

Committee for Employment and Learning Visit Report

Springvale Employment and Learning Solutions, Belfast

5 November 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 Springvale Employment and Learning Solutions. The visit was agreed by the Committee to see the post school SEN training provision carried out by Springvale.

Attendees

The following Committee Members attended:

Mr Robin Swann MLA, Chairperson
Mr Tom Buchanan MLA, Deputy Chairperson
Mr Phil Flanagan MLA
Mr David Hilditch MLA
Ms Anna Lo MLA
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

Springvale representatives:

Aidan Sloane, Chief Executive Officer
Bill Atkinson, Head of Operations
Mary McGurk, Head of Development
Karen Gilgunn, Engagement Consultant

Meeting

On arrival at Springvale's Springfield Road premises the Committee received a presentation from Mr Sloane on the work of Springvale and in particular on the programmes relating to individuals with learning disabilities on leaving full-time education. The presentation is at annex A.

The Committee was given a tour of the facilities and met with students on the programmes.

Issues raised

- The Springvale Post 18 Transition programme works in partnership with a number of special schools in the Belfast Area. The transition process begins at age 14, the pupils at special schools come to Springvale as part of their school week. During this time they get a chance to see what is on offer and what they are interested in before leaving school.
- Springvale work with over 200 pupils on day release from special schools every year as part of their transitions programme.
- The schools currently fund this from their entitlement framework funding but have to top it up from other school money.
- The service provided is in close consultation with the schools and can be tailored to the individual rather than the individual having to fit round the course.
- This is the first year of the post 18 course and they are piloting it with 23 students and hope to double this next year.
- Springvale look to ensure that there is progression in the training and that there needs to be more choice of courses on offer.
- Transition process is starting now (November 2014) for pupils leaving special School in June 2015. The schools set up jobs fares etc. as part of this.
- Some referrals come from the Health Trust via social workers but all the funding comes from DEL.