

Committee for Employment and Learning Visit Report

Appleby Trust Print Room, Armagh, 14 May 2014

Background

As part of its Inquiry into Post School Special Educational Need Provision in Northern Ireland the Committee for Employment and Learning agreed, to go on a study visit to The Appleby Trust Print Room, Armagh.

Attendees

The following Committee Members attended:

Mr Robin Swann MLA, Chairperson
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Ms Bronwyn McGahan MLA

Mrs Cathie White - Clerk to the Committee for Employment and Learning
Mr Vincent Gribbin – Assistant Clerk to the Committee for Employment and Learning

Appleby representatives:

Thomas O'Hanlon, Board Member
Elaine Leonard, Manager
Brenda Fox, Project Coordinator

Meeting

On arrival the Committee had an informal discussion with the representatives of Appleby Trust regarding their work and the issues facing individuals with learning difficulties who are transitioning from school. The Committee was given a tour of the facilities.

Issues raised

- Appleby Trust pointed out that they have received good support from DHSSPS regarding the funding of their projects but also pointed out that its Asperger's Project is solely funded by DEL even though it provides for individuals who may otherwise be the responsibility of Health.

- The staff felt that a list of all services/projects/activities available in the local area for young people should be collated and be given to parents so they can consider where they want their child to go. At present parents do not know what is available for their children and only know about what they get offered or what they find out about themselves.
- Appleby Trust noted that they had been working in Armagh for 16 years and currently offer 165 places across all their projects and that individuals are referred to their services by social workers.
- The differences between council and trust boundaries are a major issue for those outside the greater Belfast area.
- It is very difficult to keep up with the rigorous processes of ESF grants.
- Appleby Trust are considering how they can extend their good practice across NI by franchising their model.
- There was recognition that there is a gap in services for those individuals who do not meet the criteria for day care (profound learning difficulties, complex health needs or challenging behaviour) and those who are able to take up placements and as it becomes more difficult to get into day care then the gap grows.
- There is a need for DEL and DHSSPS to coordinate and work together more.
- The aims and objectives of these programmes and the work that DEL funds is to aim for paid employment but only a small percentage will reach this.