further reduction in the number of Departments, and we have welcomed the commitment in the draft Programme for Government, to complete a review of government structures during 2012.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nigel PE Smyth', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Nigel PE Smyth

Director, CBI Northern Ireland

Construction Employers' Federation



Our Ref *t:\cef\del\bmccrea.doc*

6 February 2012

Mr Basil McCrea MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 283
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BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Dear Basil

DISSOLUTION OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Thank you for your letter of 26 January 2012.

We have a history of working closely and productively with the Department for Employment and Learning however we agree that the dissolution of the Department is now appropriate as fundamentally there are too many government departments.

With regard to your first question, we believe that the current role of the Department in developing skills would lie more appropriately with the Department of Education, whereas their role in facilitating employment opportunities would be better sited with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Turning to your second question, our experience is that with regard to the development of employment opportunities, DEL's historical interest has to an extent been skewed toward meeting targets rather than delivering tangible employment outcomes. With DETI's focus on economic growth and regeneration, we believe that this function would now be more appropriately carried out by them.

Finally we believe that for the dissolution of the Department to be worthwhile it must result in significant resource and efficiency savings.

Yours sincerely

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Colleges NI



Colleges Northern Ireland response to the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Colleges Northern Ireland (Colleges NI) is the membership body representing all six of Northern Ireland's regional Colleges of Further and Higher Education. Colleges NI welcomes the opportunity to reflect the agreed views of the sector about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL).

1. Given the functions and purpose of your organisation and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

Northern Ireland's Colleges are central to our economy. They are a key delivery arm of government and vital to the achievement of many social, education and economic targets in the Programme for Government.

The six regional Colleges have a combined turnover of almost £250 million with over 4,100 expert lecturers and professional staff delivering a range of vital professional, technical and vocational education and training opportunities and direct support to thousands of local companies.

The Colleges help to deliver a number of key Executive policies, particularly 'Further Education Means Business for People, Communities and the Economy in Northern Ireland' that defines the strategic role for the Colleges as:

- A key driver of local, sub-regional and regional economic development;
- An active agent of social cohesion; and
- A major promoter of lifelong learning.

College provision meets the distinct needs of many different groups of learners through both full-time and part-time study. The Colleges offer a broad range of professional, technical and vocational provision from entry level to post-graduate level, including:

- Over 155,000 professional, technical and vocational enrolments;
- Almost 7,000 Apprentices and Training for Success (TfS) Trainees;
- Over 11,000 Higher Education enrolments (20% of all HE provision to indigenous students studying within Northern Ireland);
- Support for 4,500 businesses through training and bespoke programmes and direct support including Business Improvement Techniques, Open Source Solutions, Rapid Prototyping, Mentoring, etc;
- Up to 120,000 hours of provision into the post-primary schools sector (to 12,000 students);
- Almost 25,000 Essential Skills enrolments (literacy, numeracy and ICT).

While the Colleges will seek to maximise the potential of all options and retain a strong social and educational focus there is a consensus that the sector's alignment with economic priorities suggests that DETI may provide the best fit, particularly in making best use of resources to develop the skills base and support economic development. However, the importance of the colleges' role in addressing the 14 – 19 year old agenda must not be underestimated.

The Colleges will continue to make a central contribution to the delivery of the Entitlement Framework, and thus closely align 14-19 education and training provision with economic

priorities. Indeed, the value of this contribution may be strengthened with greater opportunities for work-based learning across the 14-19 age cohorts as a result of an increased alignment with economic priorities. This could improve progress into employment and also retention, achievement and progression rates, and contribute to reducing the numbers of young people who are currently classified as NEET, while enhancing the skills base in key economically relevant areas.

2. Why do you take the view expressed at 1 above?

The amalgamation of the Colleges and DETI will strengthen the ability of the Executive to meet the economic and social targets set out in the Programme for Government and the Economy Strategy.

This would also help to provide a new synergy between the two existing departments (DEL and DETI) and ensure that the core functions of both existing departments would be safeguarded. It would also ensure the key priorities of the Colleges would be promoted in a new dynamic partnership.

The Colleges have made enormous progress in recent years in delivering an economically relevant curriculum and working with industry to meet the demand for skills. The Colleges provide education and training to local businesses and industry and direct support for economic development. Any decisions should be on the basis of what is best for Northern Ireland and the economy.

The Colleges are key to re-training and up-skilling our existing workforce and moving people from unemployment into jobs. Colleges NI believes that greater alignment with the objectives of DETI and Invest NI could further enhance the attractiveness of the region for Foreign Direct Investment, particularly in light of changes to the rules governing state aid.

There are a number of significant factors affecting the workforce in Northern Ireland:

- The need to re-train and up-skill the existing workforce;
- The skills deficits at Level 3, 4 and 5;
- The need to tackle unemployment, particularly youth unemployment and the issues of NEETS.

Colleges currently provide a range of support for local and international companies, including developing bespoke training to meet the specific needs of employers and direct support through Business Improvement Techniques (BIT) programmes, Open Source Solutions (IT solutions), Rapid

Prototyping, Innovation Vouchers, Knowledge Transfer Programmes (KTP) and Mentoring. The draft action plan in support of the Economic Strategy for Northern Ireland has identified the important role that Colleges will play in supporting business innovation, growth and knowledge transfer.

The role of Colleges and, in particular, ensuring that they continue to meet the needs of economically important sectors is critical to the economy of Northern Ireland. Further strengthening these relationships may also provide much stronger progression routes for young learners from post-primary education into employment and attainment of higher level skills through professional, technical and vocational routes.

The links between Colleges and the economy are vital in ensuring that there is a continuous supply of well qualified, suitably skilled young people for the needs of local companies. Significantly, 70% of the current workforce will still be in employment by 2020, therefore, in a changing environment there is a need to both up-skill and re-train this cohort to make an effective contribution to the economy. This link is essential in meeting the focused demands in priority areas that have been identified as key economic drivers.

The links between HE and FE are critical in providing very important progression routes to support the development of a high level skills base. Internationally the links between research and economic development are well established as important economic drivers. In particular, these links are vital to the development of work-focused two-year Foundation Degrees developed in partnership with industry and local employers.

Similarly links between schools and colleges are essential in meeting the needs of learners who may otherwise fail to achieve progress from post-primary education and who will benefit from access to quality professional, technical and vocational provision. It is important to recognise that the College Curriculum offer for 14-19 age group is very different from that within the post-primary sector and, given the investment in industry standard facilities and expertise within the College sector, will remain critical in the future.

It is vital to sustain a curriculum for many young people that is vocational in focus since the school curriculum tends to emphasise mainly the academic. The progression routes for 14-19 year olds are critical in tackling youth unemployment and the issue of NEETS and ensuring young people have access to opportunities to achieve higher level skills and employment.

3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

Colleges NI believes that a number of developments have led to significant advances in the role of the Colleges in support of the socio-economic well-being of Northern Ireland, including:

- The creation and development of the Department for Employment and Learning, bringing together the colleges, universities and training;
- The model of incorporation that was introduced in 1998 leading to a more dynamic and responsive further education sector compared to that existing previously under the control of the Education and Library Boards;
- Key policy drivers, particularly 'Further Education Means Business for People, Communities and the Economy in Northern Ireland';
- The merger of the Colleges from 16 to six much larger regional Colleges;
- Significant investment of some £340 million, since incorporation, in a modern College estate and industry standard facilities;
- Effective relationships with local communities, the post-primary schools sector, local universities and with indigenous and international companies.

It should be noted that, within DEL and resulting from the factors outlined above, the six regional Colleges have evolved significantly over the past decade. All six, within a UK context, could now be classified as large colleges in that they have a turnover of more than £35 million.

4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

Colleges NI recognises the key role that DEL has played in defining the role of the Colleges in the 21st century. Aligning the Colleges and Universities, along with Training and Industry/Skills branches, has supported the development of a sector that is outward facing and focused on supporting young people into employment and growing our economy.

Colleges NI wants to emphasise this strength and the tremendous development of the Colleges under DEL's stewardship and its current significant focus on, and contribution to, the economy. The key concern in any change is that the momentum built up over many years will be lost.

Sustained investment has led to the development of industry-standard facilities and has strengthened links with international and local companies, also supporting the development of expert and experienced teaching staff, who have relevant industry skills and links.

There is significant concern that the loss of this focus on working with and support for industry will lead to a loss of the teaching skills base to the detriment of both the economy and industry. However, of greater concern are the long-term implications arising from any loss of opportunities for learners to advance up the skills ladder through professional, technical and vocational routes and into employment.

These opportunities are dependent on having a highly trained expert teaching workforce with industry relevant skills and links with local employers to provide work-based training opportunities. In addition these links ensure that technical and vocational education and training is relevant and meets the needs of local employers.

Whatever the outcome of the dissolution of DEL Colleges NI believe that it is important that the links between DE and DETI are strengthened to underpin a coherent approach to professional, technical

provision and to lifelong learning, not least to meet the needs of both young people, the unemployed and those currently in the workforce.

5. Any other relevant comments.

Colleges NI believes there are vital links between our colleges and universities, between the economy and our colleges, between our colleges and schools and between local communities and the colleges. It is essential that any re-organisation of DEL must preserve these links.

Disability Action

9 February 2012



Mr Basil McCrea MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 283, Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
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Dear Mr McCrea

Dissolution of the Department of Employment and Learning

Disability Action has strong and cooperative engagement with the Department of Employment and Learning on issues affecting the lives of people with disabilities. The Disability Liaison Group brings together representatives of disability sector organisations with staff from the Disability Employment Service to share information and expertise on vocational training and employment.

The organisation also has direct links with Training Programmes Branch on issues which affect young people with disabilities in vocational training.

Disability Action is a provider of Workable (NI), a programme funded and managed by the Disability Employment Service. Disability Action provides flexible and individual support to meet the needs of disabled employees and their employers in a wide variety of jobs.

We also deliver Specialist Support for Training for Success (TfS), managed by Training Programmes Branch. Through TfS, Disability Action supports disabled trainees participating on vocational training courses with the aim of improving their employability and supporting them into employment.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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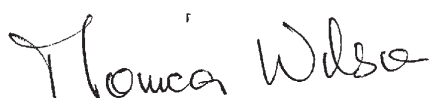
Given that these programmes focus on vocational training and employment it is more appropriate that this function should be aligned to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. People with disabilities must be given every opportunity to receive positive vocational training experiences and support to find and retain employment and this Department is best placed to provide this.

Prior to the establishment of the Department for Employment and Learning, similar programmes including Employment Support and Jobskills were administered by the Training and Employment Agency, part of the Department of Economic Development. Disability Action had developed a positive working relationship with this Department.

Disability Action has had initial discussions with DEL staff about a development in direct engagement with the disability sector, involving a more strategic approach. Disability Action is concerned to ensure that such positive moves are not stalled by the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning.

Regardless of the outcome, Disability Action seeks assurances that the existing employment and training programmes that deliver support to people with disabilities are retained. In addition, the Department must provide appropriate resources and personnel to ensure that services provide a high standard of support to disabled people across Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely



Monica Wilson
Chief Executive

Forum for Adult Learners NI

Basil McCrea MLA, Chairperson
Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 283
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3XX

09 February 2012

FALNI response to the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Dear Basil

Thank you for your letter of 26th January 2012 inviting FALNI to respond to the proposed dissolution of the Department of Employment & Learning.

This is an important step in the road map of learning and development in Northern Ireland not least as any suggested move may well be influenced following the final establishment of ESA. Whilst FALNI realise that speed may indeed be necessary in this discourse, swiftness should take second place to considered thought and robust analysis on the best and most meaningful location to support adult learning in Northern Ireland. FALNI also realise that as these deliberations are taking place, many people within the Department for Employment and Learning are facing a period of uncertainty and job insecurity. We acknowledge the expertise that is held within the Department and would hope that any changes would ensure that this expertise is valued and used wisely.

In this brief note, FALNI does not intend to offer a critique of the current arrangements supporting Adult Learning, rather we will offer a set of questions that we feel any discussion and subsequent arrangements should consider as key to reaching a decision. Adult Learning has a massive role to play in building our civic society and strengthening our economy. FALNI are keen to support an arrangement which can commit fully to both.

The Forum for Adult Learning Northern Ireland is a group which has representatives from the voluntary & community, statutory, FE, HE and trade union sectors. This is a diverse group which has links to and engagement with all government departments and a range of non departmental government bodies as well as employer and international links. It has a wide experience of working with all government ministries.

FALNI in its recent manifesto launch in 2011 challenged the Assembly to commit to four key actions. This call to action has been reprised below and has been edited to reflect the call to action as questions in this current discussion. The challenge we lay down is to ask the following questions of those who will make the decision. We have added two questions that challenge the methodology to be employed in reaching a decision.

1. What mechanism in the current decision making process can ensure that the requirements for a vibrant successful and achieving adult learning culture is taken into consideration in making the decision?
2. What mechanism can be put in place in the short to medium term to best support the learning culture that we know, the OECD know and the world knows is vital to national sustainability and international success?

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Forum for Adult Learning NI

The *Diversity* of Learning

The FALNI manifesto lays down four principled questions for this discussion:-

1. Which department is best placed to ensure '**Access for All to Learning**'? In ensuring Access for All *which department is best placed to:-*
 - a. pledge to challenge disadvantage in learning and breakdown barriers to learning whether they are financial, physical, or social?
 - b. support the commitment to access learning across all our community, in the workplace in colleges and schools in our community halls and rooms?
 - c. drive the support for learning that is focused on community development and social cohesion-learning which is vital for our success as a society?
2. Which department will ensure '**Learning for Life & Work**' is key to nurturing a broader culture of learning in order to play a full role as a citizen, *and which department is best placed to:-*
 - a. address the key capabilities need for 21st century life and lead on engagement with a literacy, numeracy& ICT strategy, financial capability strategy, civic responsibility strategy , healthy living strategy and creative expression strategy?
 - b. support the acquisition of skills and capabilities necessary for the effectiveness of the economy?
 - c. create pathways to learning & achievement which link all the routes into and through the individual and societal learning pathway?
3. Which department is best placed to deliver on '**A Strategy for Lifelong Learning**' and *will properly commit to:-*
 - a. An overarching government framework which recognises learning as a lifelong activity creating benefits for both the individual and society?
 - b. a strategy which has as a core value that learning is supported through life to its fullest capacity?
 - c. a strategy which is committed to supporting lifelong learning to benefit society economically, socially and artistically?
4. *Which department is best placed to lead on the vital tool to ensure collaborative arrangements across government that of an 'All-Party Group on Adult Learning'?:-*
 - an all party group would facilitate and support all government initiatives which touch upon adult learning, facilitating greater efficiencies
 - an all party group would focus on building critical relationships that mean resources are used more effectively across the learning journey and across society.

FALNI using its expertise across government departments and across learning in Northern Ireland, the island of Ireland, the UK and internationally is well placed to support initiatives around these key questions. Our experience across the world and through time- does suggest that a single department should be strategically responsible for adult learning. There are key benefits to drawing together expertise and knowledge from across Health, DCAL, DARD, DSD, DENI to name but a few.

This simple listing identifies that learning is contextualised not by a governmental name but the location of the learning experience and the personal learning situation of the learner. An ante-natal class supported by Health, a toddler swimming club supported by DCAL, a rural community class in a hall supported by DARD, focussed on addressing cultural diversity supported by DSD achieving a qualification recognised by employers that links to other employability structures. Learning is a river with a huge network of tributaries pouring into it from across our society

Learning is in itself a complex matter, supporting it no less so. These complex arrangements however should not be a barrier to visibility; it rather is a challenge to government to make it more visible - to increase access and participation. A Learning for Life Strategy should be the responsibility of one department and the duty of all, supported by an All Party Group whose role is to ensure that Adult Learning plays and is recognised in playing its key part in creating a vibrant and sustainable and successful society.

Yours sincerely



Brendan Clarke

On Behalf of FALNI
C/o Workers Educational Association
3 Fitzwilliam Street
Belfast BT9 6AW

Irish Congress of Trade Unions



2 February 2012

Mr Basil McCrea MLA
Committee for Employment & Learning
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BT4 3XX

Dear Basil

Re: Dissolution of the Department for Employment & Learning

I refer to your correspondence dated 26th January 2012 with regard to the above issue. NIC-ICTU is not in a position at present to respond to the series of questions posed, however we are in the process of consulting with all Congress affiliates on this matter and are conscious of the need for a public consultation of the implications on the dissolution of DEL.

Following our own consultation and on reaching a democratic decision of the trade union movement NIC-ICTU would be only too happy to share our views with the Assembly Committee.

Yours sincerely

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General Secretary David Begg

Include Youth

include YOUTH

Written response to an invitation from the Committee for Employment and Learning to comment on the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

9 February 2012

For further information contact Sara Boyce

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As an organisation which exists to promote and protect the rights and best interests of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people through policy advocacy, practitioner support and service provision, the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) has been one of the key government departments we interact with.

Among the relevant areas for Include Youth which DEL has had responsibility for are ESF funding, careers, skills training and policy development. Include Youth has developed good working relationships with the various divisions within DEL. In 2010 we established an Operational Partnership Agreement between our Give and Take Scheme and DEL's Careers Service; recognition of this partnership came in the form of a national award at the 2010 ICG Annual Careers Conference.

Our Give and Take scheme aims to improve the employability and increase the self esteem of young people in need or at risk from across Northern Ireland. It supports young people to overcome particular barriers that prevent them from moving into mainstream education, training or employment and towards independent living.

At a policy level Include Youth has been heavily engaged in contributing to and influencing government's cross departmental strategy to reduce the numbers of young people most at risk of remaining outside of education, employment or training (the 'Pathways to Success' strategy).

In the context of that work we have promoted the need for a more inclusive model of training provision which supports a continuum of service provision, encompassing both mainstream training programmes such as Training for Success but also specialised pre-vocational training programmes such as the Give and Take scheme.

We have also urged government to address the current inequitable situation regarding the lack of provision of any financial support in the form of an EMA type allowance to young people on pre-vocational training programmes, an issue which has recently secured all party support within the Assembly.

In this regard both the current Committee for Employment and Learning and its predecessor have been extremely effective in scrutinising government around its development of the Pathways to Success Strategy in general and the issue of EMA provision in particular.

It should be noted at the outset that while DEL has certainly had a central role around all of this work, responsibility for addressing the needs of these young people lies with a large

number of Departments. Key amongst these are DE and DHSSPS, but DETI, Justice, DSD and OFMDFM and others also carry responsibility. Indeed, the cross cutting nature of the issues faced by young people who are NEET is a central tenet of the Pathways to Success Strategy.

Responsibility for these young people cannot and should not be parcelled out or assigned to one government department, whether that becomes DE or DETI. Young people face the risk of becoming NEET for a whole range of complex, inter related reasons including family circumstances, failure of the education system to meet their needs, poverty, health problems including mental health problems, substance abuse, inter-generational trauma and various forms of discrimination.

Addressing these risk factors and barriers required a strategic, co-ordinated, adequately resourced response, led by the Executive with a commitment from all government departments and involvement by all stakeholders.

Notwithstanding the good working relationships that exist with DEL a major concern to Include Youth has been the continued lack of prioritisation of the needs of young people who are 'NEET', especially in the face of the growing numbers of young people falling into this category. Almost one in five young people are unemployed and the economic cost of youth unemployment in Northern Ireland alone is somewhere in the region of £250 million.

Yet despite positive statements by the Minister for Employment and Learning regarding his prioritisation of this issue, there is little evidence in the draft Programme for Government and draft Economic Development Strategy that it will receive the kind of attention and resourcing required over the next four to five years. While the Pathways to Success Strategy is identified as a building block there is no specific commitment to deliver on the Strategy, nor are there any time framed realisable targets attached.

The draft Pathways to Success Strategy itself does not have any funding attached to it. Despite it being a cross departmental strategy it does not convey a sense of inter-connectedness or alignment with other high level strategies. Additionally there appears to exist a lack of an integrated, co-ordinated policy response within DEL itself, as evidenced for example, by the Success Through Skills Strategy 2 which largely overlooked the needs of young people who are NEET.

Within DEL there has not been, at least not until recently, a dedicated unit or branch to address the issue of young people who are NEET.

In view of the issues highlighted above Include Youth is extremely concerned that there is a real danger, following the dissolution of DEL and the transfer of its functions to other Departments, namely DE and/or DETI, that the already inadequate focus on the issue of young people who are NEET will fall further down the priority list within government. This must not be allowed to happen.

As noted above the issues affecting young people who are NEET would not fit solely under the remit of either DE or DETI, traversing as they do the areas of education, youth work, skills and training, employment and enterprise. For this reason it is not a simple matter of preferencing either DE or DETI.

Include Youth strongly urges that in any discussions regarding the transfer of functions from DEL to DE and/or DETI the following issues should be considered:

- Much greater priority must be given to the issue of young people who are NEET than has been the case to date. Priority 2 of the Programme for Government, Creating Opportunities, Tackling Disadvantage and Improving Health and Well Being must include a Key Commitment, with associated Milestones and Outputs in relation to delivering on a strengthened Pathways to Success Strategy, rather than simply listing it as a building block as is currently the case.

- Similarly the Economic Development Strategy must ensure that its emphasis on 'rebalancing the economy', with its important focus on moving young people further up the qualifications ladder and into business and science based areas of work, is not to the complete exclusion of those young people who are either not on or are at the bottom rung of the qualifications ladder.
- Delivery of the Pathways to Success Strategy must be led by one Department, which has established within it an adequately resourced, dedicated unit/branch to work on the issue of children and young people who already fall into the NEET category or are at risk of becoming NEET.
- An effective mechanism for ministerial oversight of delivery of the Pathways to Success Strategy must be established, whether that be a sub-group of the Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People or otherwise. The relevant Ministers must all be represented. Include Youth, along with others in the community and voluntary sector working with children and young people has been critical of the Ministerial Sub-Committee for its failure to deliver meaningful outcomes for children and young people; we note that concerns regarding its effectiveness were also raised by DEL Committee members with DEL officials.¹ These concerns must be addressed for any ministerial oversight mechanism to work effectively.
- A delivery mechanism must be established which is made up of senior civil servants from all the relevant government departments and statutory agencies. Greater detail is required regarding the proposed Steering and Implementation Group (SIG) put forward in the Pathways to Success consultation document and the nature and extent of involvement by the community and voluntary sector on such a body.
- The regional approach to joint planning and commissioning of services for children and young people in the form of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership should play a central role in facilitating the implementation of the Strategy from regional agency level down to local level.
- The extremely important role played by the Committee for Employment and Learning in effectively scrutinising the work of DEL on its development of the Pathways to Success strategy must be replicated by the relevant statutory Committee.

1 Northern Ireland Assembly Official Report (Hansard) Committee for Employment and Learning Pathways to Success
14 December 2011

Institute of Directors



Mr Basil McCrea MLA
Chairman
Committee for Employment & Learning
Room 283 Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3XX

8 February 2012

Dear Basil

Further to your letter of 26 January regarding the Dissolution of the Department for Employment & Learning, the issue has been discussed by our Northern Ireland Committee and the Education & Skills Committee.

In response to your question 5, we were surprised by the sudden proposal to dissolve DEL and to share out its functions between the Departments of Education (DE) and Enterprise Trade & Investment (DETI) as seem to be suggested. While the IoD is in favour of rationalising the number of government departments, we believe that the aim should be to achieve more effective government. This particular move appears motivated by political expediency rather than good governance, and therefore the impact on efficiency and effectiveness is likely to be much less than if the departmental structure was assessed as a whole and based on the kind of governance that Northern Ireland actually needs.

In answer to your other questions:

Questions 1 and 2

The Institute has called for the creation of a Department for the Economy that would encompass skills, including leadership and management skills which are particularly relevant to the Institute. In our view it would make sense for Further and Higher Education to sit within DETI. Both sectors have made considerable efforts to align themselves with the needs of the economy with valuable outcomes for the business community in relation to skills and R&D. Joining up the functions that relate to supporting business makes sense.

In our view DE's role is to prepare young people with the basic skills for life, further education and employability and the department's focus should fall within this area including careers advice and education.

Question 4

As we believe that the main objective of reducing the number of departments should be to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of government service delivery, our main concern with moving the functions of DEL is the danger that the staff moving to their new departments will fail to integrate fully in the new structure. Should this be the case, the effect will be to

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create silos within departments (rather than between departments as is often the case at present) and the benefits of the new alignments will fail to achieve any improvements.

I trust that this is of assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Linda R Brown', written in a cursive style.

Linda R Brown

Director

Invest NI

Basil McCrea MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 283
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Stormont
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16th February 2012

Dear Mr McCrea

Thank you for your letter of 26th January 2012 seeking views on the proposed dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning. I have offered a number of comments below on behalf of the Invest NI Board.

The collaboration between Invest NI and DEL has been fundamental in providing comprehensive support mechanisms for Northern Ireland business. There are natural alignments between Invest NI and DEL, particularly with regard to Skills and Industry, and Higher and Further Education. In order to ensure that we continue to provide a relevant and effective service to Northern Ireland businesses, it is essential the key elements of industry, skills and FE/HE remain closely aligned.

The 2009 Independent Review of Economic Policy made a number of significant recommendations and Invest NI has already delivered on the large majority of those which fell within its remit. The recommendation that economic policy should be driven by the Executive has also been delivered through the creation of an Economic Sub-Committee and the publication of the draft Economic Strategy. It is notable that one of the Report's most significant recommendations, essentially the final piece of the jigsaw, namely that "the core economic functions (covering DETI and DEL areas of responsibility), should be brought under a single Department of the Economy" has not yet been achieved and, it would be ultimately detrimental for our future economic growth if decisions were taken that would actually take us further away from that position. In the UK, the joined up economic model adopted by the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) facilitates a single focus on the key drivers of economic growth. Everything that BIS does, from investing in skills, promoting trade, boosting innovation and helping people to start up in business, is focused on driving growth. This model has proved effective in providing a strategically powerful platform from which to drive economic growth through its strategy "The Plan for Growth".

One of Invest NI's roles in supporting economic development in Northern Ireland is identifying industry's current and future skills requirements and this operates in tandem with DEL's remit in relation to skills development which allows it to direct and influence HE and FE provision as appropriate. It is Invest NI's view that continued close collaboration is essential for the success of the Northern Ireland economy. One example of where this collaboration has been particularly effective has been in respect of Assured Skills, where Invest NI's knowledge of the future skills requirements of potential foreign-owned businesses are used by DEL to develop tailored skills programmes to meet individual project needs. Any changes to current departmental structures must ensure these links between industry and skills not only remain but are strengthened if the Programme for Government's 25,000 job promotion target is to be fulfilled.

From an R&D and innovation perspective, a single departmental approach could accelerate the development of regional research clusters leading to increased export opportunities and building on the existing research strengths of our Universities. It would also offer the opportunity for a joined up Further and Higher Education policy and strategy that places the key pillars of skills, research and knowledge transfer and exploitation as core to the strength

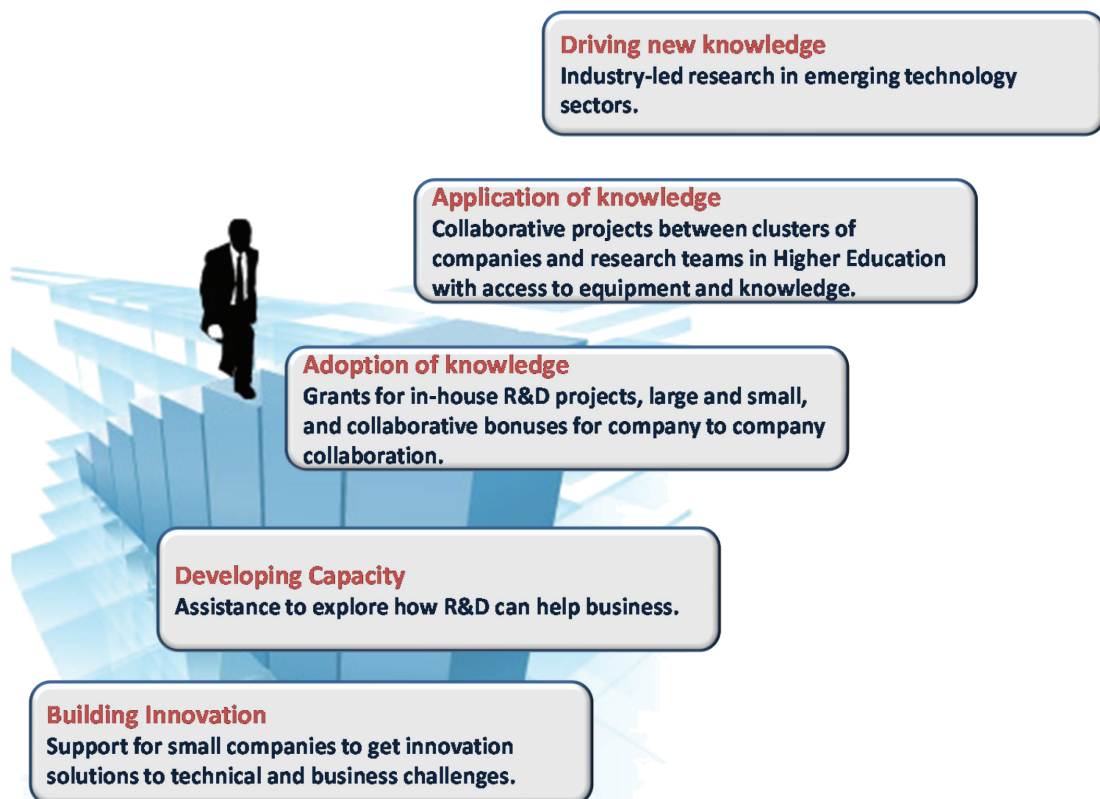
of the economy. By acting as driver of flexibility in the education system, both in terms of curriculum and research focus, this would mean that we can quickly adapt to meet the research and skills needs of existing and potential investors.

The contacts and networks developed by the FE Colleges in recent times through their involvement with Invest NI programmes, are now beginning to deliver success through increased levels of trade, R&D activity and closer links with local industry. One such example is the Sustainable Development sector, where Further Education colleges presently deliver a varied range of over 40 training courses with a strong focus on STEM subjects. New courses are also being developed to meet industry's needs in this growth sector of the economy including the Wind Turbine Apprenticeship at Belfast Metropolitan College, Offshore Energy Accreditation at South Eastern Regional College and the continued success of the Foundation Degree in Wind Technology at South West College's Innotech Centre. Invest NI's Innovation Voucher Programme also provides a highly effective bridge between industry and FE Colleges by offering up to £4,000 to small enterprises to progress innovative projects with the HE/FE sector.

The role of universities as an important part of the wider innovation ecosystem in Northern Ireland is undisputed. Each stage of the Invest NI Innovation Escalator (as

highlighted in our Corporate Plan), from building innovation capacity in SMEs to creating industry led research, programmes of support is dependent on the input of the FE/ HE sector.

The Innovation Escalator



Invest NI support programmes, such as Proof of Concept, Knowledge Transfer and the Competence Centre Programme are key examples of effective collaboration with the Universities to achieve knowledge transfer to the business base. The Competence Centre programme in particular acts as a bridge between academia and business, supporting industry driven programmes of research being undertaken in key sectors such as high value manufacturing; cloud computing; connected health. This triple helix approach of Government, Academia and Business working together to achieve key goals, provides a similar model to Finland's Technical Research Institute (VTT), which was identified as the model of best practice in the IREP Report. VTT has as its mission:

“to produce research services that enhance international competitiveness of companies, society and other customers at all stages of their innovation process, and thereby creates the prerequisites for growth, employment and well being”.

At a time when Northern Ireland needs to look for new sources of growth, providing the right conditions for high-tech manufacturing companies and knowledge intensive business services must be a priority. If high-tech companies are to be competitive they need to locate in knowledge and information rich regions where there is a concentration of the research, creative individuals and infrastructure needed for innovation, which is why Universities play such a key role in attracting inward investment.

In terms of foreign investment, the single most important reason inward investors cite for choosing to locate in Northern Ireland is the availability of a highly skilled workforce. Indeed, this was a key factor in the successful delivery of the last Programme for Government where we made some considerable achievements, promoting over 7,500 new jobs from foreign investments alone, 75% of which contributed annual salaries above the Private Sector Median. We have also made significant inroads in key target sectors such as Financial Services, ICT and Legal Services winning investments from companies such as New York Stock Exchange, Citi and Allen and Overy. Such success has been built on the availability of people, our strong work ethic and the flexibility that our workforce provides.

If this progress is to be maintained and capitalised upon, the alignment of our skills base to the needs of business needs to be further improved. As a small economy, one advantage that we need to exploit to the maximum is our ability to be joined up in our approach, a point that was specifically highlighted by existing investors at the USNI Investment Conference in Washington DC in 2010. The creation of a single Department of the Economy will significantly strengthen our offering further, giving us a competitive advantage in global markets. Locating responsibility for Further and Higher Education and skills in another Department would not only undermine this competitive advantage but would jeopardise our ability to deliver on the key objectives of new Programme for Government and the longer-term commitments of the Economic Strategy. If the Executive is serious about its economic goals and vision, particularly on delivering against a stretching 25,000 jobs target, then we should work to de-risk these plans by aligning Business and skills now.

It has been widely acknowledged that the potential reduction in the corporation tax rate would reduce the competitive restrictions on Northern Ireland, opening up new markets for us to compete in. Invest NI has made a conservative estimate of the impact on job creation that such a reduction might have- this estimate was derived by taking inward investment into the island of Ireland over the last five years and pro-rating it between north and south according to population size. Based on this assumption, Northern Ireland's share would increase by at least 3,200 jobs per annum. These jobs would be over and above those which Invest NI already attracts in its key export sectors and would equate to an additional 64,000 jobs over a 20 year period. If we are to achieve such a significant impact on the economy it is essential that we are able to match our skills supply in those areas where there is demand from potential investors. Having a single Department of the Economy would make this task much more achievable.

This is a pivotal time for Northern Ireland and our future development. The chance to ensure the alignment of the key drivers of economic growth is now before you and we implore you to grasp this opportunity. I would like to thank you for the opportunity for allowing my Board to provide its feedback on this important issue and I am more than happy to furnish you with further additional information should it be required.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Ennis

Chairman
Invest NI

Labour Relations Agency



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7th February 2012

Mr Basil McCrea MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Employment & Learning
Room 283, Parliament Buildings
Stormont
BELFAST BT4 3XX

Dear Mr McCrea,

Re: Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

I refer to your correspondence dated 26 January 2012.

The Board of the Labour Relations Agency has given consideration to the questions posed and responds as follows:-

1. Given the functions and purpose of your organisation and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

The Labour Relations Agency (the Agency) is a statutory body charged with improving employment relations in Northern Ireland. The Agency is independent from Government.

It is the view of the Agency that it is best placed within a Department that is primarily responsible for the economy. Between all the Departments the preferred Department, for employment relations, would be the Department which will have responsibility for the economy.

2. Why do you take the view expressed at 1. above?

Good Employment Relations is essential to support the effective performance of the economy and is primarily measured by way of economic and social performance indicators. The Agency's key stakeholders: CBI; NIC ICTU and FSB have the economy and employment as their determining interest. Linking the Agency with the economic functions of the DETI would appear to be the most effective outcome in respect of institutional and operating arrangements.

Chairman
Mr Jim McCusker



Chief Executive
Mr Bill Patterson MBA FCIPD

3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

The Agency was part of the former Department for Economic Development. Our experience of that arrangement was that it was beneficial for better employment relations.

4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

The Agency would be concerned that there would be less Ministerial and Departmental focus on employment relations and the development of employment relations skills. A further concern would be that we lose the mutually beneficial relationship that we have developed with DEL officials. It is more likely that this issue would be successfully addressed within a Department for the Economy and Employment.

5. Any other relevant comments.

The Agency would be concerned that in any realignment of Departments, that there should be any dilution of the unequivocal commitment to supporting the Agency in its role of improving employment relations with the provision of appropriate resourcing for all aspects of employment relations.

We are available should any clarification be required regarding the above.

Yours sincerely,



W PATTERSON
Chief Executive

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1 March 2012

Dear Mr McCrea,

Re: Dissolution of the Department of Employment & Learning

Thank you for your letter of 16 February inviting comments on the dissolution of the Department of Employment and Learning.

You are particularly interested in our views about the Department which best aligns with the functions and purposes of our organisation. The Law Centre's purpose is to promote social justice for disadvantaged persons and groups through the provision of advice and representation, training, publications and policy analysis. We specialise in five areas of law: employment law; social security law; community care law; mental health law and immigration law and apply a public interest law model to our work. We offer employment law services across Northern Ireland from our two regional offices and the focus of our work is on advice and representation to employees. We receive referrals from and provide advice to agencies across the advice sector and the broader community and voluntary sector, the Labour Relations Agency and constituency offices.

Below we set out our views about the alignment of certain DEL functions should a political decision be reached to dissolve the Department.

Our interaction with DEL is as a funder and on policy matters. The Law Centre receives funding from DEL for our Employment Law Advice Service. On policy matters, our interaction with DEL relates primarily to three issues. First, employment law matters as they affect employees. This includes participation in the DEL-led Migrant Workers Sub-Group. We chaired this Group throughout the process of finalising the Northern Ireland Migrant Workers Strategy. Ensuring the protection of migrant's rights remains a key priority for the Law Centre. While migrant workers issues are properly the domain of a number of departments, there remains a strong case for a single lead department to provide leadership for co-ordinating and sustaining an on-going focus on the rights and entitlements of migrant workers. Second, we interact with DEL in relation to jobs and benefits. Third, more recently, we have been in contact with the Department about the provision of essential skills, in this case, ESOL classes to refugees in Northern Ireland.

The Law Centre's interaction with the Committee to date has been on the process for reform of the system for resolving disputes and the implementation of the agency workers directive.

In the event of dissolution of the Department, and taking these issues in turn, we see the employment law function being best aligned with the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Investment. It is less obvious where responsibility for migrant workers rights and policy should fall, though one possibility might be with OFMDFM given its remit on equality and rights or within a dedicated section within DETI. Our principal concern about the transfer of employment law matters to another department is that the particular focus and specialism within the DEL on employment rights matters is not lost in the absorption of this work within



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a new department. This concern applies equally in relation to scrutiny arrangements. The current Employment Law Review in Britain contains a raft of proposals that threaten a range of employment rights and which, if taken forward in Northern Ireland would generate the need for significant time for parliamentary scrutiny. The risk is that the extension of the Enterprise, Trade & Investment Committee's remit to cover employment law matters may inevitably diminish the opportunities for detailed scrutiny of employment law matters which are currently enjoyed by the Employment & Learning Committee. The perceived risk may, of course, be offset by careful management of the Committee's work programme to reflect any new remit or by the establishment of a sub-committee to focus on employment law matters.

Second, in the event of dissolution of the Department, the jobs and benefits function of DEL would be best aligned with the Department of Social Development. The rationale for this is that the introduction of Universal Credit in 2013 is predicated upon a model that envisages the integrated delivery of employment services to support people into work and implementation of the new benefit arrangements. The transition to Universal Credit is complex. There are compelling arguments, therefore, for streamlining responsibility for the new system under the auspices of one department, with implementation through the Social Security Agency.

Third, in relation to essential skills, our view is that these are best aligned with the Department of Education who might then assume responsibility for the development of life-long learning pathways that incorporate essential skills, although we would argue that the provision of specific provision for refugees (which has been the basis of our interaction with DEL on essential skills) would align with OFMDFM given its overview of immigration and integration issues.

Yours sincerely,

Ursula O'Hare

Assistant Director (Policy & Publications)

Mencap



Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning Mencap's comments

Mencap welcomes the opportunity to respond to the proposed dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and thanks the committee for contacting us.

1. Given the function and purpose of your organisation and the function and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and the Department of Education (DE), with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned.

Mencap's concern is to ensure that people with a learning disability and their family carers get the support they need to enjoy the same opportunities in employment and lifelong learning as others in their community. Whichever Department is selected, it must result in an improvement in the lives and opportunities available to people with a learning disability and their family carers;

It is important that the work of the Department ensures equal access and benefit to the Department's resources at all levels - policy, prioritising and allocating funding and in planning and commissioning the delivery of programmes and initiatives - with accountability mechanisms put in place to monitor that this is the case along with a commitment by the selected Department to joined up working within and between Departments.

Mencap believes that, due to the close relationship between Further and Higher Education and employment the responsibilities of DEL as a whole should be transferred to the new Department. This would avoid the need to create and develop new links and pathways, which would impact significantly on the sector's capacity, time and resources, and reduce the potential for individuals to become "lost" in the interface between two large departments. Our experience of providing support to people with a learning disability to find and keep a job indicates that the most appropriate Department to transfer the duties and functions of DEL should be transferred to is DETI. We believe, however, that it is essential that the knowledge, expertise and relationships developed through DEL and the sector working together must not be lost in the transfer to the new Department.

2. Why do you take the view expressed at 1 above?

In light of the current economic climate and DETI's strategy for investment and sustainability, Mencap believes that this would provide an opportunity for people with a learning disability seeking training and employment to take an active role in the economy and be active and equal citizens. DETI could also provide relevant career advice which is reflective of the Northern Ireland job market. It is encouraging to note the connection, acknowledged by the NI Executive, between investing for the future and social inclusion, particularly the focus on social clauses in the Draft Programme for Government 2011-15 but our experience demonstrates the importance of targeted programmes and initiatives if this is to become a reality for people with a learning disability and family carers.

Mencap believes that the incorporation of DEL functions into DETI would provide better opportunities for the inclusion of disabled people and disability issues into the core direction of government: the economy. For example, the specialist support function of DEL's Disability Employment Service (DES) – and the work it has carried out to help integrate disabled people into the work force - could be adapted to help DETI ensure more disabled people contribute to Northern Ireland's economic development

With the Department of Education covering a wide remit of responsibilities there are concerns that the responsibilities of DEL would add pressure to the Department. Mencap is concerned that the people with disabilities may become invisible within such a large department.

3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

Our experience of working with either Department is limited but we have some concerns about accessing funding through DE. It is important that the transfer of DEL's responsibilities does not impact adversely on current and future contracting arrangements.

4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department of Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for department alignment if the department is abolished.

Mencap is concerned that the work of the Disability Liaison Group within DEL and the specialist disability knowledge of the personnel within DEL would be lost if the Department is dissolved. It is essential that, if the Department is dissolved, there is a plan to minimise the loss of disability knowledge, that access and uptake of opportunities by people with a learning disability family carers is monitored before and after the transfer of duties and functions, and that any adverse impacts are identified and mitigating measures put in place to address inequalities. It is also important to ensure that the work to develop a strategic role for DLG continues and provides a continuity of the direction of further education and employment services in NI.

5. Any other relevant comments.

It is important to ensure that the transfer of DEL'S duties and functions leads to improvements in access and opportunities for people with a learning disability and their family carers. The key role of specialist employment provision must be recognised and funded and that a commitment given to strong interdepartmental working whichever Department is selected. We suggest that the responsibilities of DEL are transferred as whole and that DETI is the more appropriate Department to transfer responsibility for employment and lifelong learning. This could be an opportunity to develop the services currently provided by DEL within the wider economic context and a fresh approach to tackling unemployment and providing quality training to people with a learning disability in Northern Ireland.

NASUWT

NASUWT
The Teachers' Union
NORTHERN IRELAND

Request for comment from Chairperson of DEL Assembly Committee.

The NASUWT represents teaching staff in colleges of further education, post-primary, primary and nursery education and is the largest teachers union in Northern Ireland.

NASUWT welcomes the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning as it provides a real opportunity to put the education service into one government department.

The NASUWT believes that it makes sense to have all education under the Department of Education where policy, planning and delivery can be co-ordinated across sectors to the benefit of all in our community. NASUWT rejects the suggestion that major sections of education could be placed within the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment as it makes no educational sense.

In every other jurisdiction in these islands, central and devolved governments have found the most effective way is to have joined up thinking in terms of policy and delivery of education across all sectors, in to have a single government department.

The development of DEL has resulted in business oriented models of delivery that have hindered improvements to the quality of delivery of the range of courses available across Northern Ireland or in delivering skills to increase economic activity. It makes sense to connect FE colleges and Universities with the proposed Education and Skills Authority and within the Department of Education. NI there is a real opportunity for that to happen.

Q1. Given the functions and purposes of your organization and the functions and purpose of the DETI and the DE , with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

1. NASUWT members are mainly teachers and lecturers whose role is to impart knowledge and encourage learning by students so that they can obtain the qualifications and develop the skills and experience to equip them to progress in their chosen careers and as citizens.

The Department of Education has a similar mission in respect the expectations it has for teachers delivering to pupils in the schools sector. NASUWT believes that Department is the appropriate governmental department to have responsibility for the delivery of education across all sectors. The re-integration of the post-schools sectors within that Department would in our view, not only enhance the status of teachers but provide much greater scope of integration of the 14 – 19 curriculum across the schools and FE sectors in particular. The NASUWT has always supported the position of Lifelong Learning and a continuous process and advocated a central policy and delivery approach. It would also enhance the strategic approach to the training of teachers which is fragmented under current arrangements.

The future strategic direction of the schools sector will be determined by the Education and Skills Authority with a focus on preparing young people for life and for future employment. That focus strengthens the argument for greater co-operation and integration between the schools and the post-school sectors to mutual benefit. The re-distribution of post-school education into a single department will facilitate cross-sectoral planning and regulation and the deployment of teachers to best effect. It would also end the anomaly which currently exists whereby the need for the training of teachers is determined by one department and funded and delivered by another.

Integration and co-operation across sectors of education would not be improved by the re-location of post-school institutions to the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment. Such a re-distribution would in our view completely distort the role and functions of that Department.

A post-school education service which is primarily business facing will turn further and higher education institutions into training organizations harnessed to the short term needs of multinational corporations whose objectives are for short term profit rather than meeting our needs for a well qualified workforce of educated citizens committed to social cohesion and a shared future.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at 1 above?

Please refer to the comment above.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, is so please specify?

The incorporation model which underpins the functioning of our FE colleges since 1998 was designed to make colleges into corporate organisations run on a business model. We believe that policy has been a failure. Apart from the fact that educational purpose of those institutions has been diverted from that of delivering a public education service, the colleges have reduced learning opportunities for our citizens and its leaders have brought industrial relations chaos to its staff. The “break even at all costs” philosophy of college leaders, pushed by senior officers of DEL has resulted in huge efficiency savings through the loss of teachers jobs, cuts to courses and student numbers in classes increased to unmanageable levels which has damaged the quality of provision overall.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of DEL and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

The NASUWT believes the careers service, post school education and training should be under DE. An additional concern for the union is that the £40million found by DEL to support higher education arising from the position taken by the Northern Ireland Executive in respect of student fees is retained for those institutions.

For further information

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NIACRO



NIACRO works to reduce crime and its
impact on people and communities

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Mr Basil McCrea MLA
Chair, Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 416, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw,
Stormont, Belfast,
BT4 3XX

9th February 2012

Dear Basil,

Future of the Department for Employment and Learning

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's consideration of the future of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). We, in NIACRO, have cultured strong working relationships with various branches of DEL, and therefore have strong views on the potential re-organisation of this department's functions.

NIACRO is a voluntary organisation working for 40 years to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities. Our staff, volunteers and members work with individuals, families and communities to help them make positive changes to their lives. To maximise our impact, we work in partnership with a range of statutory departments and agencies; voluntary and community sector organisations; and private businesses. We deliver services for children and young people; prisoners and their families and offenders in the community.

We hope you find our comments helpful in your consideration of this matter and if you require anything further, please just let us know.

Yours sincerely,

Olwen Lyner

Chief Executive

1. Given the functions and purpose of your organisation and the functions and purposes of the DETI & the DE with which dept do you think your sector should be aligned?

Within NIACRO, we offer a range of services for people both in prison and in the community. These include Jobtrack, which is a partnership with the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) and the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS). Jobtrack is funded through the European Social Fund with matched funding from DEL, and is based on research that demonstrates securing employment is a significant factor in reducing offending. The target group for the programme, prisoners and offenders in the community, encompasses many people who are on the margins of society and experiencing multiple barriers that exclude them from the labour market. They need direct intervention and support into employment, which can only succeed with the proactive engagement we provide with employers.

Our Choose to Change programme (which replaced our Youth Employability programme) receives referrals from PBNI for young people who are deemed to pose a high risk of re-offending, and works both in the Juvenile Justice Centre and the community. These young people often have few community supports and are outside formal education, training and face multiple barriers to employment. The service is targeted at those between 16 and 18 years of age.

All of NIACRO's employment programmes feature assessment; placement; brokerage/linkage; specialist advice including disclosure of conviction information and motivational guidance, as well as employer influencing, advice and guidance. All services are offered in the prisons and in the community across Northern Ireland.

The underlying rationale for all of the work we do to increase skills is to increase access to employment opportunities, which in turn reduce the risk of people engaging in criminal or anti-social behaviour. Having worked hard to build relationships with various functions within DEL, and tailored our programmes to enable people to gain easier access to DEL's mainstream programmes, our preference would be for our organisation to remain aligned with DEL.

As we understand that this is unlikely to be an option through the current re-organisation exercise, our second preference would be for both the training and employability functions to be transferred together to the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), to ensure synergy between the needs of the labour market and opportunities in the training sector.

If this is not the preferred model of restructuring, and the training and skills functions of DEL are to be transferred to the Department for Education (DE) then we would call for strong protocols and partnerships to be fostered between DETI and DE to ensure that the labour market becomes the driver for the training and skills provided.

2. Why do you take the view expressed at 1 above?

Having worked hard to improve access to DEL's mainstream programmes, and develop bespoke alternatives for those who struggle to access them, we would have been keen to further this work, rather than being forced to establish new partnerships within departments whose main business is as yet detached from our work.

In the past NIACRO, along with many others in the voluntary and community sector, operated a "supply side" model of training development: providing access to training in the hope that individuals would be better equipped to enter the labour market. This was driven by the needs of government funded training organisations, rather than the labour market and resulted, for example, in a wealth of qualified HGV drivers in an economy that needed IT specialists.

Over the last 15 years, we in NIACRO have sought to develop direct links with the labour market to facilitate a "demand led" model, which is more closely aligned to the changing needs of the labour market, and takes account of regional specificities. We hope that if the employment functions of DEL are transferred to DETI, their focus on the economy and job

creation will enable this approach to be maintained, and may increase access for our service users to a broader range of employment opportunities. We also hope that it will provide an opportunity for the introduction of social clauses to DETI funding for private enterprises, requiring them to ring-fence a proportion of their services or employment opportunities for those who face the most barriers in accessing mainstream provision.

However, we are concerned that transferring responsibility for dealing with some of those who face the most significant barriers in accessing mainstream services, to a department whose mission focuses solely on growing the economy, will require considerable changes in ethos, structure and attitudes within DETI. Rather than trying to shoe-horn people who have been excluded from various programmes and opportunities in the past into pre-determined schemes, consideration will need to be given to the particular needs of vulnerable groups and adaptations made to enable access to available services.

The same concerns also apply to DE, should responsibility for training and skills transfer there. We believe that the reason why the "NEETs" problem has arisen here in Northern Ireland, whereby so many young people remain outside the system without access to education, training or employment, is the failure of mainstream schools and colleges to tailor their approaches to young people with complex needs, who prefer to concentrate on academic achievement. We are concerned that those who either need additional support to follow the academic route, or are actually better suited to vocational courses, will be sidelined and excluded from mainstream provision. Given the continually evolving requirements of the labour market, and the lack of responsiveness we perceive within the education field, we would recommend that strong partnerships are developed between DETI and DE to tailor services to real needs.

We would also recommend that resources are ring-fenced specifically for "NEET" young people and adults who face multiple barriers to accessing training or employment, both within the new DETI and the new DE, to ensure that their needs are prioritised by, and not simply subsumed into, these new structures.

3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

As outlined above, our experience suggests that DE has proven to be resistant to dealing adequately with the needs of our most of our client group, whether they be from Youth Employability or Jobtrack. Whilst they do provide support for early years intervention, which assists in the delivery of Family support programmes focused on primary to secondary school transition, they have not recognised the need to contribute to additional interventions and support at the later stages of a school career. We are concerned, therefore, that in an expanded DE the needs of our service users are less likely to be met, and service provision would be driven by the "supply side model described above.

In terms of managing the European funding neither DETI nor DE have significant experience of social exclusion, or its impact on marginalised people in the context of the labour market. A significant culture change in either or both of these departments would therefore be required.

4. What are your concerns, if any about the dissolution of the DEL and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the department is abolished?

Our key concern, in a time when pressure on resources is increasing, is the cost of this reorganisation, and whether spending thousands of pounds on an administrative exercise actually represents value for money. As well as the direct costs to DETI and DE of moving staff, re-branding and transferring knowledge and information, there will be knock-on costs for a range of other departments and agencies. To give a most basic example, all of our Jobtrack materials will have to be re-branded to remove the DEL logo and introduce a new one.

That says nothing of the confusion that this will cause for staff, service users and the public, who will have to be re-educated in new systems, programmes and ways of working. We believe the Executive will be required to re-write the Programme for Government, and that legislation will be needed to effect the dissolution of DEL. New inclusion strategies will be required within both DETI and DE, and visions and missions re-written to reflect the additional functions being transferred to them. Staff will need to be re-trained, with potential for services to be temporarily suspended as this rolls out. None of this comes without a cost.

Furthermore, we are concerned that no proposals have been published on the impact of this change on departmental budgets, as it will not always be possible to separate out the contributions of some programmes along a crude 'employment' versus 'training' distinction.

We are concerned that the absorption and diffusion of current DEL functions will dilute the resources and policy understanding as they are split between two departments who have no experience of this work. There is a major risk that this will result in our work being returned to the periphery of departments' concerns, This will also result in some of the retained knowledge being lost to one of the ceding departments. The progress that has been made with employers, with regard to access to employment opportunities, could also be put at risk if the functions are split across two departments.

DEL's European Unit have understood, promoted, assisted and developed the whole project around access to employment for marginalised people. Through its European connections it has leveraged funds into the project of access to employment and has added value to the work of other departments. No other department has demonstrated and resourced this type of activity to such an extent. It is an example of good cross departmental work in action. NIACRO is concerned that the unique contribution made by the European Unit will be lost in the dissolution process. It is imperative that this work is maintained and developed in any future arrangements.

NICCY

Basil McCrea MLA
Room 416 Parliament Buildings Ballymiscaw
Stormont Belfast
BT4 3XX

10 February 2012

Dear Mr McCrea

Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Thank you for your letter of 26 January asking for my views on the appropriate arrangements for the transfer of the duties of the Department for Employment and Learning following its dissolution.

My role is to advise the Executive on its delivery for children and young people with respect to their rights and best interests. I must impress on the Executive and the Committee that they must put children's rights and best interests central to the decision they are making as powers transfer to other Departments.

The key areas relevant to children and young people that are currently within the remit of DEL are: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs), Educational Maintenance Allowance, and Further and Higher Education. I hope that the committee will also consider the transitions of children with Moderate Learning Disabilities in Special Schools over the age of 16 into further education/training, as this is can be a particularly difficult time for each young person and their families.

Clearly both the Department of Education and Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment have critical roles to play in relation to these policy areas, and it is not for NICCY to comment on which should take a lead. However, it is critical that these two Departments work together in an integrated way to ensure that the Executive delivers most effectively for children and young people in relation to these issues.

I refer you to my report (Barriers to Effective Government Delivery for Children¹), commissioned from Queen's University Belfast, which assessed how effectively Government was delivering for children and young people in Northern Ireland. One of its main findings was the lack of a 'joined up approach' in terms of delivery for children having a very significant impact on the effectiveness of Government.

Thank you again for consulting me on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Lewsley-Mooney

Commissioner

1 [http://www.niccy.org/uploaded_docs/2011/Publications/QUB%20Barriers%20Report%20-%203%20Nov%2011%20\(body%20pages\).pdf](http://www.niccy.org/uploaded_docs/2011/Publications/QUB%20Barriers%20Report%20-%203%20Nov%2011%20(body%20pages).pdf)

NIPSA

YOUR REF

OUR REF


 The logo for NIPSA (Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance) features the word "niposa" in a stylized, lowercase, serif font. The letters are closely spaced, and the 'i' and 'o' have a distinctive shape. A horizontal line is positioned below the letters.

The Leading Public Service Union

Brian Campfield General Secretary

Mr Basil McCrea MLA
 Chairperson
 Committee for Employment and Learning
 Room 283, Parliament Buildings
 Ballymiscaw
 Stormont
 BELFAST
 BT4 3XX

8 February 2012

Dear Mr McCrea

RE: DISSOLUTION OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Thank you for your letter of 26 January 2012 to NIPSA asking for our comments on the proposed dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning.

As the NIPSA Official with responsibility for the Department for Employment and Learning I am responding on the unions behalf.

Whenever the announcement was made by the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister to consider the abolition of the Department for Employment and Learning we, as a union, wrote to them to express our considerable surprise and concern at the lack of detail that had been contained in their proposal and the fact that the only people they were consulting was political parties in the NI Executive.

Whilst we appreciate that your Committee are asking for responses to key issues about what should happen if the Department is abolished, it is the very strong view of NIPSA that the Department should not be abolished and that you and your Committee should strongly argue with the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister that the functions of the Department for Employment and Learning should remain within the Department for Employment and Learning.

We say that because the Department has a proven track record of success in its role in delivering advice, guidance and support to employers and people seeking work through the Employment Service function, to the Further and Higher Education sector, through its provision of advice at that level to schools and school students through the Careers Service function, and to those seeking resolutions to employment related issues through the Industrial Tribunal and the Fair Employment Tribunal service.

It is a matter of real concern to us that we as the union representing staff in the Department, and indeed the staff themselves, first learned of the decision of the First

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Minister and the Deputy First Minister to consider the abolition of the Department through the press. That is not an acceptable way of doing business.

We consider the decision to be a purely political one and, as we have already pointed out to the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister, we believe that any decisions on matters such as this should be made by looking at the delivery of the service to the public and to ensuring that staff interests are listened to through their recognised trade union.

For the reasons I have identified we strongly hold the view that the Department for Employment and Learning should not be abolished as we believe it is working well and we have seen absolutely no evidence of any questioning of its failure to provide quality public service delivery.

In light of this we also believe that if, and it would be a matter of real regret, that the Department for Employment and Learning was to be dissolved then its constituent parts should be held together irrespective of which Department it merges with or is taken over by.

We also take the view that there should be no loss of posts as a result of the decision. The hard working and dedicated members of the Department for Employment and Learning who have made a very real contribution to the work of the Department over many years should be recognised. Instead of having their commitment undermined and undervalued it would be helpful for recognition to be provided to the staff.

We also believe that the failure of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister to have any consultation with NIPSA as the recognised union representing the interests of staff before a decision was reached, should not reoccur and if any proposals are reached regarding the transferring of the Department for Employment and Learning functions to another Department then there should be full and proper consultation with NIPSA to ensure that staff concerns are listened to and addressed.

We also think that it would be helpful if we could meet with you to discuss this matter further. We are more than happy to provide any further advice or information you require. We are grateful that you have sought our opinions on this matter which unfortunately was not the case of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister.

Yours sincerely



TONY McMULLAN
Assistant Secretary

NISCA

Chairperson
Cathy Moore
St Mary's Grammar School Belfast
147A Glen Road
Belfast BT11 8NR
Tel 02890 294000



1. Given the functions and purpose of your organisation and the functions & purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade Industry (DETI) and the Department of Education (DENI), with which dept do you think your sector should be aligned?

2. Why do you take the view expressed in 2 above?

The N.I. Schools and Colleges Careers Association (NISCA) represents careers professionals working in post primary schools and colleges in N.I. The main body of our membership comprises Careers Teachers but we also represent those working in Further Education (FE) colleges. We maintain close links with the Education and Library Boards, the N.I. Careers Service, Higher Education (HE) in N.I. and professional Career bodies in the UK and Ireland. A further explanation of NISCA's functions and purposes is outlined below:

NISCA will endeavour to enhance the quality of Careers Provision in schools and colleges of Further and Higher Education and to create a desire for life-long learning.

Fundamental Principles:

NISCA is committed to seven fundamental principles.

- Each student has the right to impartial and informed advice which promotes equality of opportunity and puts the needs of the young person first.
- Each student should have access to careers guidance from appropriately trained personnel.
- Each student must have access to up-to-date and relevant careers related information.
- Each student has the right to autonomy in relation to his or her career decision making.
- Careers education and guidance is integral to and an essential part of curriculum entitlement of all young people.
- Careers programmes should be adequately and appropriately resourced.
- Careers provision should encompass a partnership between the school or college and the wider Community.

The Roles of NISCA:

- Provide a networking facility for careers practitioners
- Make representation on policy, structure and resources to all relevant statutory bodies and other organisations in relation to the provision, delivery and evaluation of Careers Education and Guidance Programmes.
- Strengthen partnerships with the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) and other key organisations involved in careers education and guidance.
- Offer occasional in-service programmes in consultation and collaboration with the Education and Library Boards.
- Promote dialogue with relevant employers' organisations.

- Maintain links, exchange views and ideas and disseminate best practice among careers practitioners within Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and in Great Britain and with comparable organisations such as the Association of Careers Education and Guidance (ACEG).

We believe that the N.I. Careers Service should be allied to DETI. DETI currently deal with Labour Market Intelligence, entrepreneurship, employability and the Sector Skills Councils – all of this would be complimentary to the Careers Service's input to education.

Education and CEIAG are intrinsically linked as a young person moves through the key stages of their life. In order for there to be a greater consistency we believe the FE and HE should be aligned with DENI. Thus young people will remain under the same department at the transitional points in their lives.

3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

The values & principles on which NISCA is based influence our decision rather than individual experiences. However the transfer of information with each pupil moving into FE or HE from schools would in theory be more efficient if FE & HE were aligned to DENI rather than between two separate government departments. Currently young people must give their personal and educational details to colleges, training organisations and universities on enrolment, sometimes missing out vital information on pastoral issues or educational needs.

4. What are your concerns about the dissolution of DEL & how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

Currently the N.I. Careers Service plays a vital role within our schools and we would like to see this partnership to continue. Regardless of which department the Careers Service is aligned with we would not like to see it dissolved or subsumed, but to retain its own identity and some autonomy. We would ask to seek reassurance that the role they play will continue.

NI Chamber of Commerce



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11 May 2012

Mr Basil McCrea
Chair, Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 416, Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw, Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Dear Basil

Re. The Future of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)

Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce is concerned at the uncertainty that has developed over the future of the Department for Employment and Learning, particularly skills and training, and believes that this must be resolved quickly.

The formation of a new Department for the Economy which was recommended in the Independent Review of the Economic Programme last year and was welcomed by the Chamber would be the ideal. If an interim measure is required we would strongly recommend that Further Education & Higher Education move to DETI.

This integrated approach would ensure that the skills strategy would be implemented from pre-employment training, through employment to skills development and training in the workplace. This would also help to ensure that there is a supply of skilled labour required for economic growth in both short and long terms.

Avoidance of uncertainty and delay is essential if we are to create the 25,000 new jobs, at the very least, set in the Executive's Programme for Government and increase productivity and competitiveness through a sharp rise in skills.

We believe that an integrated approach would promote even closer links between the Careers Service, and Invest NI. Further education plays a crucially important role in skills and should be within the new department. In addition, further education and higher education are taking the lead in the development of skills in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Yours sincerely

Ann McGregor
Chief Executive

Cc Ms Cathie White

Working with



Chamber Patrons



Accreditation



Open Colleges Network Northern Ireland

OCN NI is a Company Limited by
Guarantee in Northern Ireland Company
No. NI50863 Accepted as a charity by
the Inland Revenue Ref No. XR17530/1
The Diversity of Learning



Open College Network Northern Ireland

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Basil McCrea MLA, Chairperson
Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 283
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

09 February 2012

Dear Basil

Open College Network Northern Ireland (OCN NI) response to the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this important issue and we appreciate your kind invitation to do so. I have prefaced our response with a brief overview of OCN NI and then I have gone into some detail in response to your questions.

In summary:

- Our response to question 1 is that if we are required to pick from only two - and we suggest that there might be other options- we view DENI as the place to support the wider learning sector.
- In question 2 we suggest that there is a difference between form and function and that not all of one department need go to another and we suggest that the clear focus on skills that is the FE role may be best placed in DETI, but that not all of the FE role should go to DETI particularly those aspects they have not done well.
- In question 3 we address the historical legacy of the post primary structure that FE grew out of and question whether this technical split on age and activity now suits our work.
- In question 4 we take a little time to recommend looking at in particular Scotland as an example of another way that actually works better than ours. There are other examples which I would be happy to discuss.
- In question 5 we suggest that DEL Committee is in a unique position to recommend a step change in how we look at learning and how we support and resource it. Our own Commission on Learning would enable CEL to leave a lasting legacy that would impact upon learning in NI for decades.

Who we Are

- OCN NI is the leading credit based awarding body in Northern Ireland, providing credit based learning in Northern Ireland since 1995
- OCN NI is the only Northern Ireland based independent national awarding organisation providing qualifications across different learning sectors. An awarding body in Northern Ireland focused on learners in Northern Ireland
- OCN NI works with and supports learners across Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. We provide a range of learning and development support strategies and services across the business, community, education and government sectors.
- We support the development of in house learning and development programmes and provide a framework of customised qualifications.
- OCN NI delivers a range of nationally recognised QCF qualifications focused on learning needs in Northern Ireland. OCN In 2010/11 OCN NI registered over 29,000 learners

As a leading Northern Ireland educational charity our objects are:

to advance the provision of education and lifelong learning for the public benefit. OCN NI aims to promote the education and training of adults, children & young people These include:

1. Promoting lifelong learning for the wider community through the development of individual capabilities, competencies, skills and understanding in areas of educational value
2. Working with stakeholders & partners to promote and provide access to learning and accreditation opportunities that facilitate lifelong learning and work related skills
3. Providing opportunity to those who have least benefited from traditional education
4. Recognising achievement, accrediting learning, awarding qualifications and supporting continuous improvement in lifelong learning and work related skills

OCN Northern Ireland Mission Statement

To offer the best possible learning programmes and resources, and to put these opportunities in the hands of as many people as possible.

We will achieve our mission by:

Providing outstanding qualifications and learning opportunities that meet current and future need, and we will support this learning with brilliant resources and services that add real value to our customers

Response

- 1. Given the functions and purpose of your organisation and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

OCN NI is a national awarding organisation, serving a large constituency across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Our qualifications and services are orientated towards the community, young people, commerce and industry. We offer qualifications from Entry Level to Level 8 on the QCF. Our work bridges the gap between employability, skills and personal and community learning.

As a leading Awarding Body and provider of learning services the key issue for us is where best can the work we engage in be supported by government and where best the

constituency be served by government- and this may be in more than one place. We work with all government departments either directly or indirectly via our work with customers in the community, in industry, the public sector or commerce. We award qualifications in Justice, in Agri- Food, in Health & Life Science, in Leadership, in Personal Development in Business Start Up in ITC, in Languages in the Arts & Creative Industries and in a wide range of other areas

We work with FE, HE, Schools, Special Schools, Social Enterprises, Community & Voluntary Organisations and large third sector delivery organisations as well as directly supporting learning in a number of government departments. We support organisations who work in interface areas on the edge of peace building, and we work with Youth Organisations who are challenging stereotypes, we work with SME to deliver learning and qualifications to their employees and we work with large corporations to support innovation and enterprise.

This is as you can see a difficult question for us to answer as those we work with are learning in a huge number of contexts supported by a large number of initiatives. In our view one department need must take the strategic responsibility for co-ordinating learning across a diverse range of sectors and specific needs. If we were required to make a choice between two then we would chose DENI.

2. Why do you take the view expressed at 1 above?

DETI as a leader in learning would and really only could speak to one main sort of learning that is focused on employability and addressing the needs of the economy. This is after all- their stated role- their goal outlined in their corporate plan is:

‘ to grow a dynamic, innovate economy’.

Response

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‘ to grow a dynamic, innovate economy’.

Learning is key to this function and may be the key reason why parts of DEL e.g. FE moves to DETI. The Skill journey is however not even half the journey that learning can and should be for those who are excluded, those who have not previously succeeded, those who are marginalised, those who are building a successful civic society, those who are developing a crucial Family Learning programme aimed at sustaining families and supporting communities and a wide range of other learners.. Specific technical skills should be the province of DETI, the broader engagement with learning that FE and other parts of DEL should and in small part do deliver will be best placed elsewhere.

In saying this the DENI vision, taken from its website has a focus on young people- which begs the question where are adult learners, community learners, non participating learners:

‘The vision of the Department of Education is to educate and develop the young people of Northern Ireland to the highest possible standards, providing equality of access to all.

The Department of Education’s Vision Statement is:

Vision Statement

DE exists to ensure that every learner fulfils her or his full potential at each stage of the development’

This dual vision excludes in a key way ‘ non- young’ people and the DETI Vision doesn’t include people! A key question must be asked, does it have to be a choice between two? DSD, DCAL, Health, Justice and others all play a part in learning and development.

The legacy of non skills learning, is really in the absence of a co-ordinated policy approach and the fragmentation of a strategic focus on adult and community learning. Largely ignoring or subordinating the needs of activity which aims to address disadvantage through learning and seeks to build a civic and civil society through learning. These aims would be lost in DETI- they were almost lost in DEL. They may- unless the Vision of DENI is changed- be lost there also, but at least DENI vision begins with people and not with structures

DELNI Vision statement from its website is:

Our Aim

To promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy.

Our Objectives

To promote economic, social and personal development through high quality learning, research and skills training; and

To help people into employment and promote good employment practices.

Our Customers

The Department's two main customer groups are:

- Individuals who are seeking to improve their levels of skills and qualifications or who require support and guidance to progress towards employment, including self-employment; and
- Businesses in both the public and private sectors.

Whilst this is not completely exclusively related to skills and employment in practice it has meant exactly that. Community Learning, Adult Learning, Informal Learning do not from DELs perspective address its core area of 'preparing people for work and to support the economy'

It is not a significant leap to move from 'supporting the economy' (DEL) to 'grow a dynamic, innovative economy'(DETI). This specific skills function and related research for DEL does seem to fit with DETI expressed goal. This however move of function is not the only or even remotely appropriate response.

A significant amount of cash flows into DEL to support its flagship skills vehicles the colleges. A large proportion of that resource should be diverted towards the functions that should sit with DENI or DSD or Local Councils. Any move of form or function in a department shift such as this should link in with an analysis of the functions delegated as well as the tasks performed. Adult and Community Learning was delegated to DEL, was the task performed?

3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

Our experiences in Northern Ireland of the role of government in learning and development is influenced significantly by our approach to primary and post primary structures. The move of Colleges away from the ELBs into a corporate structure took with it an estate and functions that once belonged to DENI and pathways that grew out of a post primary structure. Whether this structure is now the most appropriate given the move to area based planning and the impact of the revised entitlement framework is an additional question that needs addressing.

The emphasis on skills and the economy has been well serviced by this move from Education & Library Board to Corporate status. The answer to the question of whether the experience of Community Learning, Adult Learning, Family Learning, Health Learning, Informal Learning, society building learning, conflict challenging learning has been improved by this move is quite clearly no.

Much of this learning and this activity without other departments taking up the baton would have been lost. This is also recognising that FE was directed down particular routes and through its funding methodology away from these areas. FE sought to ameliorate the impact of policies that were almost exclusively skills driven and their work in this area needs to be applauded. It also raises the question as to whether their work would be further eroded by a move to DETI.

Which is why the vision and the mission is so important. if there is a secure, clear supportive vision and route for learning to support the economy and employers and business there must also be a secure, clear supportive vision for learning to support the other things that matter in our world- our society-our children- their parents, our communities - our aspirations as a people and as citizens. Who will protect this?

Experience has shown that if we are to keep learning alive across our country then we must have a pathway to support that learning . That support should be focused, coordinated and flexible enough to respond to diverse need. It must be local and not regional, it must be visible and auditable, it must deliver on its promises and it must challenge us as a society. We must rebuild an adult, community and informal learning programme. The question that

should be asked is DENI the right place or should the task be given to the super councils, or DSD or another?

4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

Our gaze now turns from looking at the past to the future. Skills and polices associated with employment will find a happy home in DETI. Adult & community Learning & development will not. Our colleagues in Scotland have recognised the unique place that community learning and development plays in the life of a nation and have focused on an approach which is integrationist in its aims. The (four) Ministries for :- Communities, Finance, Education and Lifelong Learning; have collaborated to create an infrastructure called 'Working & Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities.

This strategy has three national priorities:-

- I. **Achievement through learning for adults** - focusing on community based lifelong learning opportunities incorporating, core skills of literacy, numeracy, communications, working with others, problem solving and ICT
- II. **Achievement through learning for young people**:- engaging with young people to facilitate their personal, social and educational development and enable them to gain a voice, influence and a place in society
- III. **Achievement through building community capacity**: building community capacity and influence by enabling people to develop the confidence understanding and skill required to influence decision making and service delivery.

This approach looks to add value for money through delivery channels, challenging local communities to work and collaborate to deliver on local and regional needs, a coordinated approach.

In Northern Ireland we need an adult, community development and learning strategy that is not subordinated to another need. We need a strategy that recognises that we have a long way to go in learning with each other and for each other. We need a community learning strategy that has as its root our communities and their learning needs and we need an infrastructure that can deliver that support. OCN NI is able and willing to support this work wherever and however we can.

5. Any other relevant comments.

This is not an easy task to decide on the dissolution of a significant department like DEL and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all those people in DEL who have made an important contribution to the work of Northern Ireland. We are in a better place because of their work. In essence this restructure is testament to the brilliant work that has gone on. It also realises the tension that the department is in, trying to service too wide a range of needs. It appreciates the great work that has occurred and recognises that this work now sits in at least two other places and for the good of Northern Ireland, its economy and its people there needs to be a change.

This challenging time brings with it an opportunity to do something different that recognises the reality of the social justice imperative that is at play and also the real social capital opportunity that may be lost. OCN NI urges the Committee to place both the needs of the community and the economy in equal weight and place the support for each in their necessary place. We further urge the committee to seize the initiative and play the key strategic role on laying out a vision and a policy framework for , Lifelong Learning, for Community Learning & Adult Learning that has been absent for far too long.

CEL is in a unique position and we would contend a uniquely powerful position in our assembly history. There is no precedent for this activity and as such CEL have an almost open hand to conduct themselves the way they wish. CEL can draw a new map for learning or at least sketch the parameters for a Commission on Learning to colour it in.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brendan Clarke', written in a cursive style.

Brendan Clarke

CEO

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CHARITY REG. NO. XN90480

Basil McCrea, MLA,
Chairperson Committee for Employment and Learning,
Room 283,
Parliament Buildings,
Ballymiscaw,
Stormont,
BELFAST BT4 3XX

7th February 2013

Dear Mr. McCrea,

Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

As a key stakeholder dealing with the Department for Employment and Learning on many level and across sections within the Department I am disappointed that the dissolution is potentially occurring. In response to your specific questions I offer the following comments:

1. Given the nature and function of our organisation and the interface we have with the Department I feel that the Department should be aligned to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.
2. It is clear that as the remit of our organisation and those we interface with that an employment agenda be it paid employee or self employment sits best within Enterprise, Trade and Investment. This Department has a remit for the employment agenda including improving skills for trade within the Province and therefore employment seems to be a best fit with DETI.
3. Your letter asks which Department the Sector should sit in, in relation to the Department for Employment and Learning. I think our sector is as diverse as the government departments and therefore it is not a sectoral issue but rather the aim and purpose of the organisation. I would urge the committee to ensure that cross sectoral working arrangements are robust and this is a main issue for the community and voluntary sector.
4. If the Department is abolished a main concern is that the excellent work and relationships built over the years are maintained. Concerns also abound as to the precedence given to the work of the current department within any new departmental environment.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Haddock

Deputy Chief Executive



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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Belfast, BT6 8ED, Northern Ireland.

This project is partly funded by the European Social Fund and the Department for Employment and Learning.

Parkanaur College



Parkanaur College

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3rd February 2012

Dear Basil

I am pleased to be asked to respond to your questions in respect to the dissolution of DEL on behalf of Parkanaur College. The following remarks relate to questions 1-3.

Like most Further Education Colleges the alignment with either Department is a close call. In many respects it is similar to asking a child which parent they prefer. Looking at the alignment in England and Wales the seventy Specialised Further Education Colleges are clearly identified with the Department of Education.

The attraction for alignment with the Department of Education is strong not least because the staff dealing with provision generally have related qualifications and is therefore more appreciative and supportive of College activities.

Not with standing this transient future needs of young people into mature independent adults ought to be related to a sustainable quality of life in an integrated society. Young people ought to have outcomes that meet their needs and prepare them to maximise their independent living and employability skills.

Based on this I believe the needs of aligning with DETI are more beneficial in the long term.

Yours sincerely

Wilfred Mitchell OBE
Chief Executive

Queens' University Belfast and University of Ulster



Mr Basil McCrea MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 283
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3XX

9 February 2012

Dear Basil

Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Thank you for your letter, dated 26 January 2012, in relation to the above.

Both universities are committed to working, in partnership, with all Government Departments to deliver the priorities set out in the Programme for Government (PfG). It is the delivery of this Programme, with economic development at its core, that is the priority. Whilst higher education is currently part of the remit of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), the universities have extensive dealings with many Government Departments, including the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety; the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI); the Department of Education; the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development; the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister; the Department of Justice; and the Department of the Environment – building and maintaining these relationships will remain critical to the successful delivery of the PfG.

In particular, both universities have worked closely with DETI and, in streamlining the number of Government Departments, there had been an expectation that higher education would, at some stage, be brought within DETI. Such a move would reinforce the importance of flagship joint ventures such as the Northern Ireland Science Park (DETI, QUB, UU), recognised as a highly successful model of encouraging and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship, and the recently opened Northern Ireland Advanced Composites Engineering Centre (DETI, BIS, QUB, UU).

The partnership approach between higher education and DETI remains central to realising the Assembly's ambitions of building a sustainable wealth creating economy, which is globally competitive. Ensuring Northern Ireland is globally competitive is a continuing challenge for DETI and both universities will continue to be critical in realising this objective.

The local universities, through their international networks and reputation, play a crucial role in supporting the economy, through the provision of highly qualified, employable graduates and a strong research and development base. Indeed, the availability of a highly skilled workforce continues to be a defining aspect of the Northern Ireland economy and the universities work closely with DETI in aligning graduate skills with employer requirements. The contribution of the higher education sector in supporting the regional economy is frequently highlighted by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and, indeed, is a key component of DETI's draft 'Northern Ireland Economic Strategy'.

In recent years, a closer working relationship has developed between the higher education section of DEL and DETI, again supporting the better alignment of the demand for, and supply of, skills. This would be strengthened further by the location of the function within DETI. DEL has achieved this whilst not losing the focus on widening access to higher education and the wider social benefits of higher education.

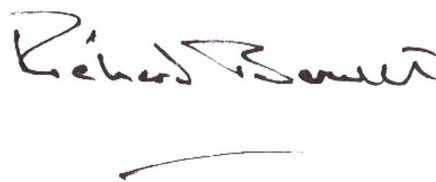
The re-organisation of Government Departments is a matter for the Assembly and the universities will work constructively with whatever structure the Assembly determines. The organisation of Government Departments is, however, a means and not an end in itself. The end is the efficient and effective delivery of the Programme for Government. Given the principal aim of the current Programme for Government, it seems to us that higher education best fits with DETI (or a Department for the Economy).

We would very much welcome the opportunity to explore these issues further with the Committee.

Yours sincerely



Professor Sir Peter Gregson
President and Vice-Chancellor
Queen's University Belfast



Professor Richard Barnett
Vice-Chancellor
University of Ulster

St. Mary's University College Belfast

Basil McCrea MLA, Chairperson
Committee for Employment and Learning

09 February 2012

Dear Basil

I am responding to your letter of 26 January 2012 on the dissolution of DEL.

You raised a number of questions and my response on behalf of St Mary's University College will be brief.

1. I think the University sector should be aligned with the Department of Education.
2. The view I have expressed in 1. above is based on my understanding of the very nature of universities.

Since the development of German universities in the 19th century, a dominant model for the University is the research centre. This model has its strengths: it promotes excellence, it advances knowledge, it enhances the intellectual elite. But the older and more widespread model for the university is the centre of learning. The university is a community of teachers and learners, a community whose central task is the pursuit and sharing of knowledge.

Our university system has been drawn towards the research model by external government requirements and internal striving for recognition. But the vast majority of its work is still related to teaching and learning. And as more and more young people enter university, the importance of good teaching for satisfied learners will increase. To develop expertise in teaching and learning, the universities need to be part of the wider community of learning which embraces primary and secondary levels. Greater integration across the learning community—a sharing in good teaching practice, an alignment of curriculum, a focus on the students' needs—can be better achieved by bringing all the sectors together under one Department of Education.

3. My view is based on a philosophical position rather than experiences from the past.
4. In particular I believe that the policy and funding of teacher education should be dealt with in the Department of Education.

Yours sincerely

Professor Peter Finn

Principal

Stranmillis University College Belfast



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

A College of Queen's University Belfast
www.stran.ac.uk

7 February 2012

Mr Basil McCrea MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 283
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BELFAST BT4 3XX

Dear Mr McCrea

Re: DISSOLUTION OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Thank you for your letter of 26 January 2012. I would respond to the questions set out in your letter, as follows.

1. Given the functions and purpose of Stranmillis University College it should be aligned to the Department of Education.
2. The current arrangement whereby the College finds its function split between two government departments – for example ITE quotas are controlled by the Department of Education and the funding of Teacher Education is allocated by the Department for Employment and Learning - has not served the sector well. Most of the key policy decisions which the sector needs to respond to are initiated by the Department of Education, consequently being part of that Department would bring greater coherence to our core business.

It would also facilitate strategic planning using the normal three year planning model rather than the current unsatisfactory arrangement of having to prepare academic plans and budgets for the next year when information about quotas and funding may not be confirmed until May or June. Timely information on these matters becomes even more crucial given the challenges of the current financial and employment background.

3. The experience of the past 4-5 years has demonstrated how long term strategic planning in Teacher Education has been curtailed because of the lack of agreement between two departments to sign off on the Teacher Education Review which was initiated in 2002. There is an absence of a single forum which brings together all



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teacher educators in Northern Ireland. The Teacher Education Review recommended establishing a Teacher Education Committee representing all Northern Ireland providers. This recommendation has been welcomed by the sector but regrettably, as yet, we have not moved to the implementation phase. The 'voice' of Teacher Education has been weakened by the fact that it has to deal with two departments and consequently has always been exposed to the risk of 'falling between two stools'.

The present situation has also led to the relationship between Teacher Education courses and the diversified degree programmes being presented in negative terms. Diversified programmes have been described as 'subsidising teacher education' rather than being conceptualised as complementary learning activities. Stranmillis University College has played a pioneering role in the field of Early Childhood Studies which brings a dynamic contribution and coherence to Early Years work. The College's existing collaborative arrangements with the Further Education sector (the College has been instrumental in establishing the largest consortium with the FE sector in Northern Ireland) enables it to make a major contribution to widening access and workforce development. The Department of Education also takes a leading role in the development of policies within this area. Consequently, the Early Childhood Studies degree needs to be understood as an integral and vital part of the College's higher education provision, not some sort of appendage linked to a narrowly defined interpretation of financial viability.

In a similar way the College's Health and Leisure degree makes an important contribution to health and physical literacy within the school sector and to wider health promotion strategies. The College currently has a number of health promotion projects linked to schools and the community.

4. The points outlined above show why the realignment of the College with the Department of Education would bring greater coherence and clarity to its purpose and core mission.
5. Aligning the College with the Department of Education does not weaken the important contribution Teacher Education and schools make to economic development. The quality of Teacher Education has an important link to economic development in terms of the impact on pupil achievement, including the key areas of Literacy and Numeracy.

The Department of Education has the responsibility for improving pupil performance. Research across the world substantiates the claim that teacher effectiveness has a greater impact on pupil performance than any other reform policy. Teacher Education's primary goal must ultimately be about improving teacher effectiveness, which has a major impact on economic growth. The investment in teacher effectiveness must include not only Initial Teacher Education but ongoing professional development. By logical conclusion therefore Teacher Education and the related professional fields of Early Childhood and Health & Leisure should be within the Department of Education's remit.

The full continuum of education, from the young child to the adult learner, should be within the remit of the Department of Education. Furthermore, the Lifelong Learning agenda can only be enhanced through such a move.

I hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Heaslett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "A".

Dr Anne Heaslett
Principal

U3A



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

15 Manna Grove
Belfast
BT5 6AJ

Mr Basil McCrea MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 283
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
BT4 3XX

6 February 2012

Dear Mr McCrea

Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)

Thank you for your letter of 26 January 2012 seeking comments on the proposed dissolution of DEL.

Before I respond to the questions set out in your letter it might be helpful to set out some background to the University of the Third Age (U3A). U3A is made up of a group of people working together that enables members to share many educational, creative and leisure activities. Members share their knowledge, skills and experience, and learn from each other. It is a good example of lifelong learning. U3A is self funding. Our aims are as follows:-

- To encourage and enable older people no longer in full-time employment to help each other to share their knowledge, skills, interests and experience.
- To demonstrate the benefits and enjoyment to be gained and the new horizons to be discovered in learning throughout life.
- To celebrate the capabilities and potential of older people and their value to society.
- To make U3As accessible to all older people.
- To encourage the establishment of U3As in every part of the country where conditions are suitable and to support and collaborate with them.

One of our guiding principles is:-

To engage with local and national government departments and other agencies which formulate lifelong learning policies and practices in order to influence those that relate particularly to learning in later life.

I have looked at the NI Direct website in an effort to better understand the functions of DEL, the Department of Education (DE) and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). In the light of the information provided my response to your questions is as follows:-

1. The U3A would seek to align itself with that department to which the DEL functions relating to higher/further education were transferred. U3A is about lifelong learning and

we have a wealth of experience not only from having been in the workplace but also as people who have chosen to go on learning, albeit in an informal setting.

2. If the DEL functions referred to above were seen as an extension to the existing educational role of DE then a transfer to that department would seem appropriate. However, if these functions were seen as a tool to help drive the economy by developing a better academically qualified and skilled workforce, then DEL would seem to be the preferred option.
3. U3A has had no previous experience of either DE or DETI.
4. One of DEL's objectives is:-

To promote economic, social and personal development through highly quality learning, research and skills training.

The elements of social and personal development, U3A would suggest, are part of lifelong learning that should start in pre-primary school and continue throughout education, at whatever level, into working life and then life after work. It would be important that in transferring functions between departments that this important part of a person's development is not lost.

Thank you for giving U3A the opportunity to respond to your Committee.

Yours sincerely

Sandra R Foster

Secretary to the NI Region of U3A

University and College Union

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Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning Request for comment from Chairperson of DEL Assembly Committee.

30.12

Before addressing the specific questions posed by the Committee, UCU would wish to express its appreciation to the many dedicated civil servants who have contributed to the work of the Department of Employment and Learning over the past number of years. They have delivered a wide range of public services to assist our citizens with dedication and professionalism. It is our view that, whatever reshaping occurs within government, the skills and commitment of those workers must continue to be harnessed to meet the challenges our society faces in respect of people who may be in work, or in post school education and/or training, those who may be unemployed or far removed from the labour market, those seeking careers advice to help them chart their future or those who must access to the employment related judicial system. Those features of our social interaction will remain ahead of us and the skills and dedication of such staff must continue to be utilised to best effect to support that work.

Q1. Given the functions and purposes of your organization and the functions and purpose of the DETI and the DE , with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

1. The University and College Union represents teaching staff in colleges of further education, teacher education and academic and academic related staff in universities, we also represent a number of tutors in training organizations. UCU aims to protect and promote the professional interests of members and to promote adult, further and higher education and training. Our members are mainly teachers and lecturers whose role is to impart knowledge and encourage learning by students so that they can obtain the qualifications and develop the skills and experience to equip them to progress in their chosen careers and as citizens.

The Department of Education has a similar mission in respect the expectations it has for teachers delivering to pupils in the schools sector. UCU believes that Department is the appropriate governmental department to have responsibility for the delivery of education across all sectors. Until the late 1990s, that department had overall responsibility for all sectors of education. It continues to have responsibility for regulating the teaching force in schools and for quality assurance through the Education and Training Inspectorate for post-school education and training. The re-integration of the post-schools sectors within that Department would in our view, not only enhance the status of teachers but provide much greater scope of integration of the 14 – 19 curriculum across the schools and FE sectors in particular, as well as promoting greater co-operation between schools and universities particularly in STEM subjects. It would also enhance the strategic approach to the training of teachers which is fragmented under current arrangements.

The future strategic direction of the schools sector will be determined by the Education and Skills Authority with a focus on preparing young people for life and for future employment. That focus strengthens the argument for greater co-operation and integration between the schools and the postschool sectors to mutual benefit. The re-distribution of post-school education into a single department will facilitate cross-sectoral planning and regulation and the deployment of teachers to best effect. It would also end the anomaly which currently exists whereby the need for the training of teachers is determined by one department and funded and delivered by another.

Research activity makes an important contribution to economic development but the mechanisms through which it does so are complex and indirect. The highest quality research requires long time horizons and academic freedom to question received wisdom. Research is of crucial importance to all aspects of society and is about much more than business innovation and development. There are dangers that the inclusion of the Universities within DETI would lead to excessive focus on short time applied research to the detriment to wider social need. There is no evidence that the current funding of research in HE would be put at a disadvantage should DE have responsibility for universities. That was not so in pre-DEL administrative arrangements. Nor is there any reason to believe that the extensive and developing co-operation and interactions between FE Colleges and Universities and the business/industry sectors, would be disadvantaged by the return of the post-school sectors to the Department of Education.

Integration and co-operation across sectors of education would not be improved by the re-location of post-school institutions to the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment. Such a re-distribution would in our view completely distort the role and functions of that Department. Currently DETI has an annual recurrent budget of just over £200million. Its functions are clear ie to promote the development of the economy - primarily the private sector - and to stimulate inward investment from the international business community. Should the post school sectors be re-distributed to that department its budget would be increased by over £700million and it would assume responsibility for all associated and accountability arrangements to do with the funding and regulation of those sectors. That alone would scale up necessary administrative machinery to proportions which would overwhelm the purpose and focus of DETI. In our view, this distortion of mission would damage the promotion of inward investment.

Furthermore we would be concerned that in DETI's drive to attract clients, post-school education establishments may be locked into financial arrangements and contracts which do not reflect the true cost of delivery or which may adversely impact upon the quality of the educational experience. UCU supports and welcomes measures to enlarge to role FE colleges and Universities in the promotion of economic development. We see that as an essential and crucial and major role for those sectors. However that is only one aspect of the purpose and role of those educational establishments – it is not and must not become the primary or dominant feature of provision. Should that become the case, we believe it would fundamentally change the role and mission of those institutions and undermine their crucial role in supporting all aspects of our society and economy. A post-school education service which is primarily business facing will turn further and higher education institutions into training organizations harnessed to the short term needs of multinational corporations whose objectives are for short term profit rather than meeting our needs for a well qualified workforce of educated citizens committed to social cohesion and a shared future.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at 1 above?

Please refer to the comment above.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, is so please specify?

Yes.

The incorporation model which underpins the functioning of our FE colleges since 1998 was designed to make colleges into corporate organisations run on a business model. We believe that policy has been a failure. Apart from the fact that educational purpose of those institutions has been diverted from that of delivering a public education service, the colleges have reduced learning opportunities for our citizens and its leaders have brought industrial relations chaos to its staff. The “break even at all costs” philosophy of college leaders, pushed by senior officers of DEL has resulted in huge efficiency savings through the loss of teachers jobs, cuts to courses and student numbers in classes increased to

unmanageable levels which has damaged the quality of provision overall. It has also resulted in unprecedented levels of financial mismanagement by college managers and huge sums spent from the public purse in investigations and consultancy fees as colleges stumble from one crisis to another. The failure of college leaders to honour promises and collective agreements made with representatives of staff has led to a disillusioned workforce. The dominant management culture in a number of colleges is one of direction and bullying rather than one which reflects respect for colleagues and the promotion of professional consensus. Those same leaders were also not immune from self interest. Shortly after the colleges were incorporated college principals sought and gained a performance pay scheme which saw each of them having the maximum pay awarded – even those who were on sick leave for the entire period of the year in question. Despite DEL's oft repeated claims that they cannot interfere in the internal affairs of colleges the embarrassment was such that the Directors' PRP scheme was scrapped. UCU believes that the "hands off" approach of senior officers of DEL contributed to those issues and that were colleges and universities under the control of DE, accountability would be made a matter of serious public concern. These issues continue - UCU can itemize the serious financial mismanagement at a significant number of FE colleges and the many references to the Public Accounts Committee that remain extant.

UCU notes that a number of influential individuals who preside over FE colleges are pressing for colleges to be relocated to DETI. We believe that is motivated by a strategy to further remove their teaching staff, from links with the teaching profession and to assist them continue their attack on the pay and conditions of FE teachers. UCU is concerned that college leaders in seeking to place the sector with DETI, would seek to further reduce regulation, departmental control and external scrutiny and to push private interests.

We are also concerned that the Higher Education strategy of the Westminster government is to open up that sector to more private sector involvement and greater opportunities for private profit through an expanded higher education market. The location of universities within the Business and Skills Department at Westminster was primarily to promote that development. However even the Westminster Coalition Government is beginning to rethink this position following major problems uncovered by the Obama government in the United States of America as a result of private providers failing to meet the needs of students by failing to deliver in the delivery of quality courses. UCU is concerned that if higher education is to be located within DETI private sector providers such as INTO and KAPLAN will seek to extend their spheres of operation to Northern Ireland and dilute the standards of provision our education departments have sought to preserve.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of DEL and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

A major concern for us is that the £40million found by DEL to support higher education arising from the position taken by the Northern Ireland Executive in respect of student fees is retained for those institutions. We are also concerned to ensure that the functions carried out by DEL are transferred to an appropriate department and in a constructive and efficient manner with minimum disruption to the mission and delivery of its public services. We believe the Tribunal functions properly should be located within the justice system. We believe the careers service, post school education and training should be under DE.

Dear MLA

Dissolution of Department of Employment and Learning

UCU represents around 4000 teaching and academic related staff in Northern Ireland's further education colleges and universities. Our members have a major interest in future government departmental arrangements for those institutions following the dissolution of the Department of Employment and Learning.

A number of persons in the leadership of colleges and universities support the post school functions of DEL being transferred to DETI. UCU believes that would not serve the educational interests of our society to best effect nor would it enhance the promotion of economic development.

DETI is a small department with a clear remit to promote economic development and to stimulate inward investment from the international business community. Our colleges and universities already have established and substantial links with DETI and play a crucial role in supporting the economy. However the mission of DETI would be seriously compromised should it assume responsibility for the funding, regulation and administration of those large and diverse educational institutions.

Those institutions as well as having links to the economy and business also have a huge role in the delivery of education and training across all aspects of public services as well as the schools sector. FE colleges, for example, through 14 -19 initiatives interact with large numbers of secondary and grammar schools. The work of our Teacher Education colleges is interdependent with our schools from nursery level through to senior managers. Our universities produce graduates and research workers for all walks of life - not solely to promote private sector economic development. In all, the sectors process around 260,000 students each year delivering a vast range of provision with all the attendant administration, regulation and accountability.

Where is the evidence to support the view that attaching all of that to DETI would enhance the ability of that department to increase private inward investment.

DEL (or rather its predecessor DEFHETE) was created as part of the political settlement for devolution. Prior to that time all education sectors were served by the Department of Education. UCU believes that arrangement provided for more efficient administration, greater cross-sectoral co-operation and a social perspective which saw education as a core social value and life-time experience for all of our citizens as well as a contributor to economic development. The teachers in post-school institutions are educators with the same values, skills and dedication to students as applies to all of the teaching profession.

The opportunity now exists to return post school education to a single government department which can co-ordinate policy in the delivery of education at all levels, and promote co-operation and shared experience at all levels to the benefit of our society as a whole. That is the approach taken by the devolved governments of Scotland and Wales and in the Republic. We believe that approach enhances those societies as a whole and does so without damaging or diminishing the ability of the post-school sector to continue to provide services and support to stimulate the economy.

UCU is concerned that relocation of the post school sectors to DETI will diminish the status of our colleges and universities as providers of mainstream education to adults young and old and will, in time, divert those institutions from their central role in delivering education to all of our citizens. Those sectors must not be converted into the McDonalds of education delivering fast track bespoke training to meet the shortterm needs of inward private sector investors. They seek a quick turn-around in profits not the development of long term generic skills - for work and for life - which an educated society provides for its citizens.

I share the views of my union and ask for your support to ensure that when DEL is dissolved the post-school functions of the department are relocated to the Department of Education.

Yours sincerely

Grainne Quigley

Ulster Supported Employment Ltd



23rd March 2012

Mr Basil McCrea
Chair, Employment and Learning Committee
Room 416,
Parliament Buildings,
Ballymiscaw,
Stormont,
Belfast,
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr McCrea,

RE: Future of the Department for Employment and Learning

I write to you today on behalf of the board and executive of Ulster Supported Employment Ltd to lay before the committee the thoughts we have in respect to the future of our sponsoring department, The Department for Employment and Learning.

As you know USEL is celebrating 50 years of Supporting, Providing and Promoting employment to people in Northern Ireland who live with Disabilities and Health conditions. USEL is an Arms Length Body under DEL which operates as a commercial not for profit company. The best description for USEL these days would be a Social Economy Firm.

In 2011-2012 we supported over 1600 people with disabilities and health conditions across Northern Ireland to find, secure and retain employment. The majority of this work was through the programmes which we have secured following competitive tendering from DEL. In the same year we employed over 100 people, over 70% of whom live with a disability or health condition.

Everything we do has a business approach with a social output resonance as we realise we need to be commercial in order to ensure future viability but cognisant of the positive social impact we generate by our very existence and operation.

Supporting, Providing, Promoting Employment

Regional Offices: Portadown, Londonderry, Omagh



Microsoft® IT Academy
Program Member



**Ulster Supported
Employment Ltd**

182 – 188 Cambrai Street,
Belfast, BT13 3JH

Tel: 028 9035 6600

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Email: info@usel.co.uk

Web: www.usel.co.uk

We exist to be the best at helping people with disabilities meet their employment aspirations. We simply could not achieve this without the positive support we enjoy from our sponsoring Department and the sponsoring branch the Disability Employment Service (DES).

We believe we need to lay before the committee a number of concerns we have in light of the forgoing as to the potential future of DEL and ultimately potentially DES.

We understand a number of options are under discussion in terms of where various functions would reside following the dissolution of DEL, so at a headline level I will deal with those.

1:DSD: It is our view that DSD provides a valuable and professional service to the people of Northern Ireland but the service is very much benefits focussed. While in the context of USEL and the client group we engage with, benefits is an important issue, it is as an enabler for our client group to engage with employment focussed activity. Many people with disabilities need to be secure in the knowledge that entering the world of employment at whatever level is underpinned by the support of the appropriate benefits. However, as the objective is employment this cannot be the prime focus.

If DEL or specifically the employment service of DEL were to move under DSD we believe, even with the best will and intention there is a risk that the overarching focus will be on benefits and focus on economic activity could be reduced.

This is a negative step for our client group and we believe for Northern Ireland PLC as a whole. The programme for government plans 25,000 new jobs, a noble and challenging intent. Within that 25,000 target will be jobs which suit and benefit our client group, so it is crucial that the policy focus is matched by the delivery focus to create and ensure people are made ready for these job roles as they develop. DEL has a positive track record in this area, and especially in terms of people who live with significant barriers to employment.

2: DE: DE like DSD has a specific focus, which is their statutory obligation, as we understand it, to ensure all children receive schooling. If DEL or the Employment service of DEL be merged under DE it is clear again that the focus on employability could take second stage to the statutory duty to provide education.

In terms of the Further and Higher education system which DEL currently has the remit for; these institutions provide skills and qualifications for the employment market. As this is not the prime statutory directive of DE it is possible that the focus on skills and accreditations and the preparation for the world of work could be reduced.

From our experience the development of people for the world of employment is inexorably linked to skills and accreditations. USEL delivered over 800 accreditations to clients in 2011-2012. These skills and accredited outcomes were delivered to our own employees and members of our client group currently in employment but many of these accreditations were delivered to people seeking to acquire skills as preparation for entering employment.

3: DETI: This would be, in our view, the most appropriate fit for DEL and DES and ultimately USEL. This department is focussed on employment creation and economic growth. As DEL takes responsibility for skilling people for work, and helping people from all areas of NI to seek and find appropriate employment the fit is so natural it seems almost beyond the need to further justify.

In terms of USEL, DETI is by far the most appropriate department, assuming the dissolution of DEL goes ahead, under which the efforts of USEL, especially as an employer in Northern Ireland, are located. USEL spans, employment, training and skills and commercial activity. This means the natural link between DEL; the skills provision, the employment provision and DETI; the commercial and employment creation focus, would yield a highly positive and highly focussed strategic delivery of the aspirations of USEL and indeed the targets under the programme for government.

It is the board and executives belief that to disperse the core functions of employment aligned to enterprise development and delivery and employment preparation and skills would reduce effectiveness and ultimately make the job of service providers and employers such as USEL so much more convoluted and challenging especially if multiple departments were engaged.

This cannot be a good thing especially in these economic times when costs and efficiencies are so important to sustainable growth for NI PLC.

Finally, as we believe seeing is believing, I would extend an invitation to the committee to re-visit USEL to see for themselves the valuable contribution we make to people who live with disabilities, health conditions and other barriers to employment.

If the committee were so minded to visit and take evidence directly from USEL we would seek to provide input from employers who have used our services and clients who have benefited as a result of their engagement with USEL. In doing so I have no doubt the committee will be convinced of the critical link between Enterprise, skills and training and Employment delivery.

I hope that the committee will be able to take me up on this invitation and I look forward to corresponding with the committee further should they deem that appropriate.

Yours Sincerely



Sam Humphries
CEO
USEL

Ulster Teachers Union

Response of the Ulster Teachers' Union – Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

9th February 2012

The Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) was founded in 1919 and is the only Northern Ireland-based teachers' union, representing over 6000 teachers in nursery, primary, post-primary and special schools in controlled, maintained and voluntary schools. The UTU welcomes the opportunity to respond to the proposal for the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning.

1. The UTU's main focus is on Education and its members approach the response to this proposal from the viewpoint of professional educators. The UTU exists to represent teachers both individually and collectively in a wide range of areas within the wider remit of Education policy. The prime consideration for UTU is Education and it is a non-political organisation in terms of party politics.

It would be the view of UTU that the proper place for the siting of the education functions of the Department for Employment and Learning would be the Department of Education.

The residual functions related to Employment Rights may be better placed within another department, and given their central role in the setting the scene for the labour market and industrial relations matters, which impact on the economy, the UTU would suggest that they should be under the control of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

2. The UTU has taken this view because it strongly believes that there should be a continuum of education within one department. The work done within Further and Higher Education is simply an extension of the work done in schools and should therefore fall under the remit of Education.

Throughout Northern Ireland the schools sector has been developing and expanding its links with the Colleges, through partnership working and delivery of the Entitlement Curriculum. Given the implications of the realignment of the Education service under the proposed Education and Skills Authority it is essential that policy be considered right across the spectrum of education providers and this would best be done within one Department.

The UTU does not believe that Education policy, or indeed the practical out-workings of that policy in terms of provision, needs to have artificial divisions made. A learner is a learner, regardless of what level they may be studying at. It makes much more sense to consider the Education landscape in its entirety rather than impose the extra difficulties of matching up one Department's priorities with another, particularly when the aim of all Education establishments and programmes is the same.

The last few years have seen significant changes in the delivery mechanisms for the curriculum. Schools have developed partnership working arrangements with colleges and pupils transfer quite easily between providers. The UTU believes that this natural interface should be encouraged to grow, particularly in times of austerity when there is no room for duplication of services. It is, furthermore, important that that interface should be seamless, both in terms of the learner's experience but also in terms of the administrative systems that govern it.

While some may argue that the Department of Employment and Learning should be subsumed by the Department for Trade and Industry, the UTU would vehemently oppose such a move, as UTU believes the prime function of "Learning" would not be best served in a Department that is focussed primarily on the economy. Clearly there would need to be interaction between DE and DETI but this would seem to be the better option if we are to

retain the focus on providing the best integrated system for all learners, therefore providing the best skills base to feed into the workforce.

The “Employment” functions of the current DEL are so central to government policy that they should be sited alongside Equality matters within OFMDFM. They should be seen as fundamental to the future success of NI and are therefore best considered as a core issue.

3. The UTU has based this view on our experiences to date of dealing with the existing interfaces between the schools sector and FE/HE. The schools/FE interface has already been referred to above, but there is also a significant schools/HE interface.

For example, initial teacher training is an integral part of the entire Education continuum and is best managed within the Department for Education. Likewise, the interface between schools and Higher Education providers, as a natural progression for learners, would seem to fit best under one Department.

4. The UTU has no concerns about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning provided the focus on Education is not lost. While there are pathways through FE/HE to the world of work, nevertheless the main focus is on learning and those pathways are leading to destinations outside the remit of state provision. The UTU strongly believes that the integrity of the Education service must be maintained.

5. The UTU welcomes the re-unification of the Education service that a merging of the functions of DEL and DE would bring.

Departmental Senior Management Team

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

The senior management team of the Department for Employment and Learning fully recognise that responsibility for determining departmental structures lies with the Executive. The team will be fully committed to the successful implementation of the final decisions with regard to the transfer of functions.

The senior management team believe that the core functions of the Department for Employment and Learning

- promoting the provision of learning and skills including entrepreneurship, enterprise, management and leadership;
- encouraging research and development creativity and innovation in the Northern Ireland economy;
- helping individuals to acquire jobs including self-employment and improving the linkages between employment programmes and skills development; and
- developing and maintaining the framework of employment rights and responsibilities.

are more closely aligned to the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment than the Department of Education. Alignment with the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment would also ensure policy responsibility for skills would be combined with delivery responsibility within a single department and this in turn would better provide for the achievement of the Programme for Government skills target of delivering over 200,000 qualifications in the planning period.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

Skills and employment are key drivers of sustainable economic growth and shared prosperity. A highly and appropriately skilled workforce has a crucial role to play in a modern knowledge intensive, export driven economy.

But our skills profile remains weak compared to many other developed economies. There are too many with low qualifications and not enough with higher level skills. Research shows that if we are to close the productivity gap with the UK over 50% of jobs in 2020 will require higher professional and technical and other higher education level qualifications – up from about a third currently. The number of jobs available to those with low level qualifications will fall away dramatically down from 27% to 10% in 2020.

Addressing this agenda lies at the heart of the Department's purpose. It requires concerted co-ordinated action across the skills continuum –

- ensuring that the economically inactive have a skill set aligned to the needs of employers and the economy (the employment service);
- encouraging the acquisition of higher level skills (further education and higher education);
- improving the basic skill set of the working population and those about to join the labour market (Further Education Training for Success and ESF);

All of this is within the context of the framework of employment law which seeks to strike the right balance between the rights of employees and employers.

The transfer of all the Department's functions to DETI would provide a number of significant advantages:-

- it creates a strong economic department which was recommended in the Independent Review of Economic Policy. Such a Department would have the capacity to respond to economic circumstances, such as a downturn or rising unemployment, including among the youth. It is a unique opportunity to bring together, for the first time, the demand and supply sides of the labour market;
- it underpins and strengthens the Economic Strategy by brigading the job creation function of Invest with the skills policy, the entire skills budget and the skills delivery functions.
- it offers the prospect of a fully coordinated approach to inward investors with INI, FE colleges and universities all working under the auspices of a single Department for the Economy;
- there would be a continuum from pre-employment training, getting the unemployed into the labour market and integrating with skills to ensure there is a supply of skilled labour to meet the needs of the local economy;
- it emphasises the key focus of the Employment Service of getting people ready for and into work;
- it preserves the links between Further Education and the economy. FE is the main delivery arm for skills and is linked intrinsically to the skills policy; the main aim articulated in FE Means Business for the sector is to support workforce and economic development. Its student population is predominantly adult;
- further education and higher education are fundamental to the Innovation Strategy. It will align policy responsibility (DETI) for innovation with key delivery agents (FE colleges and universities). Through its research the university sector is integral to INI's push to attract foreign investment and the 'Connected' programme between universities and colleges focuses on supporting innovation and product prototyping for small and medium sized enterprises;
- the work in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) delivered through further education and higher education supports DETI's intentions articulated by MATRIX. The further education colleges, especially, are charged with providing a skills pipeline to support the market opportunities identified by Matrix; this has proved to be a successful model as demonstrated through the work of the Wind Alliance;
- it keeps responsibility for all adult education and training in the one Department;
- the combined budget of DEL (£800+m) and DETI (£200+m) would provide for a substantial Department for the Economy with a budget in excess of £1bn.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

DE has a statutory obligation to provide places for under 16s and the current programme of rationalisation of provision together with the commitment to improve educational attainment represents a major challenge. There is a risk that within an expanded Department of Education the strategic focus on FE and HE could be diluted as a result of having to compete with a sensitive education agenda particularly within a tight financial context. This could have implications for economic development. There was a widely held view that in the past, prior to devolution, the FE sector was not given a sufficient priority.

Past experience would also suggest that there could be a risk of service duplication where the Department with policy responsibility for skills might seek to develop its own training

provision – as did the Training and Employment Agency under DED prior to devolution, which duplicated provision in the FE sector.

Furthermore, separating further education and higher education from skills is counter to current thinking elsewhere which has brought together support for industry, innovation, skills, further education and higher education into one department (eg Business Innovation and Skills (BIS)).

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

There is a substantial degree of coherence across the functions of DEL with the activities linked by the single theme of enhancing the skills base of the local population whether for those outside of the labour market or in work.

Some of this coherence could be lost in a restructuring and the potential separation of responsibilities for skills from further and/or higher education would mean policy responsibility for skills residing in one Department, with the delivery organisations (colleges and universities) and the associated budgets the responsibility of another. This has implications for the delivery of the PfG target as indicated earlier. But it also has operational implications at the frontline. Currently the demand from employers for skills can be met by the supply side, mostly further education, which can respond quickly and flexibly through short courses for industry.

But in a scenario where responsibility to meet the needs of employers is separated from responsibility for the key delivery organisations such responses would be more difficult to negotiate.

These concerns are reflected in the preference for the functions to be accommodated within an expanded DETI.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

The Department would be happy to discuss the contents of this response with the Committee.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name:

Branch/Office Name:

Branch/Office Location:

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 —

E01 —

E02 —

AO —

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Departmental Analysis of Staff Responses

Question 1: Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

Out of 57 Questionnaires returned, 37 stated that, given the function and purpose of their job role, the sector should align with the department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). A further 12 questionnaires stated that the functions should split between DETI and the Department of Education, (DE).

Of the remaining 8 questionnaires, 4 expressed no preference; 2 felt that based on their job function, DEL should align with DETI and the Department of Social Development (DSD); 1 questionnaire favoured alignment of the sector with DE and 1 (OITFET) indicated that, based on function, the sector should align with the Department of Justice.

Question 2: Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

The emphasis on function in Question 1 carried into question 2 with most staff giving their reason as being based on the function and purpose of their job.

For staff favouring DETI the main reasons given were:

- the work best aligned with the DETI functions;
- the work best aligned because of the importance of skills in delivering economic and employment growth and
- the role of colleges and training fits better with economic development and therefore, DETI.

Staff in the Job Centres stated that their role was to get people into work and that this better aligned with DETI.

While the Careers Service within DEL felt that their work with young people better aligned with DE, they felt that their all age guidance service sat better with DETI.

Question 3: Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

Of the 57 questionnaires returned, 18 recorded no response to this question.

Of those who did respond, 16 recorded positive past experiences of DED (the former Department of Economic Development)/DETI.

Only 1 questionnaire recorded a negative view of DETI, expressing a concern that Higher Education would become a 'poor relation' in DETI.

Of the 39 questionnaires giving an answer to this question, 6 referred to a past experience of DE which influenced their preference. These tended to refer to the restrictive nature of the ethos within DE and the emphasis on schools rather than the skills, training and the economy.

Question 4: What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

Of the 57 questionnaires, 8 were returned with no response to this question. The concerns expressed in the remainder of the questionnaires mainly divide into those relating to the business of the department and those relating to personal circumstances of staff.

Those relating to the business of DEL are mainly concerned with how work will be affected by the move to another department. Staff expressed the view that DEL worked well as a department and that there was a concern that the cohesiveness between the constituent parts would be lost if the department ceased to exist in its current form. This concern is expressed in terms of the ethos, culture or identity of DEL. These included references to a merger with DSD.

The most common concern relates to how well the focus of DEL would be lost, or its priorities diluted, if it merged with one or more other department. Staff expressed a concern that this would have an impact on the service provided by DEL.

Staff were concerned about their personal circumstances on how they would be affected by the dissolution of DEL. The main concerns were around Job Security and how their roles would be affected by changes in the structure of their work areas. This concern was raised in 23 of the 49 questionnaires responding to this question. Some staff were concerned about how they would be affected by a move to a larger department.

The other major personal concern was the location of the department with 22 questionnaires voicing this concern.

Staff raised concerns re feelings of powerlessness and an overall drop in levels of morale within DEL. There were also concerns re the lack of communication about the changes and a concern about how the change was being managed.

There were some concerns about the change process itself and about the questionnaire. One branch asked about the cost of the changes in terms of both money and staff time.

Staff expressed a view that the changes were for political rather than strategic reasons and that it would have been better for all departments to be considered rather than the focus being on one department only.

Question 5: Any other relevant comments.

Of the 57 questionnaires returned, 27 gave no response to this question. Of those who did, some common themes emerged. These are listed below:

- There was concern that the decision had been made for political rather than for strategic reasons (8 responses).
- Staff questioned why the reorganisation was not across the NICS rather than focusing on one department. There was a concern that the NICS would be reorganised at a later date which would lead to further change for the current staff of DEL.
- Staff questioned why the survey did not include a reference to the Department of Social Development (DSD). Several branches stated that they felt there was a clear alignment between, at least some of their functions and DSD. Most of these comments came from Employment Services Division.
- Staff wanted more communication re the change and in one cases asked for info re change management. One questionnaire referred for the need to ensure continuity of service for staff, clients and stakeholders.
- Staff said that they felt that the delay in the decision had been damaging to staff morale. There was also concern re the length of time that it would take to complete the change and the effect on already busy workloads.
- Staff expressed concern re their job security and there were concerns re location especially in relation to a move to Bangor.
- In relation to this survey, some staff felt that it was good that staff were being consulted but others were concerned that their views would not have any influence.

- Some staff felt that they should have been involved earlier in the process and there were concerns around why they were being asked and what the view of the committee was on the dissolution. The quick turnaround of the survey also caused some concern.

Staff responses to the Departmental survey on the Dissolution of the Department

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

As part of the Careers Service, we feel we should be aligned to DETI. We are tasked with providing all age information, advice and guidance to the public and in order to provide this we need to remain close to jobseekers, employers and policy makers. We need continue our partnerships with the sector skills councils to provide timely and accurate LMI. To move us further away from these vital elements will reduce the effectiveness of our service. In order to encourage the development of skills in key areas we must be in tune with the developments in these areas.

Although part of our remit is to work in partnership with schools our separation from them allows us to remain impartial and independent ensuring that we are client focused.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

Having worked in partnership with education they seem to be very removed from advances in the world of work and with the skills and personal qualities required in the workforce. We were previously a part of departments tasked with enterprise and workforce development such as DETI and this provided a good basis for working with clients entering the workforce in both the long term and short term.

There is also a lack of understanding between careers advice and guidance and education and I fear that the former would be diluted in an environment that has traditionally only had to deal with the latter.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

Having worked in partnership with education they seem to be very removed from advances in the world of work and with the skills and personal qualities required in the workforce. We were previously a part of departments tasked with enterprise and workforce development such as DETI and this provided a good basis for working with clients entering the workforce in both the long term and short term.

There is also a lack of understanding between careers advice and guidance and education and I fear that the former would be diluted in an environment that has traditionally only had to deal with the latter.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

My main concern regarding the desolation of DEL is that we would be placed within DE and that the services we provide to adults and young people in many environments would be lost

because DE's primary function is based around schools and academic achievement rather than work skills development and LMI.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

Branch/Office Name: Careers Service – Unit 6

Branch/Office Location: Ballymoney / Coleraine / Limavady

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 -1-

E01 -2-

E02 —

A0 -1-

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

Responses are combined by offices - 3

Department of Education – 2 offices

Preferred Department: DETI – 1 office

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

Careers Service should be an integral part of the Education System and inclusion in DE would highlight the division between SSA & Careers (Separate Offices) thereby encouraging customer attendance.

Careers falls more within Education and this is where we feel we can make the greatest impact.

DETI has a wider remit for Careers Advisers ie Referrals from Jobs & Benefits related sections of Adult Jobseekers / Jobchangers etc.

It makes sense to stay within the same Department that such referrals would come from.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

In the past Careers Service in separate buildings had a wider public appeal

Based on past experience, rather than specific, we feel that being part of the Department of Education would allow us to forge better links with the schools.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

Regardless of which department the service moves to it will have to re-establish its identity.

No concerns, as long as the importance of the Careers Service is upheld.

If we were to join DETI – we would be more aligned with the JABO's and would not be perceived as giving impartial Careers Advice.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

Reservations concerning cost of re-branding and re-structuring.

Branch/Office Name: Careers Service – Unit 8

Branch/Office Location: Dungannon/Portadown/Armagh

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 —

E01 7

E02 —

A0 3

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

DE

No preference towards either DETI or DENI.

DETI

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

DE - Much of our work is in schools. It would mean closer working relationships – ease of sharing information etc. May raise the profile of careers in school and give us a voice.

DETI - I'm concerned about how our role might change if we joined Department of Education. I would hope that we would continue to remain impartial as a service provider to schools.

DETI - I would opt for DETI in that it would continue to align our role as per our mission statement broadly speaking to that of our possible new partner. I would like to stress however that increased co-operation with DE would be appropriate in light of our considerable workload in schools.

DETI - As we are also caseloaded for adult work I'm wondering how this might affect our role within Department of Trade and Enterprise.

DETI - No experience of education

DETI - In DE I would see ourselves submerged into education and would we be guaranteed a job in the long term in such a wide ranging department?

DETI - I have had the experience of working within DETI and have no knowledge of the Dept of Education

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

I have a background in Education – I am qualified secondary school teacher with 5 years teaching experience. However I do not feel this puts a bias on my choice. I feel we would be very well placed within education to influence careers education and guidance provision within schools to ensure that Careers is not 'swept under the carpet' in schools.

I have previously been part of DETI when we were T&EA

I would not be making my choice based on experience but rather on what I would perceive to be an option which would give the careers service the best chance of maximizing its potential to achieve its core function and objectives.

In education could we continue to give clients an unbiased careers guidance service like we do now—given some things that happened in schools to get pupils to return for a course that may not be best option.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

What will happen to our adult guidance work if we become part of Education?

Will some CAs be moved to Education and others to SSA? Are our jobs secure?

I hope that, whichever Department we move to, Careers Advisers would be allowed to continue to provide impartial, person-centred careers guidance to both young people and adults, whether it is within DENI or DETI.

My main concerns are that we as a service remain impartial and continue to provide client centre impartial advice to all.

My concern would be where the Careers Service staff would be sited. There are no local Dept of Education offices rurally. There would be more possibility of staying as we are with DETI within Jobcentres/JBO's

I would not be unduly concerned with its dissolution providing an efficient cost effective transition took place which does not negatively impact on the core work of the dept, namely an accessible service to the public at local level.

Wrong place wrong time. DEL being abolished because it had an Alliance minister could have been any department if circumstances differed. Did not influence my preference.

My main concern would be where I would be based. Since working in Careers I have worked alongside the Jobcentre staff and prefer this setup.

If we move to DE, would Careers Advisers be based in schools? If so, what would happen to the management & admin staff?

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

Is the decision to dissolve DEL purely political?

Has the process been carefully thought out to ensure our clients continue to receive the service they can currently access?

The current location of many careers offices within Jobs and Benefits offices is a major barrier for many young people and adults seeking careers guidance. Moving to a new department could present an opportunity for the Careers Service to move to more appropriate locations to see all young people and adults, especially those already in employment or in full-time education who are reluctant to come to a Jobs and Benefits office to see a Careers Adviser.

I would only add that from a careers service perspective, whichever option is chosen should retain and in fact enhance the professional work already being carried out and where possible give increased recognition to the work already being done.

Branch/Office Name: Careers Service NI – Unit 9

Branch/Office Location: Enniskillen/Omagh/Strabane

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 1

E01 5

E02 —

A0 2

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

Some staff would prefer to go to DETI but some staff would prefer that the Careers Service went to DE. Other members of staff are unsure.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

Staff recognise that we are an all age guidance service and some feel we would fit more suitably with DETI. Although careers advisers recognise a significant amount of work is done in the school setting but overall as a service we are increasingly doing more work with adults and in the area of social inclusion. Some staff preferred DE due to the amount of school work that was undertaken throughout the year. Staff who were unsure about which department would suit better commented that they would need more information on both departments.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

No.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

Some Careers Advisers feel that if we were to go to Department of Education they would be concerned about where the Careers Service would be placed in terms of importance. Some felt that education in schools would always be more of a priority than impartial careers guidance and that this may impact on the finance the Careers Service would receive especially in the current economic climate. Some hoped that in DETI, the Careers Service would be more recognised for their professional specialist role.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

N/A

Branch/Office Name: Careers Service – Unit 10 (Banbridge/ Lisburn/ Lurgan)

Branch/Office Location: Banbridge Jabo

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 –1–

E01 –5–

E02 —

A0 –2–

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

All staff agreed that DETI was their preferred option.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

The aims and objectives of DETI fit in with DEL. Our Mission Statement refers to our role in providing a service that enables people “ to contribute positively to their communities and to the NI economy”

The Careers Service provides an all age service, if we were part of the Department of Education this could be difficult as a major part of our work involves working with adults.

If we went to Education how could we continue to ensure that we are viewed as being impartial by our clients. Schools would be keen that we promote returning to school as the main option.

The group felt that we should move Dept as a whole body, rather than as a small individual group going to a different Dept.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

Many staff have experiences working in schools whose main priority is maintaining student numbers and keeping teachers in post. Our focus is client centred.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

That our Careers ethos will not be carried forward.

That we end up working in a dept where our Post Grad qualification is seen to have less value than a post grad in Education.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

We feel that this process should have been started with staff before going out to private consultation. Concerns raised about the short turnaround for feedback from staff.

Branch/Office Name: Careers Service – Unit 11

Branch/Office Location: Richmond Chambers

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 ——

DP ——

S0 ——

E01 5

E02 1

AO 4

AA ——

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

The Newry, Kilkeel and Newcastle Team feel that because of our lack of knowledge with regard to the functions and purposes of the two Departments we cannot make an informed decision regarding which of the two we should be aligned to.

The team also feel that these questions are too important to have to answer within such a tight timeframe. Because of the nature of our role it is not possible to have even a local team meeting to discuss the questions.

In conclusion, the Team wish to say, while they very much welcome the invitation from the Committee for our input, as Careers Advisers we feel that we have a responsibility to make a considered, informed and rational response regarding the future of our Careers Service and because of the factors above we cannot do that before close of play today.

We would suggest that the time frame for response be extended to accommodate this.

We would also welcome some form of briefing from our Senior Management with regard to their vision for our future.

Finally we require information regarding the two Departments as requested.

In addition, ***** ***** feels that Dept of Education is our natural home.

Thanks

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

Refer to feedback in Q1.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

Refer to feedback in Q1.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

Refer to feedback in Q1.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

Refer to feedback in Q1.

Branch/Office Name: Careers Service – Unit 12

Branch/Office Location: Newry, Newcastle, Kilkeel & Downpatrick

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 —

E01 ~~–6–~~

E02 —

A0 ~~–1–~~

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

Most staff felt DEL was more closely aligned with DETI rather than DE, although some did not see the link with either of these Departments.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

Most staff felt that the work of the Employment Service is more closely aligned to the economy than to education, particularly in relation to driving and promoting economic growth.

Some staff felt their day to day work was mostly with DSD, rather than with DETI or DE.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

Staff who were formerly in SSA found the environment restrictive with very little autonomy.

Those with previous experience of DED/T&EA found it to be a highly work-focused and flexible organisation.

When FE & HE joined the T&EA to form DFHETE there was a lot of adjustment. Culture and ethos in Education very different to DEL.

DE appeared to be more regimented. Most then felt they wouldn't want to return to DE.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

In general staff expressed concerns about job losses, location of jobs, loss of identity, changes in job roles, impact on the standard of service, how DEL will fit in to a different Dept's structure and the impact on DEL's existing culture and ethos.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

Staff expressed doubt that their comments/opinions would have any influence on the eventual decision made.

Staff enquired if consideration was given to aligning DEL to DSD.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Carol McCabe

Branch/Office Name: Strategic Planning Branch, Employment Service Division

Branch/Office Location: Gloucester House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 1

DP 6

S0 7

E01 4

E02 4

A0 2

AA 1

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

Department for Enterprise. Trade and Industry.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

The general consensus is that the work of DETI is more closely associated with the frontline work undertaken in the J&Bo network working as we do closely with employers and with customers seeking employment.

It is felt that this link is closer than that between the training aspect of our J&Bo provision and further education.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

The common aspect of our work is referral to provision which is to either work experience or training in the form of Short Accredited training or for example VRQ with work experience. Increasingly the emphasis is on specific occupational areas and increasing economic activity creating a closer link with DETI than with DE.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

The general consensus is that there is concern over whether or not it affects our job role and some assurance that there will be no job losses.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

.....

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Liam McNicholl

Branch/Office Name: Shaftesbury Square J&Bo

Branch/Office Location: Belfast

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 -1—

E01 -1—

E02 -4—

A0 —

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

Vast majority (exception of 1 person) see merit in DEL's functions transferring to DETI, given the economic focus of skills and innovation and need to improve employability – and their link to economic growth. Ultimately however the services of TEASB are likely to transfer to where our main internal customers will reside to ensure alignment and continuation of a reasonably seamless service.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

DEL has a significant focus on areas of economic relevance and a Department of the Economy is seen as the most effective means of achieving the vision in the Economic Strategy. This would also be in keeping with the independent IREP report.

There is a feeling that splitting the functions of DEL between DE and DETI would dilute the impact of growing our local economy – particularly more important now coming out of the downturn. There is also a concern that DE isn't business facing enough and all the work and progress already made could regress.

It is difficult to see how the Skills Division could operate effectively in a different Department to the HE and FE Divisions. Many of the targets in Success through Skills rely on delivery in the FE and HE sector – concerns over influence of achieving targets in this regard.

In addition some of the DEL PFG targets have a cross divisional focus – who would retain responsibility for achieving/monitoring these.

Essential Skills cuts across 2 Divisions – FE and Skills (training element) – it would be difficult to manage this in 2 separate Departments and could there be a negative impact on achievement of the ES Strategy if this were to happen.

Some consultees felt that it was right to keep the statutory education in a separate Department to that in FE/HE as the latter is a choice whilst the former is a right and the FE/HE are more akin to the needs of employers which would be better met in a Dept of the Economy.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

Resources are required to implement change and therefore there will be an opportunity cost of staff time throughout this process. Many reasons have been given above for one Department of the Economy. In consideration of resources, transferring functions across two Departments is likely to require more than in a merger of 2 Departments.

If HE and FE were to transfer to DE and the remainder to DETI, there are concerns whether the new DE and DETI would work effectively together based on past experience.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

- Impact on morale
- Redundancy/staff reductions

- Loss of expertise and knowledge if staff re-structured
- Potential impact on delivery as Ministers of expanded Departments will have increasing workload and therefore may wait longer for decisions to be made
- Potential limitations to business planning and taking important workstreams forward
- Unsettling over changing timescales
- Public transport links to Rathgael if staff re-located
- Concerns over new Departments 'taking over' parts of DEL rather than integration.
- Analytical Services likely to be split up if DEL functions are.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

Given the difficulties in the local economy, the timing doesn't seem right to take the focus off delivering on the front line for those in need of DEL services to managing a transitional change such as this.

If the dissolution of the Department is to go ahead, it is felt by all that it should be undertaken as part of a wider review of NI Government Departments.

Change itself can be de-moralising for staff and it has to be managed carefully – staff feel this hasn't been handled properly, i.e. staff finding out through the media of the proposals.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Wendy Lecky

Branch/Office Name: TEASB

Branch/Office Location: Adelaide House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 -1—

DP -4—

S0 -4—

E01 -0—

E02 -0—

A0 -0—

AA -2—

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

My branch is responsible for both ICT and Consultancy Services within DEL. These are corporate functions that are replicated in most Departments although there are slight nuances in the functions/responsibilities of each line of business IT units. It appears that DEL's ICT and consultancy services are best aligned with those of DETI.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

As ICT and consultancy services are corporate functions that should be merged with the existing 'like' functions in DETI. These functions were previously performed by DED (former Department whose functions were in the main split between DEL and DETI). Therefore, DETI would be most familiar with DEL's specific business.

It is also our view that most of the consultancy work in the short to medium term will be required to rationalise corporate functions. Other Divisions can move as "job lots" and not require significant re-structuring in a new Department.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

These functions were previously performed by DED (pre- devolution Department whose functions were in the main split between DEL and DETI following devolution). Therefore, DETI would be most familiar with DEL's specific business.

In addition, DE has no recent or significant record of deploying internal efficiency / consultancy expertise.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

Our concerns are that the outcome will be a political expedient and not a business-based, logical solution.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

We are also concerned that the continued delay on a decision regarding the re-apportionment of DEL's function is affecting the morale of staff.

Staff have specific concerns about the uncertainty about their future role, redeployment, where they will be located geographically, etc.

Completed by Head of Branch:

Name: Gina McConville

Branch/Office Name: ICT & Consultancy Services Branch

Branch/Office Location: Adelaide House, Belfast

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 1

DP 2

S0 6

E01 3

E02 0

A0 2

AA 0

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

10 staff Surveyed.

DETI = 7

DE = 3

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

The staff made the following comments:

For DETI

- “I think our role within the labour market fits better now and for the future with DETI.”
- “We need to take the jobs market forward and DETI is the department to work in partnership with to achieve this.”
- “Fits better with Trade and Industry as a sector.”
- “Because we serve Skills and Industry more.”
- “Because we are more employment and job focussed.” (2 comments are the same).”
- “Feels that DE is more Education and Careers orientated.”

For DE

- “Want to educate our clients to the levels that employers want but need to know more of DETI role as well.”
- “We need to educate people so that they can move into the job sector.”
- “Having come from DETI I think that DE is where we should be. Educating people is needed so that they can move into the job sector – as such we fit with DE and not DETI.”

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

For seven of the staff there were no past experiences to influence. However for three there was the following comments made:

For DETI

- “Did work in the Department for Economic Development before DETI was set up and Jobcentres fell into this area of work.”

For DE

- “Worked in TNEA previously so feel that education is where we should be. DEL has EDUCATION and LEARNING in it which is why we sit better with DE.”
- “Having come from DETI I think that we need to be with DE. Educating people is needed so that they can move into the job sector – as such we fit with DE and not DETI.”

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

There was a varied amount of concerns from all the staff surveyed as follows:

- Do not see us going forward as a Department if, for example, we sit with SSA who are too benefit driven.
- Concerns about losing our identity and the focus of our role.
- Concerns if we sit with SSA as they are too benefit driven and not as customer care focussed as we are as a department.
- Will we still have a job? Will the new Department be able to cope with the influx of the new staff from DEL (whichever Department we go to)?
- Concerns re: job security (3 people made comments on this).
- No concerns expressed.
- Don't want DSD – concerned about re-location of post and does it change our role?
- Worry that we are going to have to join DSD and don't feel we sit there. Worried about re-location of post.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

There was only one comment made and that was to remain as DEL and not to change at all.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Jan Jones (Office Manager)

Branch/Office Name: Banbridge J&Bo.

Branch/Office Location: Banbridge.

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 -1—

E01 -1—

E02 -6—

A0 -1—

AA -1—

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

My staff and I work in a corporate function, so this is already duplicated in both Departments. Those who expressed a view in the Branch, however, consider that DETI's aims and objectives align most closely with those of DEL.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

The vision of the Department for Employment and Learning is "a dynamic, innovative and sustainable economy where everyone achieves their full potential". This is the key driver behind the huge progress the Department has made in enhancing skills and FE/HE provision, and thus increasing employability. This sits more closely with DETI's corporate objectives.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

No.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

Being based in a corporate service, which is already duplicated in both DETI and DE, it is likely that many of my staff will have to be redeployed. Naturally, this is a cause for concern, with staff worried about where they will end up (geographically in particular - the city centre suits many). There is also dismay that DEL is being arbitrarily singled out to be reviewed. That said, staff are keen to have clarity on what is happening and when, to facilitate planning.

These concerns do not impact significantly on our preference for Departmental alignment.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

None.

Completed by Head of Branch / ~~Office Manager~~:

Name: Lynne Miskelly

Branch/Office Name: Central Management Branch

Branch/Office Location: Adelaide House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7	1
DP	2
S0	1
E01	0
E02	2
AO	1
AA	1

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

I think that Skills and Training most definitely could be aligned to Department of Enterprise and Trade and could also argue that Jobcentre/Jobs & Benefit office services could also fit into DETI. I personally would identify DSD as being the most suitable Department for our services. DEL and SSA already work closely together and in the biggest percentage of cases work in the same building so it would seem to be a natural merge without much re-organisation. However, I would think that Department of Education would be the most obvious Department for our Careers service.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

As previously explained I see the Job brokerage, Steps to Work and Pathways as being naturally part of DSD services. Many current functions involve both Departments and would work better with the same objectives/targets as opposed to the current arrangement of two separate Departments. Also our Welfare to Work clients would continue to be involved with two Departments as opposed to one if we merged with DETI.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

I have had no past experiences with DETI so cannot comment on the Department.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

DEL in general is a successful Department and has made a major contribution to placing unemployed customers into Employment. My main concern is that we would lose our identity and that priorities may become DETI objectives. Due to my lack of knowledge regarding DETI I would feel more confident with a DSD/DEL merge as we have both rapport and knowledge built up in local customer facing offices.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

It is difficult to imagine DEL being part of DETI as we have little or no working knowledge of the Department. We do however have fears that DEL's customer facing services may no longer become a priority that ultimately could lead to office closure or job loss. We see our services as automatically aligning to DSD who already have a role in the delivery of our programmes.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name:

Branch/Office Name: COOKSTOWN J'CTR

Branch/Office Location: 17 Oldtown Street, Cookstown BT80 8EE

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 ——

DP ——

S0 ——

E01 —1—

E02 ——

A0 ——

AA ——

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

DETI

The need to rebalance the NI economy is the Executive's number one aim. This aligns with our aim to help people realise their career aspirations, enabling them to contribute positively to their community and the NI economy. Both of these sit primarily within the remit of DETI.

The goal of developing and growing our economy can only be achieved with a skilled workforce. The Careers Service, with others, has a key role to play in ensuring that people are well informed about their career choices, and crucially, know where gaps exist in our skills base and what they can do to help address this issue.

Sitting within DETI we can build on this role and further highlight and promote that we are an all age service. If we were in DE we may be viewed as a school service and perhaps even an ancillary one at that, subsumed within the overall school provision like a number of other functions.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

DETI is responsible for economic development and the Careers Service aims to support both young people and adults in making informed career decisions, leading to increased and appropriate participation in education, training and employment. Therefore, it would seem logical that the careers service be placed within DETI as it plays an important role in contributing to the NI Economy.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

.....

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

.....

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

.....

Branch/Office Name: Careers Service Operations (Headquarters)

Branch/Office Location: Waterfront Plaza, Belfast

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 -1-

DP -3-

S0 -1-

E01 -1-

E02 -1-

A0 -1-

AA ——

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

1 SO+ 2 E01s + 1AO-DETI

2E01-DE

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

DE-A high percentage of work is carried out in relation to YP and especially in schools. This would give closer links with schools and possibly enable us to work and be based within schools.

DETI- we offer an all age guidance service that has the role of offering impartial information and advice and guidance to everyone in an attempt with them in securing employment or training. This should then enable everyone to support the local economy through taxation or purchases within NI.

If we go to DE and are forced to make stronger links with schools then this takes away from our impartial role.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

NA

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

Possible job losses or move to other depts. Changes to working conditions and opportunities that were afforded by being a member of DEL. Premises moves i.e. out to Netherleigh.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

N/A

Branch/Office Name: Careers Service – Unit 3

Branch/Office Location: Gloucester House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

SO -1-

E01 -4-

E02 —

AO -1-

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

We felt that the Careers Service would be better aligned into the function/ purpose of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. One element of our role is to offer advice and guidance on educational opportunities whether it be via our school caseloads or in our offices. However, career guidance interviews and the clients that we meet have varied needs and education options are just one aspect. If we were to move to the Department of Education would our role be tailored only to meet the needs of clients seeking educational advice, information and guidance? How would the other elements of our role be justified or aligned into a Department with such specific aims/ objectives?

We felt that DETI would be a more appropriate option, DETI describes its goal as to grow a dynamic, innovative economy and we felt that the Careers Service would fit more appropriately into this sector. One of our aims is to assist young people and adults with the skills/ knowledge to become effective career planners and decision makers, enabling them to take ownership of their career aspirations. This in turn will surely influence and have an impact on our NI economy and its future locally and globally.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

We think that our jobs may be more secure and we would be better placed in

DETI to continue our work with adults (as we are an all ability all age guidance service). See Q1.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

Historically the Careers Service has worked in partnership with the employment service and this has worked well.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

Our main concerns are:

- Job security
- the future of the Careers Service and its role locally - in our schools and the community.
- our new Minister and their perception on the Careers Service role and how it fits into their Department
- if we move to Dept of Educ could we also be 'dissolved' in time as a means of financial saving
- where would we be based/located.
- If went to DE our independent impartial careers advice; code of ethics, and professional status with the ICG could be questioned

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

Jobs and conditions could be subject to change.

Branch/Office Name: Careers Service – Unit 4
Branch/Office Location: Unit 4 (Antrim, Cookstown, Magherafelt)
Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —
DP —
SO 1
EO1 4
EO2 —
AO 4
AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

DETI

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

- 1) Our role is to support all age groups about education, training and employment.
- 2) If we were positioned within education it might be perceived that careers guidance is only for those who are at school rather than something that can be relevant at various stages.
- 3) If we are in Education we might lose our independence in schools and be less able to give unbiased guidance.
- 4) Our role is to assist clients with career decisions and in so doing we can help the economy grow but getting the right people into the right jobs.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

When dealing with unemployed adults in Steps programmes there is a misconception that we only work with those in school and are not an all age guidance service.

Some schools in the past have tried to get Advisers to encourage pupils to return to school even if this was not the best option, because we were not part of Education we were able to say that we have to advise pupils of all the options open to them, not just returning to school.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

As stated above, if we were in Education we might lose our impartiality and the perception that we only work school children would continue.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

It is good that the opinion of staff is being sought and it would be good if staff were kept informed regularly on what is happening regarding the change.

Branch/Office Name: Careers Service – Unit 5

Branch/Office Location: Ballymena / Carrickfergus / Larne

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 ~~-1-~~

E01 ~~-4-~~

E02 —

A0 —

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

Department of Enterprise and Trade and Investment.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

The nature/ remit of our branch is to ensure that the department's employment and training programmes are providing value for money and the delivery is of a high standard. To enable us to do this successfully, we are required to engage with the relevant stakeholders i.e. training suppliers, employers, employees and Sectoral Skills Councils. We believe that this remit fits into and alongside the role of DETI.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

No.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

Our concern would be that whilst we understand why the function of the division would/could transfer to DETI, would the current resource i.e. staff transfer with it. However, this concern does not influence our preference for departmental alignment.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

.....

Branch/Office Name: Quality and Performance Branch

Branch/Office Location: Waterfront Plaza.

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G6 —1—

G7 —1—

DP —3—

S0 —2—

E01 —10—

E02 —3—

A0 —4—

AA —0—

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

DETI

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

Skills Solutions focuses on giving people skills to either secure employment or become more productive in their current job. Both these activities directly impact on the economy, hence it is logical that the most appropriate Department is DETI, particularly given our close working relationship with InvestNI.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

No

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

Skills Solutions currently has many contacts with the Further Education sector, another current responsibility of DEL.

Having the Skills, Further Education and Higher Education sectors as the responsibility of one Department undoubtedly improves channels of communication and enhances the quality of response to the needs of the local economy. To split these areas across two or more Departments would put in place an additional and unnecessary impediment to this work at a time when it is least needed.

Furthermore, much of the very good work done to move the focus of further education towards helping to build the economy will be lost in DE, as DE (perhaps understandably) puts all of their efforts into the schools sector.

At a personal level the current uncertainty fosters fear over job security and staff genuinely value their role in working with small and medium sized private sector companies at this time.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

Whatever arrangement is ultimately decided needs to be based on practicality and logic rather than political expediency.

Branch/Office Name: Skills Delivery Branch

Branch/Office Location: Waterfront Plaza

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7	1
DP	2
SO	4.5
E01	3
E02	1
AO	1
AA	-

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

All present agreed that the work of Sectoral Development Branch (and Skills and Industry Division) is very closely aligned with DETI.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

The functions of Sectoral Development Branch (and Skills and Industry Division) are all related to economic development:

- skills development;
- working with DETI or in parallel with DETI to engage with employers and to tailor training to their needs;
- providing a skilled workforce for new/inward investment; and,
- improving the skills level of young people and the existing workforce.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

Historically, the model of our Branch/Division within the DETI remit has a proven track record of working.

Past and present the Division has a track record of working with Invest NI on the development of sectoral skills.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

Individuals commented:

- I would prefer to work in the city centre location;
- We assume that we would stay in the city centre in the first instance, however, I would not wish to travel to Bangor every day. If I ended up in the Dept of Education I would most likely have to travel to Bangor for future postings; and
- I have greater empathy and interest with/in the purpose/subject matter in DETI.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

We do not believe that we will have any say in what happens to DEL. The decision to reallocate DEL functions appears purely for political reasons and not with a strategic direction.

If one was to examine the number and structure of the NI Departments in a more objective way, there are probably stronger arguments for evaluating DCAL, merging DOE with DRD, especially with planning moving to local authority and the creation of Water NI or, merging DARD with DOE i.e. similar to DEFRA model.

Branch/Office Name: Sectoral Development Branch

Branch/Office Location: Waterfront Plaza

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise: 6

G7 —1

DP —2

S0 —2

E01 —

E02 —

A0 —1

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

Most staff surveyed opted for DETI, one suggested Department of Education, one that the Careers service should go to Education, with the remainder of the Dept in DETI and one member of staff felt it sat with neither.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

DETI comments

- I feel that we could fit into either DETI or DE depending on which services you look at
- The service we provide is to get clients back into work, this could be aligned with Education
- I feel we should be aligned to DETI as we do not fit with DE
- There is more of an overlap between functions and responsibilities of DETI and DEL. Any changes to education would probably take 10+ years to filter through. If merged with Education this could result in a loss of focus as two dissimilar depts come together. The more immediate impact of any changes would come through on the economy and employment if DEL merged with DETI and given the current economic environment would be desirable.
- Longer term DEL/DETI alignment would make more sense. The economy in NI would need to be rebalanced to make more export based business and a realignment to inward investment and a shift from in the past of public sector/retail/construction jobs to a concentration more on life based sciences, IT and technology/research. This would bring in DELs expertise in HE more into focus with the aims of DETI on trade and investment.
- Don't see my role fitting in with Education. I can align it more to the ethos if DETI – to promote and develop a global economy

DE comments

I feel it would be better suited if we moved to Education as I see my role in Advice and Guidance more akin to the education sector

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

Only one stated – past history of working in SSA. (This was from the member of staff who thought the Department did not sit well with either DETI or DE)

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

- Most common concern was job security at various grades
- Want to apply skills learnt and these could be best applied in this dept or DETI
- No concerns but feel that the Department for Employment and Learning should stay and be a stand alone department in current economic climate

- I feel that this is the worst possible time to do away with a department called “Employment and Learning”. At a time when we are in a recession and the number of people unemployed is at an all time high I think it sends a very bad/negative image of the government
- My concern would be that currently there is a line of communication set up between SSA and DEL and that should we be transferred to another dept this could hinder the effectiveness of it and worse case scenario that previously agreed procedures would be changed. As we are already operating in a time of extreme changes this would only add more pressure to staff.
- The skills/knowledge/achievements of DEL and its staff would find more of a home and less likely to go to waste if merged with DETI. Staff would more likely be able to be redeployed in this merged dept than with Education
- Redundancy/increased workloads/extra duties/dilution of service
- Prefer to stay in current location – however job role closely linked with SSA

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

.....

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Eunice Graham

Branch/Office Name: Lisburn JBO

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 —1—

E01 —3—

E02 —6—

A0 —2—

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

I don't believe my role fits neatly into either Department. My role is primarily to help people gain employment or at least move closer to job readiness. Education comes into this in as much as we encourage individuals to take further study/training to improve their prospects/remove barriers. Trade and Enterprise also comes into as we advertise vacancies for employers. However neither DETI nor DENI is primarily focused on the unemployed person. I would be very concerned that this focus will be lost wherever we move.

My first instinct is that DEL should be aligned with the SSA in DSD, but as this option is not listed above and I do not have much an insight into how the above listed departments operate I can only assume that DETI would make more sense as I believe its core purpose is to create job opportunities which is similar to ourselves.

DETI

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

Jobcentre role of working with employers, taking vacancies etc fits with DETI.

Helping clients find and secure employment should also fit with DETI.

Should mean our jobs are more work focused rather than just making people comply with benefit requirements.

Working with people with health conditions & disabilities – as with the aim of our “pilot”. Working with people who want to work rather than making them attend for their benefits.

DETI's Social Economy Policy Group – tying in with Ashton Centre, NCT, etc.

Employment Support becoming a new division of DETI.

NISRA compile Labour Market Survey, Labour Force Survey – People in employment / claimant count.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

No. I just feel very strongly that we focus on the individual. With unemployment so high how can work with the unemployed be shoved away into a dept with a different emphasis?

Based on past experience if aligned with DETI we would be better placed to influence how jobs funded by the likes of Invest NI might be filled.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

My pre-NICS background is Education. I am passionate about encouraging people to continue to learn throughout their life, whether through further academic study or practical training, as this increases their level of employability as well as giving a sense of achievement and building confidence and self esteem. It is my view that 'Employment' and 'Learning' are inseparable.

My main concern is that the Department is being dissolved purely for political reasons, and not for the overall benefit of staff and clients.

That the likes of services provided by DES get lost in the process.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

Having attended the Universal Credit talk at NICS Live, the DSD representative seemed to be talking about the function DEL staff carryout in the JBO as the future role SSA staff would carry out. It therefore seems logical that JBO front line service would be aligned with DSD but is this an option?

Office Manager:

Name: Lydia McAleenan

North Belfast JobCentre, Gloucester House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 1

E01 2

E02 8

A0 2

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**
- alignment with DETI more appropriate;
 - either or/ no evidence base on which to inform any particular view;
 - there may be other alternatives;
 - aspects of the branch's work may be more closely aligned to DE;
 - depends on specific work areas; and
 - more aligned to DE
- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**
- through alignment with DETI appropriate progression routes can be secured for SLDD learners towards employment (benefits of Careers advice and DETI Employer contacts);
 - similar focus to DETI – employment linkages – FE is more aligned to DETI's strategic focus;
 - neither option is more appropriate than the other – benefits to both;
 - no evidence base to support alignment one way or the other;
 - Closer links with DE will reduce duplication – schools are now delivering FE provision; and
 - specific aspects of FE's business would benefit from alignment to DE – pay and conditions, regulation, teacher qualifications and quality and performance issues (inspection)
- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**
- splitting employment and learning diminishes DEL's overarching focus to match learning with employment opportunities – the two are inextricably linked;
 - closer alignment with DE would be beneficial for students in terms of their transition from school to college – at present this process is not as effective as it could be;
 - detrimental impact of dividing learning and employment;
 - linkages between DE and DEL in terms of policies would be weakened further – Entitlement Framework delivery, qualifications to teach, regulation, professionalization of the workforce may be hampered/ weakened through DETI's strategic focus.
- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**
- N/A
- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**
-

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name:

Branch/Office Name:

Branch/Office Location:

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 —

E01 —

E02 —

A0 —

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

Majority of staff felt that although the Employment Service remit didn't necessarily align with either Department, DETI was the best option.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

The overall view was that the Employment Service's role with employers would support DETI's aims regarding economic growth. There is however a fear that we will lose our individuality and that our work with the customer may become lost.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

Many staff remembered when we were previously part of DETI and were the Training & Employment Agency. Most staff felt that if we were to move to DETI again then it should be as an Agency where our identity and focus wouldn't be as easily eroded. There is a fear that once we are no longer a department in our own right, our focus will be become blurred. This is especially concerning for the staff in Frontline offices as they are already facing the uncertainty of Universal Credit. We need to have a clear view of where the Employment Service will fit into all of this and at the moment this seems very confused.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

All staff were concerned that the Employment Service would move to the SSA especially with the introduction of Universal Credit being on the horizon. Staff have a genuine fear that if that was to happen the focus on customers would become lost altogether and that work with employers would cease.

This fear strongly influences staff's views on which Department we are aligned to.

Staff feel that the hard work that has been done over the last 18 months to improve our customer service and focus on employment, that was lost following our move to Jobs & Benefits Office will be destroyed.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

There is an opportunity here for us to ensure that whichever Department we move to we bring with us our identity that we have fought hard to re-establish over recent years. Perhaps with Universal Credit coming our way sooner rather than later we need to be realistic and realise that it takes us closer to our colleagues in the SSA but that doesn't mean that we need to become part of the already established Agency. Perhaps we should consider the possibility of starting afresh overall and abolish the SSA as well and create a single Agency which has a focus not primarily on benefit conditionality but rather on the individual needs of customers – this is afterall what Universal Credit is meant to be about. An Agency much more aligned with JobCentre Plus where the primary focus is on Employment!!

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name:

Branch/Office Name:

Branch/Office Location:

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 —

E01 —

E02 —

A0 —

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

As we provide a service for all Departmental Corporate and Business Planning areas of this Department – on transfer our work could be as easily aligned with either Department – this comment has been agreed with the majority i.e. 3 out of 4 staff.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

We provide an all round service to the Departmental staff.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

Not Applicable.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

No concerns and none have influenced.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

None

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Philip Cromie

Branch/Office Name: Corporate Governance and Business Planning

Branch/Office Location: Third floor Adelaide House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —1—

DP —1—

S0 —

E01 —1—

E02 —

A0 —

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

No consensus view within branch.

Some preference for full transfer of DEL functions to DE, other preference for full transfer to DETI and other not expressing a strong preference either way. No one expressing an absolute view that it had to be their preferred option otherwise the other scenario would be disastrous for HE / DEL functions. To the contrary, there was a recognition that there are arguments in favour of either scenario.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

Functions with DE

Brings together education functions from nursery to finish.

Would ensure a Minister and senior team with vision for the entire education journey. The functions would be properly interlinked and joined up right throughout the education experience. Reflects similar approaches in Scotland, Wales and ROI.

Functions with DETI

Recognises and ensures continued and appropriate linkages between HE, Skills agenda etc. and the wider economic focus of DETI.

More closely reflects the structure of the equivalent Dept in England, with whom NI Dept is likely to have most contact.

More likely to ensure that HE continues to have an appropriate priority and funding provision – risk that it will become the ‘poor relation’ in a large DE as the primary focus will inevitably be on the statutory provision at primary and secondary levels.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

Functions with DE

Used to be a single department and was effective in this format. Split only arose for political reasons to accommodate outcome of Good Friday Agreement - no other clear arguments or reasons for the separation.

Functions with DETI

Concern that HE would be poor relation in DE arises from experience in DHSSPS which saw health promotion activity consistently suffer reduced resources / lower priority because of demands from the front line / acute services.

Negative commentary from some politicians during recent discussions over funding for HE would suggest that there is a lack of understanding of resources needed for HE and the importance of providing a sustainable funding base if HE is to be an economic driver for NI. HE is about much more than just education and DETI Minister / officials demonstrate greater awareness of this wider role relating to research, the economy, attracting inward investment etc.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

There is a concern in moving to either Dept that HE should not become marginalised or lower priority on the overall Department and Minister's agenda.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

Although not an issue for all staff, there is some concern re the potential for a geographical move to create travel difficulty for anyone using public transport. This is particularly relevant in relation to a potential move to DE (Rathgael) which may necessitate individuals driving to work rather than using public transport or, due to absence of direct public transport links, will lead to increased cost, inconvenience and longer travel times – negative impact on work / life balance.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Claire Thompson

Branch/Office Name: Student Finance (Future Policy)

Branch/Office Location: Adelaide House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 1

DP 1

SO 1

E01 —

E02 —

AO —

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**
- DETI (13 staff)
 - DETI/DE (2 staff)
 - DE (3 staff)
- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**
- DETI's role is more closely linked to our own i.e. Jobs/economy etc
 - Although DEL offer qualifications through the STEPS programme its main focus is to get clients into employment. We also work with employers which we feel is more closely linked to DETI's functions rather than the Department of Education;
 - Closer links already forged with DETI re Jobs Fund and redundancies;
 - Mission statement and objectives closely aligned to our own
 - Our focus has always been client lead.
 - The JobCentre interview clients with a view to helping them find employment or remain in a job. We work with employers, marketing and networking on behalf of clients to find suitable employment.
 - Also assist employers in the advertising/interviewing process to find suitable applicants. Signpost both clients and employers for appropriate support ie Labour Relations, Equality Commission.
 - No preference option: Admin work is fairly generic;
 - DE only: In the current economic climate, we feel emphasis should be placed more on education and training. As STEM subjects are the future of our economic growth, without education and retaining NI could be found to be lagging behind competitors.
- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**
- Statistics Research branch keep information on employers which link in with the work we do with employers and Redundancy Branch.
 - We have already had connections with DETI in the past i.e. liaising with InvestNI and before Account NI such as Personnel Functions i.e. staff travel.
 - DE only option: No specific experience in DE and due to limited knowledge of both departments and therefore could not fairly comment.
- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**
- Amalgamation could reduce number of posts!
 - Possible relocation to other areas;
 - Difficult to envisage our roles within either department. As most JobCentre have amalgamated with SSA/DSD and this may have been the preferred option

- Working with people with disabilities/health issues requires specialist help. Our division would be best placed in a Department where we can readily contact and work with other branches that have the same/similar objectives.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

None

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name:

Branch/Office Name:

Branch/Office Location:

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 1

E01 2

E02 7

A0 7

AA 1

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment (unanimous agreement)

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

- Alignment with economic aspirations and overall role of DETI.
- Strong sense that employment and employability are key economic issues and as such should be delivered within that context in the NICS.
- The “fit” between education and employment is recognised however the view is that the remit is too broad to be delivered by one Minister/Department.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

The role of the **Employment Service** is to contribute to economic development. The engagement of external stakeholders (e.g. unemployed clients, clients with disabilities employers and the Disability Sector) is on the basis of supporting a move off social security benefit and into employment. Focus should be sustained on what we want to **move towards** – rather than what we are working to move away from.

Most external stakeholders engage with the Employment Service to secure economic outcomes. This is particularly true of employers.

In addition, the Disability Employment Service delivers a range of programmes that support people to **sustain employment** (i.e. interventions for people already in employment). In many cases no social security benefit is in payment so outcomes are economic.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

- **Alignment with DSD/SSA** (although not referenced at the start of this survey).
- The implication is that work focused activity is viewed simply as a benefit condition.
- SSA culture and regime are not conducive to the delivery of a professional employment service.

Other concerns:

- Lack of recognition of all the hard work that went into establishing DEL and its associated successes over the years.
- Civil Servants being blamed for the “failure” of DEL and transferring to a new Department with an associated negative perception.
- DEL priorities not securing required profile/commitment within a new Departmental context.
- Personal concerns relating to job security, job location, developmental opportunities, uncertainty about further roles.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

.....

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Terry Park

Branch/Office Name: Disability Employment Service

Branch/Office Location: Gloucester House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 -1—

DP -3—

S0 -8—

E01 -3—

E02 -3—

A0 -3—

AA -1—

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

As a corporate support branch our work cuts across the whole of the Department's remit and therefore is directly aligned to the work of both DETI or DE.

The cross cutting ethos and remit of the branch, including its expertise, experience and knowledge, would be well placed to support functions in both DETI and DE.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

The main focus of our Branch is inter-departmental with both DETI and DE.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

The bulk of DEL's current key roles originated from DETI's predecessor (DED), and that which came from DE was FE & HE.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

Business Matters:

- Loss of experience people, knowledge and expertise;
- Harder to plan/organise for the longer term;
- Adopting to a new culture/Department and properly being skilled/trained to do so;
- Lower staff morale/lack of motivation during current process; and
- Lack of communication over timescale and uncertainty date for new approach to be implemented

Personnel matters:

- Redundancy;
- Lack of choice over new work location and related expenses for same and /or impact on family care arrangements;
- Being suitably trained for a new job/business area; and
- Lack of choice over new job/business area.

As a corporate branch, there would be uncertainty around how DETI and DE deal with interdepartmental issues and if they have a dedicated branch similar to the DEL structure.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

As we understand a more substantial re-organisation of NICS Departments is planned within the next 2/3 years, it therefore seems wasteful of resources to make limited changes now which may well be undone within a wider NICS re-organisation a relatively short time thereafter.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Stephen Jackson

Branch/Office Name: Strategy and Equality unit

Branch/Office Location: Adelaide House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 --1--

DP -- 3--

S0 --2--

E01 ---

E02 --1--

A0 ---

AA --1--

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**
- Job roles needed in both Depts and we would expect to go with the majority of other staff.
 - Dept could probably go to either DETI or DE
 - **Strong Preference however is with DETI.**
 - One preference for DE.
- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**
- DETI preferred as
1. DEL's aim is linked to economic growth and development therefore it seems more likely that a merger will achieve synergy and focus.
 2. Fewer staff already in H&S role in DETI and more scope to stay in this area of work.
 3. Historical connection with DED/ T&EA and could see sense in realigning with DETI as historically likely to be a greater match of processes and culture. Also working relationships still in place between DEL and DETI.
 4. As DETI has only one building the assumption is that location would remain as Adelaide House and consequent continued need for premises officer and messenger service.
 5. Given that we have no direct input to the education process and that we help to prepare a skilled workforce it would seem that DETI would be the more relevant department. (if we had the choice).
 6. Although a training function can sit in any area there is a traditional link with DETI. Also as stated above DETI bring in new employment and investment that will help the economically inactive and it seems the natural one to align with.
 7. I can see that as a Training Unit within the Department of Employment & Learning, that we could fit into either Department of Enterprise, Trade & Investment or the Department of Education.
 8. I feel that the work undertaken by DEL's Regional Operational staff supports the work undertaken by DETI. There are already close working links with the two departments through the Jobs Fund and Invest NI. Careers Advisers discuss apprenticeships, designed by the Skills Solutions Team, with Year 12 pupils and staff in Jobs & Benefit Offices/JobCentres help economically inactive people move into employment thereby improving the economy in Northern Ireland.
 9. I feel if we worked closer with colleagues in DETI, we would be more aware of the labour market conditions i.e. what investments are coming, what new trade will affect which occupational area. Therefore, we could assist customers develop or gain new skills to match what the demand will be in Northern Ireland.
 10. We deal with the unemployed/economically inactive assisting them into work and training thus supporting/building the economy

11. As DETI are focused on improving the Social economy; RL&D primarily train staff to improve the employability of the future workforce, therefore, this seems to be the appropriate Department.
12. The functions and purpose of the DEL Employment Service are to support and assist people to get into work and to assist employers to identify potentially suitable candidates to match job vacancies. These are activities which directly relate to the economy and therefore the Employment Service division of DEL aligns with the strategic aims of DETI.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

- Ease of re- establishing contacts and links with DETI
- Also see response to previous question.
- Having worked with DED and T&EA, and now all having emanated from DETI I feel both Depts would be working closer on a common goal. Improving the economy.
- Since I came into the Northern Ireland Civil Service, I have worked in the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Investment in Property Solutions Unit and Companies Registry, which have been developed into Non Departmental Public Bodies.
- I have no preference in which Northern Ireland Civil Service Department which I work for. I am only concerned about potential job losses, loss of earnings and the possibility of relocation.
- Having worked for the Training and Employment Agency I feel that a holistic approach incorporating Careers Officers, Skills Solutions Team through to Regional Operations staff all ties into DETI's goal "to grow a dynamic, innovative economy".
- I will have come full circle. When I started my career in NICS in 1986, it was with DED, DEL has evolved from this Department.
- I believe (and this is supported by the experience of the amalgamation of the SSA functions and Job Centres into the J&BO service delivery model) if the Employment Service was to be aligned with; i.e. DSD/SSA the preparation for employment and job brokerage activities of the Service would be replaced by benefit entitlement conditionality and sanctions processing regime with little or no priority given to employment or employer support.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

- Job Security
- Relocation
- Impact on DEL culture – it is a great Department to work in and we would not want to lose that or see the Dept broken up.
- As I have no control over a political decision, my only concern would be that which ever Dept we are aligned with we are integrated and not seen as an annex or bolt on.
- The job which I do can be delivered to the same high standard whichever Dept I belong.
- My biggest fear would be that whatever Department we are assigned to may have no need for a training unit or will have one already in place and I will be transferred to a new job and location without much say in the matter.
- Re-location and access to training facilities.

- I have only general concerns about how the changes will affect me, my job role and the services we provide. These concerns do not have an impact on my opinion regarding departmental alignment.
- At present, I have no concerns regarding the dissolution of the Department of Employment & Learning. However I understand that the dissolution could take some time as it has to go to the Northern Ireland Executive – Stormont & to the Coalition Government – England for consultation.
- My only concern is for the future security of my job. This in itself does not influence my preference for departmental alignment
- My concern is if there are surplus staff how the redeployment procedure will be implemented. Was involved before in redeployment and feel staff are just moved to fill posts, think we could involve staff more in matching skills to posts.
- Concerns would be possible relocation and new base for work and where this would be. Also, fear of “just being swallowed up into another department”
- It concerns me that if the service DEL’s Employment Service provides to the public, was aligned with DSD that would seriously diminish the employment support services to the public and to employers, leaving job seekers without the support they need to get back into employment. I have no such concerns with alignment with either DETI or DE, however DETI is the best business fit.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

- Communication – Only two bulletins and silence. Even to know that there is no new info to hear would be welcome. Also no information about timescales and an initial urgency seems to have disappeared.
- No evidence of change management.
- Seeming delay in gathering any feedback from staff.
- Rumours that DSD are now also involved in split but not included in this survey and we are left to draw own conclusions.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name:

Branch/Office Name:

Branch/Office Location:

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —1—

DP —3—

SO —4—

E01 —11—

E02 —3—

A0 —3—

AA —

SGB team also

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

The role of the branch is that of finance, which represents a central support function for business areas. We do not represent a specific sector in the same way that HE or FE does.

The roles within the branch and the branch as a whole could therefore be equally aligned with either DETI or DE.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

No additional comments to add.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

In the past DETI provided financial payment services and maintenance of the bank account for DEL ("provider/receiver" relationship). This meant that there was a significant day to day working relationship with DETI and indeed some of the finance staff from DETI at that time now work in this branch.

As a result, the preference would be for DETI.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

- In the current economic climate and given the functions for which it is responsible, it does not seem logical to dissolve the Department for Employment and Learning in isolation at this time.
- The decision appears to be a political one rather than having been arrived at through a rational review of activities across all Departments.
- The current lack of certainty about the future of the Department and individual posts has caused stress and anxiety.
- As finance is a corporate support function, this has added to the uncertainty felt in the branch.
- Transfer of functions will require a significant amount of work for the finance team. It is not possible to accurately plan for this work without knowing the future direction of the Department and any associated timetable.
- The finance team has been at the core of the embedding of financial best practice, in terms of the production of monthly management accounts and the delivery of an effective reporting solution for budget holders and senior management. We would be keen to maintain this team as an entity to ensure that these achievements and corporate benefits and not lost.
- These concerns have not influenced a preference.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

- Our preference with regard to location is Belfast City centre – work life balance and travel arrangements are noted as factors.
- The preference would be for the Finance team to remain intact and be aligned with DETI.
- With regard to the future of the Department as a whole, and given the future direction of and challenges facing Northern Ireland, DEL should be combined with DETI in order to create a Department for the Economy.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name:

Branch/Office Name:

Branch/Office Location:

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —1

DP —1

S0 —2

E01 —3

E02 —3

A0 —2

AA —none

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

Ultimately, the decision on whether or not functions should be moved within, or between NI Departments, is one for elected representatives.

On initial consideration, it may seem more appropriate place the matters relating to further education within the Department of Education, however, when considering the current functions of the Further Education sector, there significant reasons for it to be placed within the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. These reasons are set out below.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

The further education sector's key strategy, which was developed in 2004 as a result of the work of the then Assembly Committee, is '*Further Education Means Business for People, Communities and the Economy in Northern Ireland.*'

One of the key features of that document is the framing of the key strategic purpose of the sector as a key driver of local, sub-regional and regional economic development. In response to that strategy, the colleges have shifted their provision to ensure an economically relevant curriculum is delivered to students and that they work closely with local business and industry in assisting in providing the skills needed by local companies.

The Colleges have a key role in re-training and improving the skills of those in work and play a central role in providing opportunities to those who are not in employment, education or training – the so-called NEETs.

The colleges have also engaged significantly with Invest NI in assisting to gain inward investment and development through the provision of the skilled work forces needed by these companies.

As a result, it is considered that there is a clear linkage between the work of the Department in further education and the wider economic responsibilities of DETI.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

The incorporation of further education colleges in 1998, which took the colleges out of Education and Library Board control, and the recent merger, has created 6 area based colleges which were charged with delivering a key strategic aim, as articulated through '*Further Education Means Business for People, Communities and the Economy in Northern Ireland*' to deliver the training and skills needed within the local workforce which would improve and enhance the economic performance of local business and industry and, hence, the wider NI economy.

The development of the strategy, and the response of the colleges in rising to the challenges set, have led to a further education sector which is now central to delivering skills for business and the economy. There are concerns that a return to the Department of Education, with its focus on more academic attainment, may impair this focus.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

From a practical perspective, the work of civil servants will continue to a high quality no matter where the functions of the Department ultimately are placed, though there are concerns, particularly in the lower-paid grades, about any potential office relocation.

As part of DEL, the further education sector has enjoyed significant funding and investment in buildings and equipment to allow the delivery of the high quality teaching and training required from local business. As mentioned above, there is a concern that if the economic focus of the FE sector is not retained, it will be detrimental to the wider economic performance of local business and the economy.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

None.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Richard Monds

Branch/Office Name: FE Finance and Funding Branch

Branch/Office Location: Adelaide House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 1

DP 1

SO 2

EO1 2

EO2 1

AO 2

AA 1

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

There is a view that the question does not embrace the potential for functions within DEL to be discharged effectively within DSD and DoJ and as such the most appropriate response is neither. There is a need for a comprehensive review of the structures of the NI departments.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

The need for a seamless commitment to the learner with coherent delivery by the appropriate provider (be it a school, FE college or training provider) as they progress from education into the economy requires a rethinking away from the tired hierarchy which has allowed too many young persons to be failed by education.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

.....

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

The potential return of FE to DE raises the spectre of FE returning to the Cinderella experience it endured under the previous relationship wherein schools - in spite of one in four being failed by the experience - are the principal focus for DE. The lack of vision for FE which DE displayed may not auger well.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

Suggestions raised by staff include:

- Proper review of all departments;
- Abolition of all departments in favour of divisions a la the Scottish Executive model; and
- Need to recognise that DEL has delivered many of the objectives set by the Executive

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Anonymous

Branch/Office Name: Qualifications & E-Learning

Branch/Office Location: Somewhere in Belfast

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 --1--

DP --4--

S0 --1--

E01 ---

E02 --1--

A0 ---

AA ---

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

“DETI”

“Skills & Industry Division, including Management Development Branch and Investors in People would logically sit within **DETI**.”

“The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment is the department I feel my function and job role are more suited.”

“I think the functions of DEL are more suited to those of DETI.”

“DETI; we are very closely aligned with DETI economic role, work with employers and skilling employees and the DEL skills agenda is at the heart of the NIES.”

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

“Because of their involvement with business and industry across the economy”

“Management Development Branch is responsible for the upskilling of managers in Northern Ireland Small to Medium-sized Enterprises through a suite of management and leadership programmes. This function is closely aligned with some of those currently delivered by DETI. “

“In my job role I deal with small to medium sized enterprises, promoting the Departments’ Management and Leadership programmes. I feel the objectives of our branch sit naturally with DETI.”

Our work is very clearly aligned with business and enterprise and has built a reputation for delivery in this area – so DETI is the most appropriate fit.

“As my job duties lean towards helping employers improve their Management and Leadership skills, the above Departments functions are best suited.”

“My Branch, as like the others within Sills and Industry Division focus on the development of business and their staff training needs, which in turn contributes to the Employment, Learning and trade infrastructure within Northern Ireland”

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

None

“I’ve been employed by the Dept of Manpower, Dept for Economic Development and the Industrial Development Board. The knowledge and skills gained over the years greatly helps me in the performance of my current work.

I also feel that, the integration into DETI would be made easier by having a working knowledge of the Department and knowing past colleagues.”

“I have worked for Department of Economic Development and Manpower Services in the past, which in turn is DETI under a different name. I was happy working in this environment.”

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

“The beneficial effects we have input into the development and growth of the NI economy will be diluted or at worst lost”

“My concerns include whether or not the alignment with a different Department will involve a change in office location; how sustainable my post will be in the long term; and if there is any risk of a redundancy situation further down the line.”

“My only concern is that we may be seconded to Invest NI.”

“If Skills & Industry was aligned to DE, the nature of the work we do would be jeopardised. Education has little bearing on business and industry.”

“The step is purely political and has been a very negative one for those who have worked hard to deliver DEL’s services. It is not chiefly about cost saving - more about a carve up of Ministries to suit the political landscape. The changeover will undoubtedly be very costly at a time where there could be more easily achieved savings in other areas.”

“I’ve been involved in Department name changes numerous times and this from my experiences was reasonably straight forward. My main concerns with the dissolution of DEL, is where our Management & Leadership function will lay within the new Department and how budget allocations will be sorted.

Eventual branch location is also a concern.”

“My concerns related to secondment to Invest NI and after 3 years having to re-apply for my job within the Civil Service.”

“Concerned about how my job and role will change.”

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

“Why do we have to be done away with just to suit the machinations of the Two party clique at Stormont”

“City Centre location would be preferred as a central base for meeting businesses.”

“Concerned at how this survey has been managed and possible political use that will be made of it.”

Branch/Office Name:

Branch/Office Location:

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7	1
DP	3
S0	6
E01	3
E02	2
A0	4

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

There is strong support for alignment with DETI.

However, we have a joint Careers strategy with DE and some feel that, while not necessarily favouring DE, we could equally be aligned with that department.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

- Our focus is on preparing clients to engage in education and develop skills with a view to employment, we are therefore closely aligned with the economic agenda of DETI.
- We perceive that the DETI culture is continually promoting development which fits well with our own culture of lifelong learning.
- We work with a wide range of partners, not just in the education arena but across healthcare, justice, employment service, employers and training. DETI offers wider exposure to these.
- Careers Guidance policy has an all age and impartial remit. Alignment with the education sector may impact on client perception of our impartiality.
- The Careers Service provides services to clients of all age groups and abilities. To ensure that effective and all inclusive CIAG services are marketed effectively and delivered to all clients it would be important that careers information advice and guidance is not seen as a service only provided through schools/colleges and to certain age groups. This would be more difficult through the functions of DE.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

- There is continual confusion amongst clients and stakeholders between the role of schools in delivering careers education and the role of the Careers Service in providing impartial careers information, advice and guidance. Aligning the Careers function with DETI would allow an opportunity to clarify the position, particularly in relation to the provision of labour market information, while alignment with DE would add to this confusion.
- Careers guidance for young people in England and ROI is aligned with education and recent experience has shown that when education budgets are under pressure careers guidance is susceptible to cuts.
- Experience of working with DE on the development of strategy and business cases has demonstrated that we have different systems and approaches which are not easily compatible.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

- We consider that the interconnections between branches in DEL works well and there is concern that some of this will be lost if the Department is split. We would therefore prefer to merge with another department rather than split functions.
- If we split there is a concern about where other DEL branches will be placed and how we will interact.

- There is concern that if we move to DE our role will become merged with the school function and we will lose our all age remit. Given the move towards lengthening the working life, this is a major concern.
- There is concern that DE, DEL and DETI each have a different ethos and that it may be difficult to adapt ie – DE focused on age specific client, DEL client driven (people, skills, jobs), DETI corporate driven.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

- Concerns about the time, effort and work that will be required to complete this change. Additional pressures on already busy work schedule eg preparing briefing for new Minister and SMT, developing new networks, marketing, advertising, rebranding
- Important that clients, stakeholders and staff, including the staff of the ‘new department’, are clear about the function of the Careers Service and that there is continuity of service.
- Concern about how we will be effected personally – location, travel, adapting to new colleagues and new ways of working.

Branch/Office Name: Careers Policy and Strategy

Branch/Office Location: Waterfront Plaza

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 -1—

DP -2—

SO -2—

E01 -5—

E02 -1—

AO —

AA -1—

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

DEL Aims and Objectives;

To promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy.

To promote economic, social and personal development through high quality learning, research and skills training; and, To help people into employment and promote good employment practices.

Our Customers

The Department's two main customer groups are:

- Individuals who are seeking to improve their levels of skills and qualifications or who require support and guidance to progress towards employment, including self-employment; and
- Businesses in both the public and private sectors.

Our four key areas of activity

- Enhancing the provision of learning and skills, including entrepreneurship, enterprise, management and leadership.
- Increasing the level of research and development, creativity and innovation in the Northern Ireland economy;
- Helping individuals to acquire jobs, including self employment, and improving the linkages between employment programmes and skills development; and
- The development and maintenance of the framework of employment rights and responsibilities.

DETI Aims and Objective relating to the economy and developing employment growth.

Priorities: Public Service Agreements and Objectives

In the PfG, DETI has identified three key priorities for the period 2008 - 2011. Department has incorporated these within the framework of the twenty-three Public Service Agreements (PSAs), published as part of the Northern Ireland Executive's PfG. The three PSA priorities DETI has identified are:

- PSA 1: Productivity Growth - improve manufacturing/private services productivity
- PSA 3: Increasing Employment - raising employment levels;
- PSA 5: Tourism - develop the tourism sector.

Through the DEL its JBo network has a primary aim and responsibility is to assist our unemployed customers find employment through the delivery of quality advice and guidance and also progressing those clients who require additional and specialised help towards a menu of training programmes that includes, Steps, Pathways, Bridge to Employment, TIS and others. In addition, we provide help and support to those employers seeking to fill employment vacancies, by referring qualified and motivated candidates and by also advising

firms on DEL re-training programmes and encourage them use the menu of programmes to up-skill existing work forces and re-train unemployed and economically inactive clients.

Comparing the DEL and DETI objectives as set out in their respective Action Plans, as well as drawing from the NI Economic Strategy Comprehensive Action Plan of it is very clear that DEL and DETI share similar aims and objectives when it comes to developing the NI economy. To that end, in relation to economic development, both Departments are committed to building the economy through R&D, employment and training, therefore, **I believe that DEL, JBO functions are closely aligned to DETI and therefore should be transferred to DETI.**

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

DEL through its JBO network underpins DETI's economic growth aims and objectives by interfacing with economically inactive and unemployed clients as well as servicing the recruitment and skills needs of employers. In addition, through the delivery of its skills and programmes, complements and strengthens DETI's, R&D enterprises, growth objectives and therefore is a strategic partner and stakeholder in helping the NI economy rebuild for the future. In both of the above roles DEL staff are also well placed to identify local sectoral and skills trends and working under the one Department, would be able to quickly flag up these changes as they arise giving employers and businesses more confidence to work with and single point of contact across the 35 JBO/JC network for their employment and skills delivery service.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

DEL on a number of fronts has a close working relationship and business links with DETI. These have proven to be very successful and demonstrate that joined up thinking and joint delivery is beneficial to employers and unemployed customers. Such as;

- Through the 35 JBo/JC network, staff work closely with Invest NI to meet their target to create 4,000 new jobs by 2015 through the Jobs Fund project. DEL has committed itself to supporting Invest NI to achieve this target. On the ground the Employment Service has been liaising with Invest NI to promote this package to employers in conjunction with the Steps to Work Employer Subsidy and fill vacancies, created under the Jobs Fund, with long term unemployed/economically inactive clients.

The success of this initiative has demonstrated that DEL and DETI/Invest NI work well together on a common purpose to assist economic growth.

Redundancy Clinics

- DETI, DEL and Invest NI work closely and successfully on Redundancy clinics

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

If DEL JBo functions were subsumed into DSD/SSA (Benefit orientated as per the 2010-2011 Business Plan) the opportunity to utilise valuable knowledge and expertise of skilled front line staff which has been built up through relationships with local employers and business in the economy would be lost.

There is a strong argument to consolidate a range of functions within a single 'Department of the Economy' and deliver joined up local solutions that deal with the skills and training needs of the economy and the broader socio-economic issues. DEL through its JBo/JC network are well placed to carry out that function.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

This is an opportunity to bring together the job creation function of Invest NI along with the skills and employment policies of both Departments to work in tandem as a single identity in order to re-grow and build a strong economy in NI.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Seamus O'Neill

Branch/Office Name: Enniskillen JBo

Branch/Office Location: Enniskillen

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 ——

DP ——

S0 1

E01 3

E02 20

A0 16

AA ——

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

Kilkeel JBO – unanimous DETI

Newcastle JC – unanimous DETI

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

Kilkeel Staff feel that DEL and DETI are very closely linked in terms of their focus. The DETI focus is supporting the Economy by getting Employers to invest and provide jobs, while the DEL focus is in acquiring sustainable employment for our Clients. DETI support Employers via incentives and DEL do likewise with their Clients and Employers via Programmes, Training and Subsidy therefore, in their own way both support the Economy.

The Client base in the Kilkeel Office suggests that there are lots of experienced people out of work. They don't necessarily have qualifications and because of their maturity don't want to return to the Education environment, but they have skills and need employment therefore, DEL needs to have jobs to offer and DETI can assist in this respect.

Although it is recognised the Department of Education also has strong links with the DEL focus, the general feeling is that DETI's link is stronger and more advantageous in our efforts to assist a turnaround in the Economy.

Newcastle JC Staff feel that DETI because of their Role, is linked more to Employers, Industry and Investment in the Economy and therefore, sits better with the DEL Role.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

Newcastle JC feel that DEL has had a good relationship in the past with DETI as we were linked through Accounts, Pay and Personnel functions.

Kilkeel Staff recognise that the Economy has to be built up and have had experience of the work DETI does to assist in this respect.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

Newcastle JC Staff don't have any concerns about the dissolution of DEL.

Kilkeel JBO Staff are concerned about Job Security, Location and changes to their Role, but would be content to change to DETI because of the links already mentioned and because their current focus would remain. However, they would have grave concerns about stepping outside of DETI and/or the Department of Education because they feel the DEL focus would be lost, they may become too process-driven and feel strongly that their work should not be benefit-linked.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

None.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Veronica Burns

Branch/Office Name: Kilkeel Jobs and Benefits Office

Branch/Office Location: Newcastle JobCentre

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 -1-

E01 —1-

E02 -2-2-

A0 -4-2-

AA —

Kilkeel Staff numbers are shown in normal type and Newcastle Staff numbers are shown in italics. Unfortunately there were Staff absent from each Office when Survey was carried out.

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

DETI - 15

DE - 2

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

DETI

DEL currently works with employers and Invest NI who are part of DETI.

Current partnership arrangements which DEL have in place are the same as some of those DETI have. E.g. Councils

DEL work with clients trying to move them into employment in a difficult economic climate, links with employer small business etc will be essential. DETI currently work with these organisations. If we join it will be more streamlined.

If we join DETI it would work alongside our current job role working with Economic partners and employers.

Inward investments to create new jobs and training opportunities to create more companies

With employers creating employment we can work closely in training these people offering subsidies

Department of Education

Department should be aligned with Department of Education as we are all about Employment and Learning and helping people be retrained with new skills.

We deal with people seeking training opportunities and advice on further education.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

In the past DETI and DEL were all one branch and it worked well.

DETI has similar customer base.

Talking to past DETI staff member same focus, shared goals.

Being part of DETI will hopefully lead to more Job creations in difficult economic.

Job Funding and assistance for customers while in employment.

The creation of more Employment Contact Managers - this role would be beneficial and enhance the work done by DETI.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

Loss of identity – at least if we are aligned with DETI they work with employers

Job Losses

Losing expertise

Each Department keeping their own staff – will DEL become the poor relations!

Location - Where will we be working from, currently working alongside staff in DSD

Loss of funding from schemes which help the unemployed into work and training

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

.....

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Thaddeaus Toner

Branch/Office Name: Magherafelt JBo

Branch/Office Location: 31 Station Road, Magherafelt BT45 5DJ

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 ——

DP ——

S0 ——

E01 -2——

E02 -4——

A0 -7——

AA -1——

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

The view of the staff in Newry would be that if DEL has to disband, that it should transfer in its entirety to DETI.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

The staff in Newry Jobs and Benefits Office see their priority as assisting people to move into employment. Currently our Department has a range of functions which work well together to enable this.

Their view is that the Department has a good record of promoting learning and skills, preparing clients for work, and assisting employers. These activities in turn support the economy and are vital for any future recovery of the economy.

Therefore because of the nature of the work and the interrelationship between the various functions, it is felt that these functions sit better in their entirety with DETI given its role in dealing with the economy.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

Over the past couple of years, a lot of work has been done to regain our main focus which research has shown appears to have been lost in Jobs and Benefits Offices.

Initiatives such as the New Jobseekers Process and concentrating more on our work with Employers have been welcomed by staff who feel they are now able to do quality work which helps clients get into employment.

A move to DSD/SSA is seen as detrimental to this.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

Staff are very concerned with the potential for aspects of the Employment Service transferring to DSD, and would see it as a step back for them and also for the recovery of the economy.

They see it as a very real danger that they would find their role changing from assisting people into employment to 'policing the benefit system'.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

.....

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Diane Waddell on behalf of David Morrison

Branch/Office Name: Newry Jobs and Benefits Office

Branch/Office Location: Newry

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

NB due to the tight deadline, we were only able to speak to a few of the staff, however due to previous discussions at team time etc, we are confident that the attached would be the view of the majority of staff.

G7 ——

DP ——

S0 ——

E01 3

E02 4

A0 3

AA ——

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

21 Number of staff surveyed across grades from AA- SO

16 DETI

1 DE

1 SSA

2 Don't have enough knowledge of either Dept to make a decision

1 Leaving the decision to DEL

Generally staff believe the Department would be better suited to DETI. Given the current economic climate the focus should be on employment rather than benefits. We should be promoting Employment and helping new businesses capitalise on the workforce at our disposal and that benefits should remain solely an SSA function.

Rather than DEL functions transferring to DETI a new Department should be formed emerging both DEL and DETI and renamed as deemed appropriate.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

Unfortunately DEL frontline services is now all about signing on and benefits, DEL has lost it's purpose and has been swallowed up by SSA processes. DEL needs to regain its identity and merge with DETI in order to achieve this.

In recent times the priority of the role of Employment Service Officer has changed dramatically towards ensuring payment of benefits and customer meeting conditionality of same and not the same emphasis on Job search activity in helping customers towards/into suitable employment and training opportunities.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

As all emphasis in recent years has been work focused regarding moving customers from Welfare to Work. It is important that we are aligned to a Department which has similar Aims and Objectives to DEL and that the importance of current Partnerships and Stakeholders which are on board and working very well is recognised and allowed to continue.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

Northern Ireland needs a Department fully equipped to get the Economy back on track. Without DEL we could lose the one Department that is best placed to achieve this.

If we amalgamate with a Department solely related to Benefits and Benefits issues we will be sucked into a process driven regime.

"The decision to abolish DEL is purely political and that the impact has not been thought through."

Will DEL or its function become the “Cinderella Service” as it currently is perceived by SSA

Many staff have real concerns about their job security, fear of job losses, change of location, change to Terms and Conditions and the long term effects this will have on their future.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

DETI is very closely linked with Employment and the future of the Economy in Northern Ireland. To abandon DEL now and push frontline services into Social Security Agency could have serious consequences for the future of the Economy in Northern Ireland.

Completed by Office Manager:

Name: Kate McElroy

Branch/Office Name: JBO

Branch/Office Location: OMAGH

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 1

E01 1

E02 9

A0 9

AA 1

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

Skills Policy Branch is responsible for the Skills Strategy. The strategy's main aim is to develop a workforce with the skills employers need to drive economic growth. As such, it is one of the main ways in which the Executive's Economic Strategy will be taken forward. For this reason, in the event of the dissolution of DEL, the work of this Branch would be best placed within DETI.

However, it is not as simple as this. The main delivery agents for the Skills Strategy are FE, HE and training organisations. A lot of work has been taken forward by these organisations in the last decade to make them more attuned to the needs of our employers and the local economy. Therefore, it is important that the policy responsibility (and governance) for vocational training, FE and HE remain together and strongly linked in with economic development. It is our opinion that the optimal solution for the economy would be a single **Department of the Economy** comprising much of the work of DETI, Invest NI and DEL.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

Economic development, growing our economy and improving our well being is the number one priority for our government. However, at present, no single department is responsible for the economy.

It is widely recognised that skills are an essential driver in delivering economic and employment growth. In this context the functions of the DEL will have a crucial role to play in stimulating and growing our economy. Aligning the functions of DEL and DETI will ensure that NI has a flexible and responsive skill system which can meet the demands of business.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

No

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

One of my main concerns would be the work that has already been taken forward by DEL in terms of skills would become lost. A lot of improvements have been made to the skills landscape, this should not be hindered by the dissolution of DEL. This work is very important and is crucial if Northern Ireland is to compete in the global economy. The skills work must retain its importance within any restructuring.

It is important to note the good working relationship we already have with Invest NI and DETI in taking forward the economic agenda.

The dissolution of DEL, whilst far from ideal, provides an opportunity for the creation of a more focused Department of the Economy. It should not simply be about cutting up DEL and sticking it in with either DETI or DE. The economy should be at the heart of any restructuring of Departments

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

None.

Branch/Office Name: Skills Policy

Branch/Office Location: Waterfront Plaza

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 -1---

DP -4-

S0 -4-

E01 ---

E02 ---

A0 ---

AA ---

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

The role of this branch is to provide a core Finance function for DEL. This function could be carried out in any Department, once here was an understanding of the intricacies of that Department's business.

It was agreed that we felt better aligned to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

The main reason that this branch agreed that we are best aligned to the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment is because both Departments are linked in that they have a direct input to the Economy. DEL's mission is to provide the necessary skills for individuals to secure employment, whilst one of DETI's main functions is to attract inward investment and job opportunities.

It also does not seem feasible to split DEL between the Departments. The divisions of DEL are linked - particularly the Employment Service, Skills in Industry and Further Education. The FE Colleges provide the training courses to upskill those that are unemployed (Employment Service) and those that are undertaking apprenticeships (SID). It would be difficult and inefficient to break these links.

In addition the HE Sector provides the skills that are required and indeed tailored to meet the criteria of the jobs created by inward investment that has been secured by DETI.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

This branch has not had any past experience that would influence our preference.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

This branch had a number of individual personal concerns mainly in relation to the uncertainty of our futures. One point to make though is that location would be an issue, and that travel to Bangor would not be palatable. For this reason too, alignment with DETI would be more favourable.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

The branch has concerns around the flexibility with regards to the type of post that would be offered if Finance division were disbanded (eg) would it be a finance-related post? Also, would there be a second/third choice if the first choice were turn down as unacceptable?

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Maryann Smith

Branch/Office Name: Financial Planning Branch

Branch/Office Location: Rm 301 Adelaide House, Adelaide Street, Belfast BT1 8FD

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 --1--

DP ---1-

S0 -1---

E01 ---

E02 ---

A0 -1---

AA ---

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI).

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

DEL ESF funding for 2007-2013 is part of the EU Competitiveness and Employment Programme and this comprises of two Departments, DETI & DEL. DE currently has no direct involvement.

ESF relates to helping people into employment and improving workforce skills and we see this as fitting with the functions and purposes of DETI.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

Previously the T&EA was part of DED.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

Most concerns are general concerns and we would have regardless of the choice between DETI & DE.

Location – moving away from the city centre.

Transport – if moving outside the city centre public transport may be more problematic

Car Parking – if public transport is problematic may choose to drive (if that is an option), availability/cost of car parking.

Preparation for the dissolution – will we be given sufficient notice regarding location changes if applicable

Why are only two Departments being considered as part of the dissolution?

Possible changes to staff posts, for example DETI have a Certifying Authority Unit

Timing of this staff survey, a number of staff are out of the office today and with the Divisional Business Planning day on Monday the survey had to be completed Friday 27/04/2012.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

N/A

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Andrea Quail

Branch/Office Name: ESF Finance, Certifying Authority and European Policy.

Branch/Office Location: Adelaide House (one member of staff works from Richmond Chambers)

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —1—

DP —0—

S0 —1—

E01 —1—

E02 —1—

A0 —1—

AA —1—

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

- 7 staff participated in this discussion;
- 5 staff saw their current role aligning with DETI rather than DE;
- 0 staff felt their job role aligned with DE;
- 1 member of staff felt strongly that, although not formally offered as an option, their role aligned most strongly with DSD; and
- 1 member of staff had no preference on which Department our sector aligned to.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

DETI

- Staff felt DEL is more closely aligned with the economy and job creation and that it is a natural progression to incorporate the process of job creation with preparing clients for work and to fill the vacancies created;
- It was felt that it would be more appropriate for DEL to work with DETI to identify possible skills shortages and take measures to address any skills deficits, and that this is a much wider process than 'education';
- At the NICS event on 24th April 2012, DETI outlined the NI Economic Strategy and staff felt that DEL fitted into this strategy from a job creation rather than 'social' perspective;
- Moving to DETI would increase the potential to build on links already established with InvestNI eg Jobs Fund (formerly Stes); and
- Universal Credit is viewed by staff as an opportunity to 'pull back' from the current JBO structure and bring the focus of current DEL staff back to helping clients into work as the 'processing' would not be carried out by DEL staff and will be conducted 'off site'. It was felt this opportunity would be much better utilised in DETI rather than DE;

DSD

- Universal Credit should mirror the Department for Work and Pensions model to ensure parity where possible. This model brings work and benefits under one department;
- The DEL Universal Credit team is embedded in each strand of DSD's Universal Credit Project and at the moment it's felt that both departments are 'doing their own thing', the staff member felt that bringing the departments together would address this; and
- It would be beneficial if DSD had responsibility for all front line delivery within JBOs as they would then have responsibility for both benefit delivery and work focused activity and would have to focus equally on each. At present it is felt that DSD do not take work focused activity into account in their decision making process;

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

- It was strongly felt that the experience of move from JobCentres to Jobs & Benefits experience played a key role in influencing preferences – both for those with a preference for DETI and those with a preference for DSD;
- For those who preferred DETI, it was felt that DEL lost it's identity in the transition from JobCentres to JBOs and became too focused on benefits. They feel that frontline should be totally focused on work and the preparation and movement of clients into work;
- For the staff member who preferred DSD, It was observed that we are now intrinsically linked with DSD through the policy and legislation applicable to JBOs and that it would be easier for front line staff to operate under one department and one set of targets and objectives; and
- Operational priorities in the past have focused on benefit delivery rather than job focused activity as these are legislatively driven. It was felt a move to DETI may dilute this benefit link.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

DETI

- JBOs will become entirely benefit focused and work/job focus will be lost if DEL loses it's economic focus;
- Concerns were raised that the link with skills through the Integrated Employment and Skills Strategy may be lost in the dissolution of DEL if work transfers anywhere other than DETI;

DSD

Lack of parity with GB in terms of Universal Credit if DEL moves to DETI or DE rather than DSD;
Staff working to two different sets of targets and objectives if department moves to DETI/DE

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

- Has consideration been given to moving the frontline service only to DSD or managing the dissolution of DEL on a business area by business area basis?

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Sheila McNeill

Branch/Office Name: Universal Credit Project Team

Branch/Office Location: Gloucester House, Belfast

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 1
DP 4
S0 —
E01 1
E02 —
AO 1
AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

The majority of staff consulted have little knowledge of either DETI or DE so this has to be borne in mind when relaying their comments. That said, all those consulted are of the opinion that DETI is the most appropriate Department. They feel that our role in Jobs and benefits is “to prepare people for work, and to support the economy”. They feel this sits most appropriately with DETI'S focus on the economy. For example, there has been a recent drive for more collaboration with INI through the ‘Jobsfund’ in order to assist employers financially. This initiative is bolstered by an employer subsidy from DEL's STW programme. They feel therefore, that DEL's role sits with DETI's role in supporting employers and strengthening the economy. They also feel that assisting clients back to work is our primary role however, “promoting learning and skills” (outside of the Steps To Work programme) is a role for Further and Higher Education and perhaps that should go to DE.

A member of staff expressed concern that parts of DE were subject to RPI and that if DEL functions went there then those DEL functions could similarly be brought into RPI scope with the potential for staff to lose Civil Service status.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

There are very few staff remaining who were in the department when it last set within DETI. Of the one consulted, they felt that it would be easier going back as presumably, a significant number of Core DETI staff would be familiar with Jobcentre activities.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

Some staff are concerned that there may be cuts in staffing levels.

Some staff felt that we might be seen as a DETI add-on and that our functions will be seen as secondary. They felt this would be the same no matter what Department took over our functions.

Reorganisation would add an additional pressure to front-line at a time of radical change. This could have an additional detrimental effect on front-line operations.

There may be a negative effect if Careers goes to DE as we are currently trying to forge closer working with the Careers service.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

Some staff are very unhappy that this has to happen at all for “Political purposes” and that they would prefer the Department remained as one. Some felt that if we have to merge with another department then **all** DEL functions should migrate to DETI **including** Further & Higher Education.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Gerry McLoone

Branch/Office Name: Lisnagelvin

Branch/Office Location: L,Derry

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 -1-

E01 -2-

E02 -6-

A0 -1-

AA -1

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

90% Advisers feel we should be aligned to DE. Information sharing would be improved and links strengthened. Better access to students. Increased awareness of training opportunities consistent with the requirements of careers teachers and careers advisers.

10% felt we should be aligned to DETI as they are driven by employment and investment which will enhance our LMI. They also felt DE do not work with all age client base and as the careers service offer all age information advice and guidance we would be better placed with DETI.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

The need to rebalance the NI economy is the Executives number one aim. This aligns with our aim to help people realise their career aspirations, enabling them to contribute positively to their community and the NI economy. Both of these sit primarily within the remit of DETI.

The goal of developing and growing our economy can only be achieved with a skilled workforce. The Careers Service, with others, has a key role to play in ensuring that people are well informed about their career choices, and crucially, know where gaps exist in our skills base and what they can do to help address this issue.

Sitting within DETI we can build on this role and further highlight and promote that we are an all age service. If we were in DE we would in my view be seen as a school service and perhaps even an ancillary one at that, subsumed within the overall school provision like a number of other functions.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

Advisers feel there is a real need to strengthen links between CEIAG and CIAG. They feel schools have information readily available which would definitely complement our guidance. Increased opportunities to access this information if we were with DE.

None.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

Overall staff's main concern is that their position remains stable irrespective the Department to which they are aligned.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

None.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Patricia Frazer

Branch/Office Name: Ann Street Careers Resource Centre

Branch/Office Location:

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 —

E01 ~~—6—~~

E02 —

A0 —

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

DETI.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

The twin roles of this Branch are:-

1. Reconnect people with the labour market; and
2. Up skill those in employment.

Both of these objectives fit with DETI's aims.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

his branch was previously part of the former T&EA, an executive arm of the former Department for Economic Development prior to devolution and therefore fits with the economic objectives of DETI.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

I have no concerns.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

No.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Brian Smart

Branch/Office Name: NIESF

Branch/Office Location: Adelaide House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 -1—

DP -2—

S0 -2—

E01 -1—

E02 -5—

A0 —

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

It is the view of this branch that our functions would best align with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

There is one exception to this view. We believe that responsibility for the funding of teacher education would best align with the Department of Education.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

Higher Education is a driver for economic growth and regeneration. It would be best placed in a department which has economic growth as f its key objective. This would be similar to the situation in England where the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has responsibility for HE.

If Higher Education were to be placed with the Department of Education, it would be forced to compete for funds with the primary and post-primary education sectors. It would become to be seen as an “educational” issue rather than seen as the key economic driver that it is.

However, the Department of Education has policy responsibility for the training of teachers. The teachers are employed in the primary and post-primary sectors. It would make sense for one department to have both the policy responsibility and the funding responsibility for the one activity which is vital to the primary and post-primary sectors in Northern Ireland. This would allow the Department of Education to take a holistic view of teacher education in Northern Ireland. We can think of no other function or activity of government that is split between two departments.

Teacher education is delivered by five institutions in Northern Ireland which are all funded by DEL although the Department of Education determines the numbers of students to be enrolled on the teacher education courses each year (these are Stranmillis University College, St. Mary's University College, Queen's University, University of Ulster and the Open University).

All other functions of the DEL should be transferred to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

None.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

All members of staff are naturally concerned about the change that may result due to the dissolution of DEL. However, the views expressed in this survey return are based solely on our view of business need.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

Staff are of the opinion that too little time has been afforded for this survey exercise and that it has been requested very late in the process. The Committee for Employment and Learning would, we believe, not countenance such a cavalier attitude to a consultation had DEL itself been responsible for it.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Billy Lyttle

Branch/Office Name: Higher Education Finance

Branch/Office Location: Adelaide House (4th floor)

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —1

DP —2

S0 —

E01 —1

E02 —

A0 —1

AA —

[5 members of staff – full branch discussion]

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

9 Staff selected DETI.

4 Staff did not select any of the two departments

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

Close links with DETI in regards to skills and industry, Employers and job creation.

As a policy branch for the development and maintenance of the Department's main adult return to work programme, Steps to Work, we see that this area of work is best suited to fit in with DETI and not with DE.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

Staff worked and some had links with previous departments such as Dept for Economic Development.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

Several staff had concerns about travelling to Netherleigh.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

Several staff asked why the DEL committee are asking these questions.

What are the views of the DEL committee on the proposed dissolution of DEL.

It appears the Department is being dissolved for political reasons.

Completed by Office Manager:

Name: John Mallon

Branch/Office Name: Programme Management and Development Branch

Branch/Office Location: Adelaide House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 -2—

DP -2—

S0 -4—

E01 -1—

E02 -2—

A0 -1—

AA -1—

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

For the Employment Service to fulfil its function properly we should be seen in the context of economic development. We should, therefore, have a proactive role rather than the reactive role implicit in some aspects of our present function as part of benefit administration. This can only be achieved by absorbing DEL in its entirety into DETI and forming a new Department for Economic Development.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

We have been there before. The culture of DETI is similar to DEL. We have staff at all levels who have worked in the DED/DETI culture. Again, I reiterate the importance of the proactive pursuit of economic development – particularly now that the economy is weak.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

I would be concerned that the Employment Service would disappear completely if, for example, the DEL JBO function were to be transferred to The Social Security Agency. The functions are fundamentally different. The Employment Service should be about the imaginative pursuit of developing the flow of the labour market and preparing people for work. The Social Security Agency's function is to react to individual economic need by administering, assessing and paying benefit. Staff feel very strongly about this.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

.....

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Bob Mairs

Branch/Office Name: Strabane Jobcentre

Branch/Office Location:

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP —

S0 —1-

E01 —1-

E02 —

A0 —1

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

The unanimous view is that OITFET should not be aligned with either DETI or DE but with DoJ.

One member of staff due to transfer on promotion to a local Job Market takes the view that Job Markets might be a better fit to DSD rather than DETI but definitely not DE.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

The independence of the tribunals from a sponsor department which has been the subject of many questions in the past from respondents (and indeed some claimants). It is likely that should OITFET move to DETI, from a presentational perspective, claimants and their representative organisations may have the same concerns about undue influence being brought to bear on the tribunals by their new sponsor department.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

Yes – numerous complaints levied at tribunal administration (& the judiciary) given our current sponsor relationship with DEL.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

None, only an issue if OITFET's transfer to DoJ does not proceed.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

None – OITFET staff have been expecting & indeed preparing for our transfer to initially the NI Courts Service & laterally DoJ for some years now so the dissolution of DEL is not really a live issue for staff other than it may well prompt movement on the transfer.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Rene Murray

Branch/Office Name: OITFET

Branch/Office Location: Killymeal House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7	1
DP	-
S0	2
E01	2
E02	5
A0	19
AA	4

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?

The Widening Participation agenda has both social justice and economic development imperatives and as such has links to the agendas for both DE and DETI. Arguably, encouraging more equitable participation in HE across all social strata is a clear promotion of the value of education but Widening Participation is only of value to the wider community if those benefitting from that education can make an economic contribution to society to repay the public investment in their education.

At a wider sector level the link with DETI is much more clearly identifiable and HE has a very distinct contribution to make toward economic development and the attraction of Foreign Direct Investment. The HE in FE responsibility of this branch would also align much more closely with DETI through the promotion of the FE Means Business development strategy.

In many ways the question above seems to require staff to choose the method of their own demise. It is unfortunate that greater, and perhaps more creative, thought has not been given to alternative possibilities in which DEL may continue the good work that it has begun with perhaps the transfer of some compatible functions from other Departments into DEL.

Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?

The views expressed are a reflection of the collective views of staff. We have tried to be objective in our responses but there is a slight dichotomy between the specific functions of WP and the overall position of the sector.

The views on HE in FE are a direct reflection of the success of FE Means Business to date.

Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

Three out of four staff in this branch are ex-DETI staff. However, the comments made reflect a genuine consideration of the issues and the belief that HE and FE are, and should be fully recognised as, major drivers for the local economy.

Candidly, there are also some genuine concerns that DE has a reputation as a somewhat stultifying Department in which it is difficult to effect significant change.

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

At personal level most staff are concerned not to lose their current city centre location. Some travel very great distances to Belfast each day and do not relish the prospect of a further drive to and from Bangor on a daily basis.

At a professional level, most staff are convinced that their work will lose focus in a different Department that may have competing priorities that will supersede the work that they have been engaged in developing over the last few years.

However, on a positive note we are pleased to note the inclusion of the phrasing, "...if the Department is abolished" – but we wouldn't take out a mortgage on the strength of it.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

Beyond those outlined above, there is a real concern that the decision to abolish DEL was not taken for strategic, or even operational, reasons. There is a concern that much of the very good work that has been successfully begun over the last 10 years may now be dissipated and diluted in the competing agendas of other Departments. It is not clear, for example, why other Departments and agencies were allowed to develop functions in DEL areas such as skills development.

Skills, not finance or marketing, will drive successful economic development in the next few years. Therefore this does not seem like a good time to dissolve a dedicated Department for Skills.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Kieran Mannion

Branch/Office Name: Higher Education Widening Participation Branch

Branch/Office Location: Adelaide House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —1—

DP —1—

S0 —2—

E01 —

E02 —

A0 —

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

It was the view of all branch members that we should be aligned with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

Following devolution, we continue to work closely with colleagues in the other devolved governments, particularly those in England. The Department which our English counterparts work for is the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). We have no contact with the English Department of Education. If our branch was to become part of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, then the Department would be directly comparable to BIS. This would allow existing working relationships to be maintained and may lead to new cross-cutting initiatives between Higher Education and business. A single Department for Enterprise, Trade, Investment and Higher Education will allow for a quicker more tailored response to meet the demand for graduates in areas of economic importance to Northern Ireland.

It was felt, however, that Education Maintenance Allowance, as a scheme for schools and Further Education students, would sit better within the remit of the Department of Education.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

A number of staff within the branch were in post when the Department was originally created. This involved the movement of large numbers of staff from the Department of Education (based in Bangor) to Adelaide House in Belfast. In the months following the creation of the Department of Employment and Learning, many of the staff who had moved from Bangor were found posts back in Bangor again. This upheaval led to low staff morale and ultimately the loss of skills and knowledge as experienced staff left the newly formed Department.

It is felt that a move to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment would reduce the potential disruption.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

Staff are concerned that if Higher Education is moved to the Department of Education that it will be marginalised as it will fall outside the Department of Education's key responsibilities to primary and secondary education.

At a time when the Assembly is working hard to speed up the recovery of the Northern Irish economy, it is vital that Higher Education remains at the forefront, reacting to the requirements for skilled graduates in areas key to economic growth.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

Members of the branch are concerned that moving to a different Department will involve a geographical move of office, with the most likely destinations being Netherleigh House and Rathgael House. With the majority of staff living outside Belfast, a move to either of these locations would lead to greatly increased commuting time and costs, with those dependent on public transport needing to take two buses to get to either potential location. Moving from Adelaide House would have a serious impact on the work / life balance of all concerned.

It is felt that for business continuity and the retention of key staff that remaining in the centre of Belfast was vital.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Jonny O'Callaghan

Branch/Office Name: Student Finance Branch

Branch/Office Location: Adelaide House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 ——

DP ——3

S0 ——1

E01 ——2

E02 ——1

A0 ——1

AA ——

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

The majority of the Branch believes that its functions should transfer to the Department of Education.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

The main view was that all aspects of education provision should be the responsibility of one Department.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

.....

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

The main concern was the fragmentation of collaboration between education and skills if the functions of the Department were to be split between two different departments.

- Q5. Any other relevant comments.**

.....

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: John Murray (on behalf of Patricia McVeigh)

Branch/Office Name: Higher Education Policy Branch

Branch/Office Location: Adelaide House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —

DP 3

SO 4

EO1 —

EO2 —

AO —

AA —

PS 1

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI).

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

The higher education sector is central to the future development of the economy. The higher education institutions play a critical role in terms of addressing the skill needs of the workforce and developing our knowledge economy through engaging in research and development. Innovation and R&D in particular is a key theme in the Economic Strategy and one to which the higher education sector will be expected to make a significant contribution. Universities will continue to be the dominant source of such activity in the local economy. This is clearly stated in the Higher Education Strategy published by the Department on 24 April.

Higher Education Research Policy Branch (HERPB) is part of Higher Education Division which provides the funding and develops the policy for the higher education sector. It makes sense therefore for the work of the Division as a whole, with a couple of possible exceptions, to transfer to DETI which is the Department with lead responsibility for the economy.

The possible exceptions are funding for initial teacher education for which policy responsibility already rests with the Department of Education (DE) and the Education Maintenance Allowance which is providing financial assistance to young people not yet in higher education. It may be more appropriate for both of these functions to be transferred out of the Division to DE.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

In terms of working with other NI Government Departments, the vast majority of HERPB's dealings are with DETI and InvestNI. We have no liaison whatsoever with DE.

Before my current post in HERPB, I worked previously in Higher Education Division on the policy side. For part of this time (from 1999-2000), Higher Education Division was part of DE before transferring to DFHETE when devolution was first restored. The rationale at that time for moving the functions out of DE was that higher and indeed, further education, were not being given the prominence they required in a Department whose focus was on schools.

In addition, there was much less focus on the economy. Senior officials recognised the potential of the higher education sector to make a significant contribution and it was the considered view that this would not happen whilst the functions remained the responsibility of DE.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

HERPB considers that there is a strong rationale for retaining DEL – since it was first established, it has developed into a well-structured, coherent and dynamic Department with a distinct identity. Despite what some commentators have said in the press, there is a logic to the functions which it covers and they sit together well. For that reason, if dissolution is inevitable which it appears to be, it would be preferable to transfer all/the majority of the functions together to another Department.

HERPB is concerned about the loss of identity which will occur regardless of the Department we transfer to, and despite our preference for a transfer of functions to DETI, we consider that that loss of identity might be felt more acutely in DETI where the acquisition of DEL may be viewed by them more as a takeover rather than a merger between two Departments.

HERPB is also concerned about the additional (and unnecessary) costs (re-branding, stationery web-site etc) and workloads (First Day briefs, Ministerial correspondence, senior staff briefings) which will occur because of dissolution. There are, of course, also the issues of familiarisation with another Department's procedures and ways of working, and developing the necessary internal contacts.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

One member of the branch is currently on a DEL promotion list and is concerned about what will happen to the list when DEL is dissolved.

There is a general concern about location, particularly in relation to a move to DE Headquarters in Bangor.

Staff would welcome an early decision on what is going to be happening to the Department – the uncertainty is very unsettling.

Staff are also concerned that this could be an interim move pending wider departmental restructuring leading to more additional cost, upheaval and potential confusion for stakeholders.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Sheila Rodgers

Branch/Office Name: Higher Education Research Policy

Branch/Office Location: Adelaide House

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 - 1—

DP -2—

S0 -1—

E01 —

E02 -1—

AO —

AA —

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Survey

- Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?**

With the exception of one member, all other staff thought that we should be aligned with DETI.

- Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?**

The areas of work which we serve have no fit with the work of the DE. The view that DETI is our best fit is based on an objective choice, not personal preference. The business areas with whom we work are tied to enhancement of the economy and labour market issues. In practical terms our best fit will be to be aligned with wherever they go and there will be an issue should TPB go one way and Employment Service another. However from the point of view of economy of scale it would be much more logical to keep the Branch as a single entity which goes to DETI.

- Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?**

The wording of the question is ambiguous. We interpreted the term "preference" to relate to the objective view as above.

A number of staff have worked in DE, DETI or both and based on that experience felt that alignment with DETI is much more logical. Staff who had worked previously for DED took the view that there is considerable merit in keeping all labour market related activities under the umbrella of the same Department.

- Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?**

A considerable majority of the staff have concerns about:

1. The fact that the decision to dissolve DEL is based on the apparent need to adhere to a political process rather than a soundly reasoned view of what is best for NI particularly in the current economic climate.
2. The way in which the decision was announced and the uncertainty which has ensued since the announcement in January. There is a feeling among some of being kept in the dark. The decision making process around the future of DEL needs to be more transparent so as to ensure that informed decisions are taken.
3. The priorities of DEL will be diminished as it is divided up.
4. Fragmentation of DEL, and in some cases Divisions, will dilute the necessary cohesiveness and flexibility of managing the end to end products which DEL delivers.

There is a feeling of powerlessness as a result of those concerns highlighted at 1 and 2 and for that reason they do not influence the view as to which Dept. we should be aligned with.

However the concerns at 3 and 4 would strongly influence the view that the Dept should merge as a whole with DETI to form a new Dept.

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

Some staff commented that it was interesting to note that only DETI and DE were included in the questions. There has been conjecture that the Employment Service would be subsumed by the DSD/SSA.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name: Ann Loney

Branch/Office Name: Supplier Services Branch

Branch/Office Location: Waterfront Plaza

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 —1—

DP —2—

S0 —2—

E01 —4—

E02 —7—

AO -18—

AA —3—

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

Proposed Dissolution of the Department Responses by Grade in Tabular Form

Division	Branch Name	Grade 6	Grade 7	DP	SO	EOI	EOII	AO	AA	AD HOC	Total
Employment Service	Banbridge JBO				1	1	6	1	1		10
Employment Service	Beifast JC				1	2	8	2			13
Employment Service	Cookstown JC					1					1
Employment Service	Disability Employment Service		1	3	8	3	3	3	1		22
Employment Service	Enniskillen JBO				1	3	20	16			40
Employment Service	Kilkeel JBO (includes Newcastle)				1	1	4	6			12
Employment Service	Liburn JBO				1	3	6	2			12
Employment Service	Lisnagelvin JC				1	2	6	1	1		11
Employment Service	Magherafelt JBO					2	4	7	1		14
Employment Service	Newry JBO					3	4	3			10
Employment Service	Omagh JBO				1	1	9	9	1		21
Employment Service	Programme Management and Development		2	2	4	1	2	1	1		13
Employment Service	Shaftesbury Square JBO				1	1	4				6
Employment Service	Strabane JC				1	1		1			3
Employment Service	Strategy Planning		1	6	7	4	4	2	1		25
Employment Service	Universal Credit Project Team		1	4		1		1			7
Finance Division	Corporate Governance and Business Planning		1	1		1					3
Finance Division	Financial Planning Branch		1	1	1			1			4
Finance Division	Supplier Services Branch		1	2	2	4	7	18	3		37
Further Education	FE Finance and Funding		1	1	2	2	1	2	1		10
HE Division	Higher Education Finance		1	2		1		1			5
HE Division	Higher Education Policy Branch			3	4						7
HE Division	Higher Education Research Policy		1	2	1		1				5
HE Division	Student Finance Future Policy		1	1	1						3
Higher Education	Higher Education Widening Participation		1	1	2						4
HR & Corporate Services	Facilities Management		1	3	4	11	3	3			25
Human Resources & Corporate Services	Central Management		1	2	1	2	2	1	1		8
Human Resources & Corporate Services	Human Resources		2	2	4	3	3	3	1		18
Human Resources & Corporate Services	ICT & Consultancy Services		1	2	6	3	3	2			14
Skills & Industry	Careers Policy and Strategy		1	2	2	5	1		1		12
Skills & Industry	Careers Service - Unit 03				1	4		1			6
Skills & Industry	Careers Service - Unit 04				1	4		4			9
Skills & Industry	Careers Service - Unit 05				1	4					5
Skills & Industry	Careers Service - Unit 06				1	2		1			4
Skills & Industry	Careers Service - Unit 08					7		3			10
Skills & Industry	Careers Service - Unit 10				1	5		2			8
Skills & Industry	Careers Service - Unit 11					5	1	4			10
Skills & Industry	Careers Service - Unit 12					6		1			7
Skills & Industry	Careers Service Operations		1	3	1	1	1	1			8



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 4

List of Witnesses

List of Witnesses

Action for Hearing Loss	Ms Claire Lavery Mr Alan McClure Ms Nicola Strahan Ms Jackie White
Alternative Education Providers	Ms Louise Brennan Mr Conor Kennedy Ms Caroline Rutherford
CBI	Mr Brian McAreavey Mr Mike Mullan Mr Nigel Smyth
Colleges Northern Ireland	Mr Gerard Campbell Mr Joe Martin Mr Trevor Neilands
Disability Action	Ms Monica Wilson
Employment Services Board	Mr Tom Mervyn Mr John Simpson
FALNI	Mr Alan Carr Mr Colin Neilands Mrs Ann Osbourne
Include Youth	Ms Koulla Yiasouma Ms Sara Boyce
Institute of Directors	Ms Linda Brown Ms Joanne Stuart
Invest NI	Mr Mark Ennis Ms Tracey Meharg
Labour Relations Agency	Ms Penny Holloway Mr Jim McCusker
Law Centre NI	Ms Jennifer Greenfield Ms Ursula O'Hare
Mencap	Ms Liz Aiken Ms Joanne McDonald Ms Cathy McCloskey Ms Jenny Ruddy
NI Schools Careers Association	Ms Fiona Browne Ms Hilary Harbinson Ms Cathy Moore
NIACRO	Mr Pat Conway Mr Gareth Eannetta
NIPSA	Mr Thomas McKillop Mr Tony McMullan Mr Jack Thornbury

Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills	Dr Bill McGinnis
Open College Network	Mr Brendan Clarke Ms Patricia Short
Orchardville Society	Ms Margaret Haddock
Parkanaur College	Ms Orla Corrigan Mr Tom Sullivan
Queen's University, Belfast	Professor Tony Gallagher Professor Sir Peter Gregson
St Mary's University College	Professor Peter Finn
Stranmillis University College	Dr Anne Heaslett
University and College Union	Mr George Dunn Mr Mike Larkin Ms Julie Williams-Nash
University of Ulster	Professor Richard Barnett



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 5

Other Papers

Contents

1. 26 January 2012 - Consultation letter on the Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning issued to key stakeholders.
2. 26 January 2012 - List of stakeholders included in the initial Committee consultation.
3. 16 February 2012 - Consultation letter on the Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning issued to additional list of key stakeholders.
4. 16 February 2012 - List of additional stakeholders consulted.
5. 25 April 2012 - Consultation letter for Department for Employment and Learning Staff.
6. 25 April 2012 - Department for Employment and Learning staff survey on the Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning.
7. 15 February 2012 - Letter from the Committee to the First and deputy First Ministers requesting clarification on the proposed dissolution of the Department.
8. 24 February 2012 - Response from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to the Committee's correspondence of 15 February 2012.
9. 8 March 2012 - Research and Information Service Briefing Paper on the Rationale for Departmental Re-organisation and Location of DEL Principal Activities in Similar Government Departments.

26 January 2012 - Consultation letter on the Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning issued to key stakeholders



**Basil McCrea MLA, Chairperson
Committee for Employment and Learning**

26 January 2012

Dear Sir/Madam

Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

The Committee for Employment and Learning agreed at its meeting on 25 January 2012 that members would welcome comments from its key stakeholders on the proposed dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

The Committee would appreciate your response to the following questions :-

1. Given the functions and purpose of your organisation and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?
2. Why do you take the view expressed at 1 above?
3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?
4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?
5. Any other relevant comments.

I should be grateful if you would respond by 9 February 2012.

Yours sincerely,

Basil McCrea MLA

Chairperson

Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 283, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX
Telephone: (028) 9052 1448 Fax: (028) 9052 1433
E-mail: cel@niassembly.gov.uk

26 January 2012 - List of stakeholders included in the initial Committee consultation

- Action for Hearing Loss
- Advice NI
- Alliance of Sector Skills Council
- Alternative Education Providers
- Barnardos
- Belfast City Council
- CBI
- Colleges NI
- Construction Employers Federation
- Disability Action
- Employment Services Board
- Engineering Employers Federation
- FALNI
- FSB
- General Teaching Council (NI)
- Include Youth
- Institute of Directors
- Invest NI
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions - NI
- Labour Relations Agency
- Law Centre NI
- Mencap
- National Union of Students – Union of Students in Ireland
- NI Schools Careers Association
- NI Skills Adviser
- NIACRO
- NICCY
- NICEM
- NICVA
- NIPSA
- NOW
- Ofqual
- Open College Network NI
- Open University
- Orchardville Society
- Princes Trust
- Queen's University, Belfast
- Rathbone
- St Mary's University College
- Stepping Stones
- Stranmillis University College
- The Greater Shankhill Partnership
- Thomas Doran Trust/ Parkanaur College
- U3A
- U4D
- Ulster Teachers Union
- University Colleges Union
- University of Ulster
- VOYPIC
- Youth Council NI

16 February 2012 - Consultation letter on the Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning issued to additional list of key stakeholders



**Basil McCrea MLA, Chairperson
Committee for Employment and Learning**

16 February 2012

Dear Sir/Madam

Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

The Committee for Employment and Learning agreed at its meeting on 25 January 2012 that members would welcome comments from its key stakeholders on the proposed dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

The Committee would appreciate your response to the following questions :-

1. Given the functions and purpose of your organisation and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?
2. Why do you take the view expressed at 1 above?
3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?
4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?
5. Any other relevant comments.

**I should be grateful if you would respond by 1 March 2012.
Responses can be sent via email to cel@niassembly.gov.uk**

Yours sincerely,

Basil McCrea MLA

Chairperson

Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 283, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX
Telephone: (028) 9052 1448 Fax: (028) 9052 1433
E-mail: cel@niassembly.gov.uk

16 February 2012 - List of additional stakeholders consulted

- Action for Children
- Bryson Charitable Group
- Chamber of Commerce
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Corpus Christie Youth Centre
- Economic Reform Group
- FITNI
- Gerry Rogan Initiative Trust
- Glastry College
- Inter Board Youth Panel
- Matrix
- NICVA
- North Down Training Limited
- Northern Ireland Youth Forum
- Opportunity Youth
- RNIB NI
- The Bytes Project
- The Prince's Trust
- Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster
- Youth Action NI
- Youth Council for Northern Ireland
- Youth Link NI
- Law Centre NI

25 April 2012 - Consultation letter for Department for Employment and Learning Staff



**Basil McCrea MLA, Chairperson
Committee for Employment and Learning**

25 April 2012

Dear Sir/Madam

Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

The Committee for Employment and Learning agreed at its meeting on [25 April 2012] that members would welcome comments from its present staff on the proposed dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning

The Committee would appreciate your response to the following questions :-

1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?
2. Why do you take the view expressed at 1 above?
3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?
4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?
5. Any other relevant comments.

I should be grateful if you would respond by 3 May 2012.

Yours sincerely,

Basil McCrea MLA
Chairperson

Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 283, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX
Telephone: (028) 9052 1448 Fax: (028) 9052 1433
E-mail: cel@niassembly.gov.uk

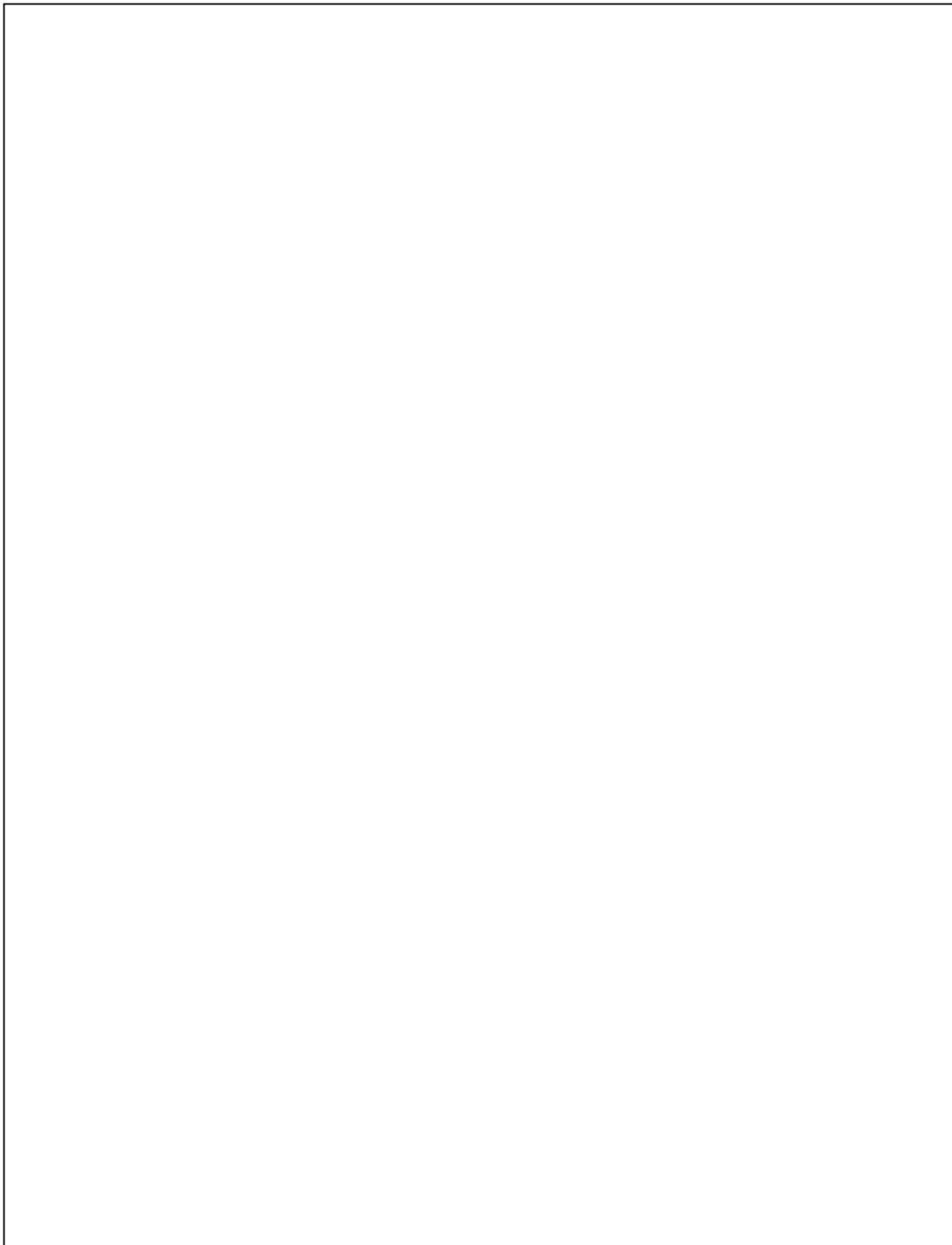
25 April 2012 - Department for Employment and Learning staff survey on the Proposed Dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning



**PROPOSED DISSOLUTION OF THE
DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT
AND LEARNING**

STAFF SURVEY

Q1. Given the functions and purpose of your job role, and the functions and purposes of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Education, with which Department do you think your sector should be aligned?



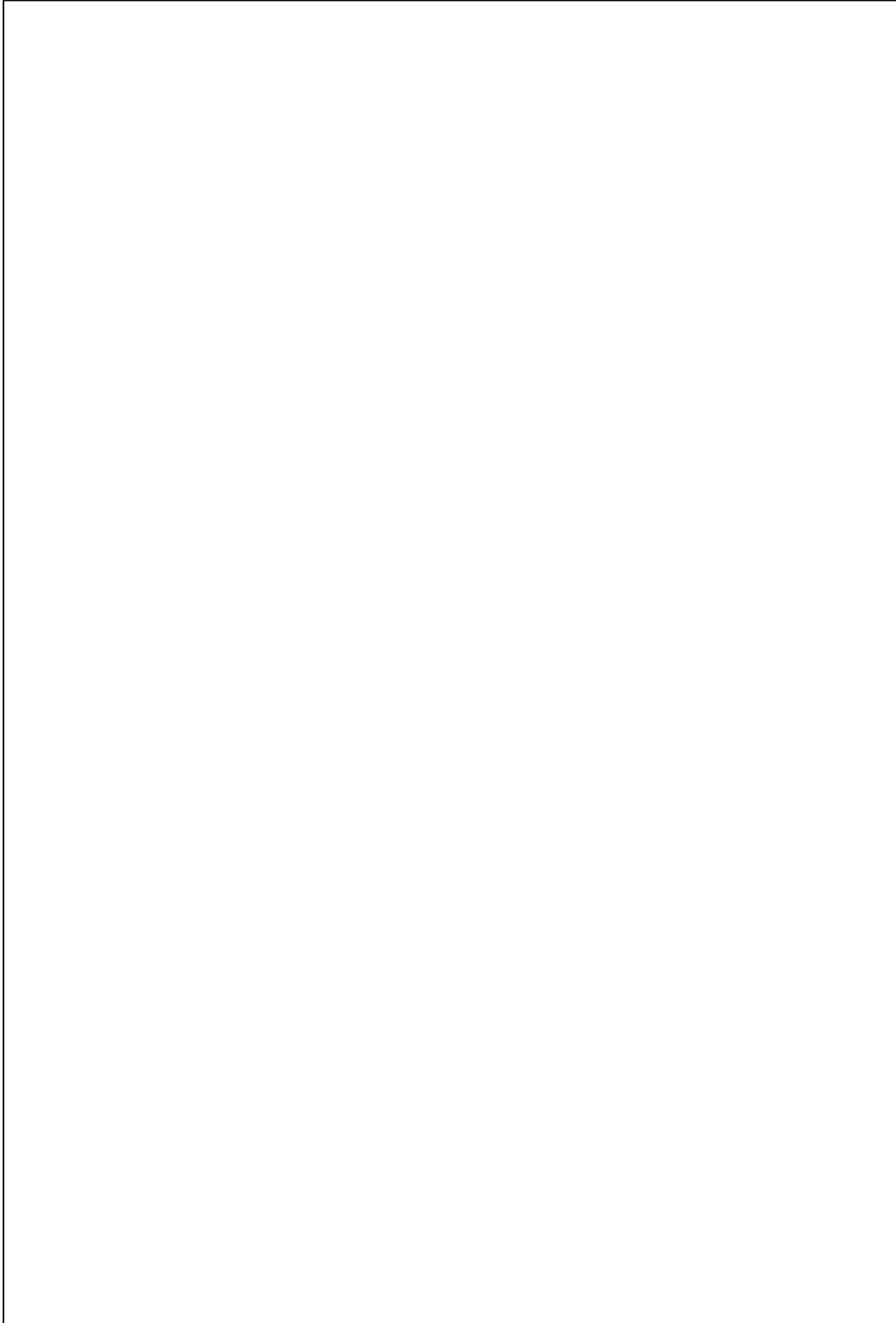
Q2. Why do you take the view expressed at Q1 above?



Q3. Are there any experiences from the past which influence your preference, if so, please specify?

Q4. What are your concerns, if any, about the dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning and how do these concerns influence your preference for departmental alignment if the Department is abolished?

Q5. Any other relevant comments.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for providing comments or responses to the question above.

Completed by Head of Branch / Office Manager:

Name:

Branch/Office Name:

Branch/Office Location:

Number and grades of staff involved in this feedback exercise:

G7 -----
DP -----
SO -----
EO1 -----
EO2 -----
AO -----
AA -----

Please return to: john.mckeown@delni.gov.uk by close of play Monday 30 April 2012.

15 February 2012 - Letter from the Committee to the First Minister and deputy First Minister requesting clarification on the proposed dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning



Basil McCrea MLA, Chairperson
Committee for Employment and Learning

15 February 2012

Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA & Martin McGuinness MP MLA
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Stormont Castle
Ballymiscaw,
Stormont
BT4 3TT

Dear Peter and Martin

At its meeting today, the Committee for Employment and Learning agreed that I should write to you to request clarification on the proposed dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning. The Committee would be grateful for information on the likely time scale for the relevant legislation to be introduced to abolish DEL and to transfer the functions it currently exercises to other departments. The Committee would also appreciate an indication of the date when this legislation will be introduced to the Assembly.

The Committee is currently undertaking its own consultation with key stakeholders with the intention of reporting on their views for the most appropriate transfer of the existing functions of DEL to other departments. The Committee would value information on the outcome of any consultation which you have carried out to add to its consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Basil McCrea MLA
Chairperson

Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 283, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX
Telephone: (028) 9052 1448 Fax: (028) 9052 1433
E-mail: cel@niassembly.gov.uk

24 February 2012 - Response from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to the Committee's correspondence of 15 February 2012



Office of the
**First Minister and
Deputy First Minister**

Stormont Castle
BELFAST
BT4 3TT

TEL: 028 9037 8158
FAX: 028 9037 8040
e-mail: ps.ministers@ofmdfmini.gov.uk

Mr Basil McCrea MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 283, Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Our Ref: COR/103/12

24 February 2012

Dear Mr McCrea

Thank you for your letter of 15 February regarding a request for clarification on the proposed dissolution of the Department for Employment and Learning.

Your correspondence is currently under consideration.

Yours sincerely

AP

ELIZABETH CROMIE
Correspondence Secretary

8 March 2012 - Research and Information Service Briefing Paper on
the Rationale for Departmental Re-organisation and Location of DEL
Principal Activities in Similar Government Departments.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Library Service Briefing Paper

08 March 2012

NIAR 134-2012

Eóin Murphy

Rationale for Departmental Reorganisation and Location of DEL Principal Activities in Similar Government Departments

1. Introduction

The following paper provides information on the reasons cited for Departmental reorganisation in a number of regional and national governments. In order to ensure the relevancy with regards to the proposed reorganisation of the Department for Employment and Learning, the paper will be focused on government departments with a similar role.

In addition, the paper includes a table detailing where the principal activities of the Department for Employment and Learning lie in other national and regional governments.

Table 1: Examples of Rationale for reorganisation of Government Departments - UK and ROI

Department Name	Region	Original Department	Rationale for Change
Department of Work and Pensions (2001)	United Kingdom	Functions previously based in two departments - Department of Social Security and the Department for Education and Employment.	Main reason was the need to create stronger, more integrated active labour market policies. In order to do this it was necessary to <i>“combat the long standing separation of: the social security system, coping with non-working people, both those of working age and pensioners and run by the Department of Social Security; and the employment advice and placement services and benefits for working-age people with qualifying employment records run by the employment divisions of the Department for Education and Employment (DEE).”</i> ¹
Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (2007)	United Kingdom	Functions previously based in two Departments - Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Trade and Industry.	Development of an “integrated education ministry” - DIUS was given a strong ‘innovation’ and productivity focus to: <i>“provide a strong, integrated, permanent voice across Government for effective investment in research, science, enterprise and skills, embedding these into the heart of the government’s competitiveness strategy”</i> . This idea reflected two themes of Brown’s tenure as Chancellor of the Exchequer by marrying universities more closely to the economy in hopes of generating greater commercialization of research and innovation in the higher education sector and combating the UK’s long-standing skills and productivity deficiencies. ²
Department for Employment and Learning (2001)	Northern Ireland	Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment (DHFETE) - no change in function.	The name change was for two main reasons - as stated by the then Minister Sean Farren - <i>“Its undue length causes practical problems and its acronym, DHFETE, is unfortunate.”</i> ³
Department of Education and Skills (2010)	Republic of Ireland	Previously known as the Department of Education and Science	Reorganised as a result of focus on job development: As stated by Taoiseach Brian Cowen: <i>“Responsibility for skills and training policy is being re-allocated to the Department of Education and Science, which will become the Department of Education and Skills. In addition to the work of the expert skills group, responsibility will transfer for the training activities of FÁS, which will therefore be aligned more closely with the further education and training activities of the VECs, the institutes of technology and programmes such as Youthreach.”</i> ⁴

Department Name	Region	Original Department	Rationale for Change
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (2010)	Republic of Ireland	Previously the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Reorganised as a result of focus on Job development with funding for the programme for research in third level institutions transferred to the Dept. The intention was to: <i>"help to bring together a streamlined and focused programme of funding of research and development aligned with the objectives of enterprise policy."</i> ⁵
Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (May 2011)	Scotland	previously Finance and Sustainable Growth	In 2011 following the election of the SNP majority government Employment was added to the portfolio of the Finance and Sustainable Growth Cabinet Secretary. Added as a result of the cited need to continue <i>"the trend of driving down the unemployment rate will be a key feature of this Administration."</i> ⁶
Education and Life Long Learning (May 2007)	Scotland	Previously comprised two departments - Enterprise and Life Long Learning; and Education and Young People	As part of an overall redevelopment of the Scottish Government Departments (a reduction from 9 to 6). It was designed to deliver smaller and more effective government. As stated by Alex Salmond, First Minister, regarding the creation of the Department for Education and Lifelong Learning: <i>"There will be clear benefits from bringing together responsibility for our universities and colleges with responsibility for the rest of the education system."</i> ⁷
Education and Skills (May 2011)	Wales	Previously Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills	Department renamed but remains largely the same. Minister to <i>"focus on mainstream education from early years to Higher Education."</i> Additional responsibility in two areas - looking after devolved interests in respect of welfare reform and responsibility for Welsh language as a result of education role in its promotion. ⁸
Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (2007)	Wales	Previously Education and Lifelong Learning	Same functions as previous title. Review of announcement on the 6th June 2007 could find no reasons for change cited. The Committee may wish to note that this Department underwent three title changes in 2007 and three different Ministers. No reasons could be identified for the reshuffles. ⁹
Education and Lifelong Learning (2000)	Wales	Previously Education and Training; and Education and Children	Pre-16 and post 16 education departments amalgamated. Review of announcement by the Welsh First Minister on the 17 October 2000 found no reason cited for the restructuring. ¹⁰

Table 2: Location of DEL Principal Activities in other National and Regional Governments¹¹

DEL Principal Activities¹²	United Kingdom	Republic of Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Higher Education	Department of Business, Innovation and Skills	Department of Education and Skills	Education and Training	Education and Skills
Further education	Department of Business, Innovation and Skills	Department of Education and Skills	Education and Training	Education and Skills
Adult education	Department of Business, Innovation and Skills	Department of Education and Skills	Education and Training	Education and Skills
Student support	Department of Business, Innovation and Skills	Department of Education and Skills	Education and Training	Education and Skills
Advisory services, such as the Careers Service	Department of Work and Pensions	Department of Social Protection (Transferred January 2012)	Education and Training	Education and Skills
Training and employment programmes (such as Steps to Work, Pathways to Work and Apprenticeships NI)	Department of Work and Pensions	Department of Social Protection (Transferred January 2012)	Education and Training	Education and Skills
Services to employers	Department of Business, Innovation and Skills	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	Business and Industry	Business and Economy
Development and implementation of policies and legislation to promote effective employment relations and best practice in the workplace	Department of Business, Innovation and Skills	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	Business and Industry	Business and Economy

References:

(Endnotes)

- 1 London School of Economics, May 2010, Making and Breaking Whitehall Departments
- 2 Ibid
- 3 Northern Ireland Assembly Official Report 26 March 2000 <http://archive.niassembly.gov.uk/record/reports/010326.htm>
- 4 Speech by the Taoiseach, Mr Brian Cowen, TD, Dáil Éireann, Nomination of Members of Government, 23rd March, 2010 http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Government_Press_Office/Taoiseach's%20Speeches%202010/Speech_by_the_Taoiseach,_Mr_Brian_Cowen,_TD,_Dáil_Éireann,_Nomination_of_Members_of_Government,_23rd_March,_2010.html
- 5 Ibid
- 6 Scottish Parliament, Official Report 17 May 2007 Ministers and Junior Ministers <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=4724>
- 7 Scottish Parliament, Official Report 25 May 2011 Ministers, Junior Ministers and Law Officers <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=6320>
- 8 National Assembly for Wales, Official Report 18 May 2011 Statement by the First Minister on his Cabinet Appointments <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber-fourth-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=216148&ds=5/2011>
- 9 National Assembly for Wales, Official Report 6 June 2007 Statement on the Cabinet <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-third-assembly/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=52191&ds=6/2007>
- 10 National Assembly for Wales, Official Report 17 October 2000 Statement on the Government of Wales's Cabinet <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-first-assembly/bus-chamber-first-assembly/bus-chamber-first-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=9183&ds=10/2000>
- 11 Based upon a review of Governmental websites and published information regarding roles of Departments
- 12 Identified via the DEL Annual Report 2010/11 – please note, as this covers “Principal Activities” it may not include all of DEL's activities



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