



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Employment and Learning

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

The Prince's Trust

26 September 2012

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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**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 Phil Flanagan  
Mr Chris Lyttle  
Mr Fra McCann  
Mr Pat Ramsey

**Witnesses:**

Ms Susie Cuthill	The Prince's Trust
Mr Mark Dougan	The Prince's Trust
Ms Ashleigh Murray	The Prince's Trust

**The Chairperson:** We have Mark Dougan, who is head of public sector partnerships at the Prince's Trust Northern Ireland; Susie, who is a young ambassador; and Ashleigh, who is also a young ambassador. We have already heard from Ashleigh. I thought that what you said was really great, so really well done. You will also be aware that I am wearing my little badge — just for the record.

Mark, are you going to lead off?

**Mr Mark Dougan (The Prince's Trust):** I thank members of the Committee for the opportunity to present to you today. I am coming from two points of view: one is from the employment point of view, regarding where Ashleigh has gone after going through a Prince's Trust programme; and the other one is from an enterprise point of view — what if there is not a job there? You go down the route of becoming self-employed.

One of the things that struck me over the past couple of weeks is the new figures on the number of young people not in education, training or employment, and how those figures have shot up, particularly over the past year — in fact, over the past quarter — to 54,000. When I looked at figures over the past five years, we are looking at just short of a 60% increase in the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Northern Ireland. The Prince's Trust supported around 3,200 young people last year, and we plan to increase that to 5,000 young people, although that will be according to need as well. We are very good at getting positive outcomes for young people and moving them into education, particularly 13- to 16-year-olds, who are in the last two years of compulsory education and may be at risk of disengaging. We may move them into vocational training, whereas, before, they have not been in any kind of structured training at all. The chief goal is to move young people into employment.

We have noticed that, with the range of programmes that we have available at the minute, there is increasingly a group of young people at the bottom end who are far removed from the workplace; young people who, for want of a better definition, have quite chaotic lives and are marginalised in society. They are termed as priority offenders by the PSNI. The reducing offending team has two goals for those young people: either to divert them or to charge them. We have merged with another charity in the UK, Fairbridge, and we are hoping to introduce the Fairbridge programme in Belfast in March 2013 as part of a restructure that the Prince's Trust has been going through. We know that, in the past, we have been very good at delivery, and we are very good at achieving positive outcomes. However, we have seen the employment outcomes falling away, and we want to increase those. Therefore, we are now going to focus on —

**The Chairperson:** Are you saying that you have started to see a struggle in getting people placed?

**Mr Dougan:** It has been difficult over the past couple of years. That having been said, I listed in the paper that I sent through to the Committee that our Get into programme, which is a four-week programme, is achieving 39% of young people on it going into employment. We rely very heavily on employers to give young people work placements and have potential jobs at the end of the day. From our point of view in running such a programme, it is morally not right for us to put a young person through the programme if there are genuinely no job opportunities at the end of the day. We always look for employers who potentially have a job to give, which is why I am delighted to see the announcement of today's subsidy scheme.

As regards the Fairbridge programme, we have selected premises in Belfast, and we are going to run it out of the Prince's Trust centre. A combination of our programmes will be available in the centre, including the Fairbridge programme, which will cater for those young people who are far removed from the job market. It will be in Weavers Court, which is behind the Europa bus station. We selected that location because it is close to transport links, and it means that young people coming into the city do not have to get two buses to attend a programme. That does not mean to say that we are not going to be running all our other programmes in communities across Northern Ireland; that will continue. The Fairbridge programme will cater for 200 young people each year, and those are the hardest-to-reach young people. I thought that it would be useful to give you an update on that.

As I said earlier, we are being driven by our restructure. We are focusing very much on outreach: on getting more of the right young people that need our support; and on outcomes, which means getting better outcomes for young people, particularly through employment. For many years, the Prince's Trust has been working in partnership with over 70 schools in education other than at school learning centres across Northern Ireland. From my own neck of the woods, I can think of Lismore Comprehensive School and Brownlow Integrated College in Craigavon. It has been working with all six FE colleges. It runs the Team programme from 16 locations, and the colleges are increasing that all the time. We are delighted that the Fire Service has just agreed to run the first Team programme that it has ever run in Northern Ireland, and that is a fantastic move. That came on the back of a gentleman called Mark Fell becoming a secondee on our programme. Mark was so impressed by the really disadvantaged young people whom we were reaching that he sold it back in-house to Dale Ashford, his senior, that those were the kind of young people whom they needed to be targeting. That is a particularly positive development.

We have been working with youth clubs, the youth justice system, the PSNI and the Probation Board. Very importantly, we have been working with our peers in the voluntary and community sector: we have Include Youth, Opportunity Youth, Rathbone, and so on. We work with all those groups. Sometimes that is missed by people on the outside, who do not realise how well the voluntary sector's referrals system is working.

Very importantly as well, we have always worked well with employers. Most recently, we are working with Moy Park, Dale Farm and Dunbia in a programme that we call Get into Food Processing. The challenge for us comes because Moy Park has said that young people do not want to work with it because plucking chickens is not sexy. It is as simple as that. The challenge for us came when those companies said that if we can introduce young people to them through two weeks' work experience and prep them beforehand, they have jobs there for them. Those jobs are very well paid, at £26,000 or thereabouts a year. We started running that programme, the first of which will start in two weeks' time. That is our challenge.

The other programme that we are running is with Marks and Spencer and TK Maxx. Interestingly, that programme will be based on results. We have taken 16 young people on to that programme, and

Marks and Spencer is saying that it will pay us £800 a young person, if that young person completes the programme successfully. Our retention rate on our programmes is extremely high. It is well over 90% across the programmes, so we are very confident that we can meet that challenge. It is very exciting that Marks and Spencer and TK Maxx are signing up to that. That is just the tip of the iceberg in a long list of employers that have traditionally worked for the trust. They do so because it ticks their social responsibility box. They also trust what we are doing, and it makes a difference when young people come to them and say that they have been through a Prince's Trust programme, as Ashleigh will tell you later.

I want now to introduce Ashleigh. You all heard her earlier this morning, but this is a more intimate setting, and Ashleigh can give you a bit of background about her time on a Prince's Trust programme and talk about where she is now.

**The Chairperson:** Are we going to hear from Susie as well?

**Mr Dougan:** You are indeed. That is coming up next.

**The Chairperson:** I was just checking.

**Mr Dougan:** I am taking a break for a second.

**Ms Ashleigh Murray (The Prince's Trust):** I left school with no qualifications: I had a D, a double E and an F. I went from job to job and, then, in 2011, I heard about the Prince's Trust and went for a four-week course called Get into Social Care. We did a lot of classroom-based work and a week out in a home called SixEleven Ormeau Road, looking after people with learning disabilities. Not a lot of employers were willing to take us on because we were young people from not-so-good backgrounds. That needs to be looked into. I ended up with a European care certificate and my first aid qualifications. I had applied for and been refused a job four times, but the employer was more than willing to take me on when it found out that I had done the Prince's Trust programme.

**The Chairperson:** Was that because you had done the Prince's Trust programme or because you had gained those certificates?

**Ms Murray:** I think that it was because of the link with the Prince's Trust and the fact that the employer knew that we were trying to better ourselves and move up in the world. We know that we have made mistakes, but we are willing to put them right.

**The Chairperson:** Fra has indicated that he wishes to ask a question, but I will let Ashleigh finish her wee bit. I am quite happy for this to be interactive and for us to have a chat. We do not want to interrupt your flow. Rather than gloss over it, it would be useful to hear about your background, in as far as you feel comfortable telling us. You said that you came from a more difficult background.

**Ms Murray:** Do you want to know?

**The Chairperson:** Tell us about the barriers that you faced. You almost glossed over it, but that is the crux of this. You have done very well to overcome what might not have been the best of circumstances earlier on.

**Ms Murray:** I was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder at the age of five or six. That hindered not only my high school career but my primary school career. Owing to sexual abuse by a neighbour, I moved from Antrim to Belfast. My father was in the Prison Service for many years, and we moved house around 14 times. We lived in safe houses. He was quite depressed and had very bad mental health problems, and he ended up taking his own life. I used to look after him and care for him. He hanged himself in 2010. Six months before that, I had had a miscarriage. I was homeless and was living in a hostel with people who were on heroin and cocaine, and things like that. Obstacles were put in my way that I thought that I could not bypass, but I did, in the end.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much, Ashleigh, for telling us that. I think that it is important for people to realise the really difficult issues.

**Ms Murray:** I understand.

**The Chairperson:** I really do appreciate that. I do not want to labour on what is a difficult situation. I would like to hear now about the positive bit: how you have come forward and how things perhaps started to look a wee bit better for you.

**Ms Murray:** I had given up looking for a job, to be honest. I had been looking for around a year and a half. Then, about a month after my daddy died, I went to London. I had had enough and thought, "I'm not having this." I went to London to work as a nanny. I worked Monday to Friday, 7.00 am to 7.00 pm, for £100 a week. Then, I worked from 7.00 pm to 2.00 am in a bar, and I got around £6 an hour for that. Once I came back, I heard about the Prince's Trust. I got in touch with it and did the course. I went on to do a counselling course. I have my level 2 introduction to counselling, European care certificate, first aid qualifications and, in my workplace, I continue training weekly, on things such as abuse in the home and general care for elderly people. I am constantly working my way up with my qualifications and adding to them. It is going really well.

**The Chairperson:** Brilliant. That is really, really good. We will take a couple of questions now.

**Mr F McCann:** Like you, Chair, I commend Ashleigh for speaking this morning and sharing with us her life. It is important to recognise that social care services have long hours and can be very difficult at times. Moving on from that into further employment was a key objective of Ashleigh's, and she is to be commended for that, along with anybody who has worked through it. It highlights, again, something that I have raised in Committee on a number of occasions, and that is the whole policy for NEETs and where you fit into that. I do not live that far from Weavers Court; I live on the Falls and represent the area. There are some serious, serious problems of offending in that area.

One thing that concerns me is that 36,000 young people left school without any qualifications. How do we, or you, tap into that? Is information supplied that allows you to approach young people to try to give them the opportunity to move on? However, sometimes they fall off the edge —

**The Chairperson:** We will take that particular point. You have the floor and can come back in. Mark might just want to talk about Weavers Court and how the Prince's Trust hooks up with the people who are falling off the edge.

**Mr Dougan:** Fra has raised a good point about connectedness and being able to, if you like, identify those young people who potentially are going to fall off the edge. The Careers Service has a role to play, and it is about the connectedness of groups like ours with schools.

We run the xl programme, which caters for young people in schools between the ages of 13 and 16. It works with the biggest group of young people from our 3,200; last year, that group had 1,300 young people. The programme targets young people who are potentially going to disengage from education. We operate the programme in partnership with the schools. A teacher becomes an xl adviser, and we train that person to work with young people on an individual basis. It is hugely successful. In fact, I talked to my colleagues before I came here today, and they told me that they are sitting at a success rate of 95% of 1,300 young people re-engaging with education at that level.

However, we could do a lot more. There is a lot for which we do not have the resources to cover. With Weavers Court, we made a very conscious decision to put the programme in that part of the town, more because of the transport links, but also because it is becoming more neutral. However, that is never to take away from our programmes that are working out in the community. In fact, we are looking at the e3 centre on the Springfield Road to run our Team programme. That would take us to 17 locations, which is a positive development in west Belfast, Fra.

**The Chairperson:** I will hold this here, because we will come back to that at the end. Pat, you indicated that you have a question. We have Ashleigh here in front of us if people have any particular questions for her about what she thought about the programme, and all that sort of stuff.

**Mr F McCann:** I have one further point.

Although you got a job through the placement, Ashleigh, I know a number of young people who did the same thing and the same social care thing, and it is a very difficult job with very long hours.

**Ms Murray:** Twelve-hour days — 8.00 am to 8.00 pm, every day.

**The Chairperson:** I am absolutely with you on that point, Fra. I was amazed when Ashleigh was talking about the hours that she was putting in when she was trying to get a job. People sometimes worry about commitment and what they are going to do. There is a twofold message there: first, that it is not an easy option; and secondly, that getting skills and training is helpful in moving you to that point. You are working really long hours, so your point is well made.

**Mr F McCann:** That is done for little pay.

**The Chairperson:** I do not know whether you expect me to disagree with you, but I agree absolutely. I am amazed. I think that it is tremendous that Ashleigh has gone off and done all this, as other people will have done as well. That needs to be recognised. Life was not so good, and there was not a lot of help, and Ashleigh got herself at least on a path that she feels happy with. Pat, did you want to come in just on the issue of Ashleigh?

**Mr P Ramsey:** First, it was a very personal and powerful testimony. I am sure that if your father were alive today, he would be very proud of you.

We have heard from Mark about the Fairbridge programme, but one would imagine that you were the most vulnerable at one stage. What was the trigger that enabled you to become the very competent and confident young woman that you are now?

**Ms Murray:** I have always been confident, although I think that I put on the confidence when I was younger. I hid a lot of things and I learned from that. I just got sick of sitting in the house doing nothing, and I thought, "I have to do something." I am not the university type. That is not for me at all, but I had to do something, so I thought that I would go and do this course. To be honest, I did not think that I was going to like it. I did not think that I would stick to it because it was just something that I had seen in a newspaper, but once I got there, it completely changed my life. It was brilliant.

**Mr Douglas:** Again, Ashleigh, I heard you speak this morning, and it was very impressive. You could probably do your own chat show. *[Laughter.]* It was a tremendous testimony from you. My point is similar to Pat's: what was the most important aspect of your relationship with the Prince's Trust? I have known a lot of Ashleighs in my area, and I wonder how they get into the system. The important question is how did they keep you in? Was it through personal linkages, support mentoring or whatever? I know that the course is all important, but it is much more than that.

**Ms Murray:** It was more about the support that they showed, even after the course. They were on the phone the next day and the next week, phoning to see whether I had any problems. I was lucky enough to get a job before the course had ended, but they were constantly asking how the job was going and whether I wanted to do anything to further myself. They were seeing how I was mental health-wise. When you walk in, it feels like home. That sounds so daft, but going from having nothing to having that support system in place and having somebody there for you 24/7 is fantastic. It is so wonderful to see.

**The Chairperson:** Somebody's device is on in 3G mode, and it is affecting the recording.

**Mr Lyttle:** There is no 3G on mine, Chair.

**The Chairperson:** I am switching mine off in case it is me. It seems to have gone away, anyway.

OK, Ashleigh, we will bring you back in and have a wee bit more of a chat in a minute, but we will go back to Mark for the presentation.

**Mr Dougan:** As Ashleigh said, she was on our Get into programme, which is for employability. It is for getting young people into jobs at the end of the day. As I said earlier, it is an individual programme, with 39% positive outcomes into employment, because of those relationships with employers, and so on.

However, there is an alternative way for young people, and that is to set up in business for themselves. The Prince's Trust is traditionally known for its enterprise programme, but that is a small part of what we do across a range of programmes. The enterprise programme has been very successful down the years. Indeed, it has been operating for upwards of 25 years in Northern Ireland.

I put a little piece about Conor Daykin from Tasty Foods Cuisine in the paper. Conor jokingly says that when he started off, he had two sauces: gravy and curry. He got support and a grant from the trust 22 years ago, and he now has a vast range of deli products, and so forth, is supplying to major supermarkets and has over 30 employees. No one believed in Conor at the start — that was his point — until he came to us.

Over the years, we have set up thousands of businesses in Northern Ireland. We do not have the resources to keep track of all successful businesses beyond two years, but the survival rate at two years of businesses that we have set up is 62%, which I think is pretty impressive in this day and age. That was last year's figure, which was independently verified.

That brings me on to Susie, who set up a business as a result of going through our Enterprise programme more recently. I now invite Susie to give a wee overview of why she came to the trust and of the business that she set up.

**Ms Susie Cuthill (The Prince's Trust):** As Mark said, I came to the Prince's Trust to do the Enterprise programme, which was very well thought out. I went through quite a journey. When I was 21, I had a really good job as a fundraising manager, but then I was made redundant. That was the only sector that I had worked in, and it was in the middle of the recession, so I really had no options. The company said, "You could move to London, where we might have a job for you", but I thought, "I can't. I have no money to move to London. How could I possibly do that?" Therefore, I went from having a very good job to having to sign on. That was quite a shock to the system, and it was not long before I really was lacking confidence. It was not just the lack of money and employment but the lack of structure in my life. Being a young person, you really need that structure. Getting up every morning and having the respect for yourself to go out, do a job and come home gives you confidence. I am sure that Ashleigh felt the same. I was unemployed for two years. That really takes its toll on your confidence. Like Ashleigh, I have always been quite a confident person. To feel that way was —

**Ms Murray:** It was taken away from you.

**Ms Cuthill:** Absolutely. It really takes it out of you. I was also pregnant, and trying to find a job in the middle of a recession when you are pregnant is a tricky thing to do. I had one really good job interview for quite a big clothes shop at which I thought, "Yes, I have nailed it", but it got back in touch with me to say, "We do not have the funding to take on any staff now." After going through that process, a huge company like that was not even able to take me on to sort out clothes for 12 hours a week.

I had always known about the Prince's Trust — it is a household name — and about the Enterprise programme, probably from hearing about it at school. The information was there. I had a business idea, but, in Northern Ireland, when you tell someone that you want to start up a business, I find that they are quite negative. People say, "A business? No way." So I went to the Prince's Trust, and I felt, as Ashleigh said, like I had arrived home.

**The Chairperson:** Can you hold on one wee tick, Susie? We just have a bit of housekeeping to do. We are going to have to switch off phones and iPads. I am sorry, but something is picking up 3G. I am sorry about that. You are not on 3G?

**Mr Lyttle:** There is no 3G on this.

**The Chairperson:** It is OK as long as it is just using Wi-Fi.

**Mr Dougan:** It is not using anything, but I will turn it off anyway.

**Ms Murray:** Mine says 3G, but I do not know how to work it. I just turned it off there.

**The Chairperson:** Switch it off, because we cannot get the recording right. Has everyone got their phone switched off? All my phones are off now. *[Laughter.]* All that I can say is that the Committee Clerk has brought it to my attention that we are having difficulty. Please switch off your phones if you can. The iPads are OK. Is Pat on 3G? No? I have done my bit. Sorry about that, Susie.

**Ms Cuthill:** Kind of like Ashleigh, my motivation to do that was that I had been sitting around for two years and needed to do something. I also have a child, and I did not want to be one of those figures:

an unemployed mother who was not a very good role model for him. I wanted to be a positive role model for him, and that also gave me a big push.

I e-mailed the Prince's Trust and very quickly got a response. The people whom I spoke to were very friendly, and, within a few weeks, I was signed up to do the Enterprise programme. It is quite an intense four-day programme, in which you learn everything that you could possibly need to know to start up a business. However, even though it was intense, I always felt that, if for some reason I was unable to start up my own business, I would not just drop off the edge. I was told that there are other programmes that I would be eligible to go on. I was given a mentor, and, if I did not go into business, I would be given a progression mentor with whom I would meet regularly. Therefore, I felt very supported, and that approach took the pressure off. People outside always would ask, "A business? How is the business going?" People are very critical when it comes to starting up businesses. The Prince's Trust was a breath of fresh air. There were no ridiculously high expectations, and the people there cushioned me along the way. They helped me to put my business plan together, and I got a start-up grant and a loan, which set me on my way. That was fantastic.

I have now been self-employed for a year and half, and my business is called Teddy Baby. It is very olde worlde. I spin wool and make hats, and my ethos is keeping the heritage alive while making punky, contemporary hat designs. It is going very well. The past two days, I have been running around in a tizzy trying to work out how I am going to keep up with all my orders. That is brilliant, because the summer was quite quiet. Things are looking very good. I also export on a small basis, and it is lovely when someone from New Zealand tells you that they love your hats. That makes you think, "New Zealand, but you have lots of sheep", but they love Northern Ireland.

However, I still have a business mentor and get that support from the Prince's Trust. I get e-mails if there is something that someone in the trust has heard about, such as a training course or a meeting that might be of use to me. I always get phone calls to ask how I am.

**The Chairperson:** Did they teach you about presentation skills?

**Ms Cuthill:** There was some of that. I learned a lot of my presentation skills from my business mentor.

**The Chairperson:** I was going to say that you and Ashleigh have a career. Mark might need to sharpen up a bit but you two are great. *[Laughter.]* We have got the general idea, Susie. It is a great story, and I thank you again for your personal statement. It is really powerful. Sometimes it is difficult to talk about things. I once had to sign on for a period, and I know what it does to you. I was asking myself why I was there when I had a degree and this, that and the other. That was a while ago, but it never leaves you. I understand, but perhaps not in as much detail as you both do.

I just want to ask Committee members whether they have any more questions, and I will then ask Mark to give a closing summary. Is anything burning in people's minds?

**Mr Allister:** May I ask one question of both of you? Susie, had you sought help elsewhere to set up a business?

**Ms Cuthill:** Yes.

**Mr Allister:** How would you compare the manner in which you were received elsewhere with how the Prince's Trust dealt with you?

**Ms Cuthill:** I am really glad that you asked that. I went through the Steps to Work programme. I spoke with my personal adviser at the jobs and benefits office, and I was not given a whole lot of information or very well supported. My adviser also did not have very much information on where I could gain training on setting up my own business. I completed the six-month Steps to Work programme and was given a mentor, who was of no help to me at all. That pushed me to get in touch with the Prince's Trust. I am so glad that I did, because if I had not got in touch with the Prince's Trust, I do not think that the little amount of support that I got from the Steps to Work programme would have pushed me into self-employment. So, that was not a positive experience.

**Mr Allister:** I have the same question for Ashleigh to answer from her perspective. Had you been through any other programmes?



**Ms Murray:** No. I moved out of my family home into a hostel when I was 17 and a half. I went on to get my own place, and I could not afford to go back to school full time. I looked into it, and I found that I would have lost all my benefits. That would have meant that there would have been no money coming into the house, and I was already sitting sometimes with no gas, no electricity and no food in the cupboards. It was not beneficial at the time, and, once I heard about the Prince's Trust, I found that it paid for my transport and my lunch. It gave me anything that I needed without question.

**The Chairperson:** So, you did not go to Steps to Work or any other programme?

**Ms Murray:** No. The jobcentre told me that I had to go to Steps to Work or else I would lose my benefits. I could not do that at the time because I was looking after my dad full time, as he was mentally unwell. I told the jobcentre that leaving him would be a risk to his life, which it would have been.

**The Chairperson:** Did the jobcentre then say that you did not have to go on Steps to Work?

**Ms Murray:** Yes.

**The Chairperson:** We have had great testimony from all of you. Mark, do you want to say a few concluding words? I do not want to open this up too much, but you say in your paper that the cost to our economy of each unemployed young person is £16,000 a year. How did you get that number?

**Mr Dougan:** Over a year and a half ago, the Prince's Trust did a piece of research and produced a report called 'The Cost of Exclusion'. It was a UK-wide report that included Northern Ireland. With RBS, the research came up with the figure that it costs £16,000 for every unemployed young person. That includes around £2,500 of benefit payments to that young person, and the rest is made up of lost productivity to the economy, including lost tax that a young person on the minimum wage would pay. At the time, it was estimated that the cost to Northern Ireland was around £250 million, but, since then, youth unemployment has grown considerably, which is why we have come up with the figure of £384 million.

I have heard figures being bandied about for what the devolution of corporation tax would cost our block grant, and so forth. One of my concerns is that pressure is already coming from Westminster to cut the block grant and that that could well happen with welfare payments going forward. So, we cannot stand still on this issue. From the Prince's Trust's point of view, devolution of corporation tax is not the only answer. A combination of policies is needed, such as setting up enterprise zones in disadvantaged areas to help small businesses such as Susie's, rates relief and making intensive mentoring available to those people. We are talking not only about young people but about business as a whole, but such policies would certainly help young people. We can do only so much. Each year, we are helping around 100 businesses to set up with our funding, because there is a fall-off as well. We have 500 people coming to us, and what we offer is not right for everyone. Some of them go on to employability programmes, and we are down to about 100 young people setting up each year. We could do a lot more if more pro-business policies were in place.

In conclusion, that was really all that I wanted to say.

**The Chairperson:** I have one last question for you.

Sammy, do you want to come in?

**Mr Douglas:** I have a wee grandson of just under a year. His name is Joshua, and he lives in New Zealand. He would love one of those hats.

**Mr Dougan:** I booked one this morning.

**The Chairperson:** There you go. Never miss an opportunity to advertise. I was going to say that I would talk to you afterwards as well.

**Mr P Ramsey:** We have heard about enterprise zones and that they are being farmed out more radically in Britain than they are here. The SDLP supports those fundamentally. What added value do they bring to areas for targeting social need?

**Mr Dougan:** From our point of view of working with young people, there are areas that are hotspots. I talk quite extensively about Craigavon, which is one of the areas where we run a number of programmes. I am a 1980's child, and I grew up in Craigavon. My dad and my mum were unemployed. All the people in the 16 houses in my street in Drumbeg were unemployed. I happened to escape from that. However, nothing has changed; it has stayed exactly the same. No matter what policies there are or upturn in the economy we went through, nothing has changed at all. That is why we should identify those areas and actually create enterprise zones to encourage young people into business. That is how we should be taking it forward.

**Mr P Ramsey:** I think that you are right.

**The Chairperson:** Can I ask you the hard question? You and I are both wearing the Prince's Trust badge, and obviously the trust is to do with the Prince of Wales. Is there any difficulty with sections of the community? You talked about the UK linkages, and, obviously, that would not necessarily be the preferred allegiance of some. Are there any issues on that front?

**Mr Dougan:** Absolutely not. That was one of the things that shocked me when I came on board about two years ago. I was also shocked by the number of friends who had, down the years, been through Prince's Trust programmes. At the minute, 60% of our client base is from the Catholic community and 39% is from the Protestant community, with 1% from ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland. We are working with youth clubs in Cullyhanna in Crossmaglen. I will not say that there are not gatekeepers, as I would term them, in some communities that will not send young people to us. However, young people bypass that through word of mouth. Adam Pettigrew, in west Belfast, stands out. Adam is a great guy, and I have so much time for him. He is full of life and enthusiasm and has the right attitude. He has gone back to his community with money in his pocket — he is a chef now in a kitchen in a bar in Belfast — for the first time in his life.

**Ms Murray:** He works in four different bars now.

**Mr Dougan:** He is going back and telling his mates that he has money and can produce a wad. They ask him, "How did you get that?", and he tells them, "I went through a Prince's Trust programme and got a job." That happens through word of mouth. The grannies and the mummies and all the statutory and voluntary organisations are part of that word of mouth. We do have strong support.

**The Chairperson:** Hold on a tick. I want to bring Phil in, because he indicated that he wanted to ask a question.

**Mr Flanagan:** Chair, your question is very relevant. I suppose that, at this stage, I need to declare an interest. Four years ago, I was not in a particularly good place in my life, and I approached Fermanagh Enterprise about starting my own business and taking out a loan. It could not secure any commercial funding for me, but it sent me in the direction of the Prince's Trust, which was very good to me. Obviously, I had to make a decision about whether working with the Prince's Trust was something that I could do. I was not politically active at that stage, but, being a nationalist and republican, it was something that weighed on my decision. Having the Prince of Wales as its patron did not detract me from seeking support from the Prince's Trust. I approached the Prince's Trust in Fermanagh and received invaluable support and advice from the organisation. I received a loan from the Prince's Trust to enable me to start up my business, which I was very grateful for. Unfortunately, the business was not successful, but I am still paying back that loan. I am definitely still paying it back. *[Laughter.]*

**Mr P Ramsey:** Wipe the slate. *[Laughter.]*

**The Chairperson:** Hold on a tick, folks. This is important.

**Mr Flanagan:** Apart from the fact that I got finance — I probably could have started up the business and carried on like that — the best part was the business mentor scheme, which helped me an awful lot. I had worked in the telecommunications industry and knew all about that, but actual skills and expertise were brought forward to me by somebody who was not getting paid to be a mentor but who was doing it out of the goodness of his heart and wanted to help a young person who was only trying to get started. I am very grateful for the support that I received from staff and volunteer mentors at the

Prince's Trust. So, I think that it is important that, as a nationalist and republican, I share that with the Committee.

**Mr P Ramsey:** Well done, Phil.

**Mr Flanagan:** There are obviously sensitivities there, but that does not stop people applying. I have no problem encouraging people to go to an organisation such as the Prince's Trust to get help, because they do invaluable work in all communities.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much for that. From my point of view, anybody who has not had a go at running a business does not really know how tough it can be. They do not all work, and that is just life. As far as I am concerned, it is absolutely no issue for people to go, learn a bit, move on and get into different places.

**Mr Flanagan:** You have to take a risk.

**The Chairperson:** That is it; 100%. I appreciate you telling me that. I think that this has been a really good session. Are there any other questions?

**Mr Allister:** You gave us a figure of £16,000 as the cost to the economy of every young person who is unemployed. Do you have a figure for what it costs to put someone in the same position as Susie or Ashleigh? What is your output cost for each person?

**Mr Dougan:** That is a good point. As an average across our all programmes, it costs about £1,000 for each young person.

**Mr Allister:** Does that include people who are starting up businesses with loans?

**Mr Dougan:** Yes. Basically, the different programmes do different things and the costs are at different levels. However, an average cost across all the programmes is about £1,000. We have over 300 volunteer mentors across Northern Ireland, so that is free. We just manage them and make sure that we are constantly using and replenishing them. They are one of the key aspects of all our programmes. Progression mentoring and business mentoring come the first day after the programme has finished, so that keeps that cost down.

We provide a loan fund for the Exploring Enterprise programme. Invest NI has put in place a grant scheme for business start-ups for young people up to the age of 24 who are not in education, training or employment. So, young people such as Susie, who have business plans as a result of working through our programme and getting the mentoring support, can go to Invest NI and apply for a grant of up to £1,500. We know where to signpost young people, and that keeps the cost down as well.

**The Chairperson:** Have you finished, Jim?

**Mr Allister:** Yes.

**The Chairperson:** Has everybody finished? I thank you all very much. It makes us aware of the reality. I really appreciate that you came along and talked about it. Some things in the past have been painful, but the opportunity to go forward is great. I commend you for that. Some people are coming to work with me on internships, and so forth. It is about networking now as well. We are all here to help you. We are part of your team, and, if we can be of any assistance —

**Mr Dougan:** May I raise one last point on networking? We have an event on 6 November in Stormont, and Basil has kindly agreed to sponsor it. It will be an opportunity for a round-table discussion with some of our young ambassadors — Adam, hopefully, will be there, along with these guys as well. You are all very welcome to come to that.

**The Chairperson:** I ask members to note that. We will give you the details. We have had a really interesting discussion. I know that we are all busy, and I appreciate that you are also busy. I have to confess that, during the time that I have got to know the organisation, I have been hugely impressed with some of the brilliant successes and also some of the very difficult challenges that have been undertaken. Society needs to understand that there is hope for us all, even politicians. You two were

supposed to smile at that, Ashleigh and Susie. We would like to try to help. I am sure that, if my colleagues can be present, they will come along. We would like to hear the stories, and we would like to get the message out and let people know that, as Phil testified, you deal with people appropriately and sensitively, and it is a very positive thing. Thank you all very much.