



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Employment and Learning

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Inquiry into Careers Education, Information,
Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland:
GEMS Northern Ireland

6 February 2013

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 Sydney Anderson
Mr David Hilditch
Mr Chris Lyttle
Mr Fra McCann
Ms Bronwyn McGahan

Witnesses:

Mr Stephen Atkinson	GEMS Northern Ireland
Mr Joseph Carmichael	GEMS Northern Ireland
Ms Grainne Hannah	GEMS Northern Ireland
Ms Susan Russam	GEMS Northern Ireland

The Chairperson: We have a number of groups to talk to us. The GEMS Northern Ireland submission is in members' packs. I am not sure whether we want to go through it. We could just move straight on to questions. Do you want to introduce everybody, Susan?

Ms Susan Russam (GEMS Northern Ireland): Thank you very much. Good morning, Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to come and present some evidence to you this morning. I will introduce my colleagues: Joe Carmichael, who is our local employment intermediary service (LEMIS) outreach worker for south Belfast; Stephen Atkinson, who is our client services manager and looks after the LEMIS programme and our other equality-driven programmes; and Grainne Hannah, who is predominantly an expert in young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). We hope to make a very brief presentation to you, which is linked to our submission but not verbatim —

The Chairperson: As long as you do not just read out your submission.

Ms Russam: Absolutely not. It will be no more than two or three minutes, if that is helpful.

We were very interested in making a submission to the inquiry, not least as the focus now is on lifelong learning and all-age careers information, education, advice and guidance. I will make a couple of points about GEMS, but I am not here to present a beauty contest around us. We are the Northern Ireland link for the Institute of Career Guidance (ICG), and we sit on the council of that body. We are the only non-governmental organisation (NGO) that offers placements for postgraduate certificate in

careers guidance students, including opportunities to work with a very diverse caseload, such as you learned a little bit about earlier.

We have probably 2,000 people coming through our doors, through our outreach and in our organisation, with multiple issues and challenges. The big challenge, as we see it, for careers guidance, as opposed to the Careers Service in Northern Ireland, is that we have 102 careers officers currently employed by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and a community of all ages that requires careers information, advice and guidance.

We have quite narrow routes to qualifications. The postgraduate certificate at Magee is available to a limited number of learners. The first thing that we ask the Committee to consider is the progression routes for careers guidance and the complementary expertise that is offered by the community and voluntary sector and the private sector. There should be a legitimate careers guidance route that is available, whether with your careers officer in school, out in the community, in college, in work or beyond.

I will hand over to my colleague Stephen, who will give you the bells, bangs and whistles from his experiences of managing the LEMIS programme in particular and our client services in general.

The Chairperson: Just before Stephen comes in, for clarity, will you just explain what GEMS is?

Ms Russam: GEMS stands for "Gasworks Employment Matching Service", as we were in 2001. We are an employment service employability organisation that delivers a range of programmes that support people to access employment and training; that promote social inclusion in employment to lift people out of poverty hopefully; and that work connectively in the community, with employers and others in both the public sector and the private sector, to try to make a real difference.

The Chairperson: Who are you funded by?

Ms Russam: We have a diverse range of funding streams, which include our European programmes; the Department for Employment and Learning, which funds our LEMIS programme; the European social fund; the Department for Social Development; and philanthropic funding. We are constantly trying to make ends meet.

The Chairperson: What is the sum total of that funding per annum?

Ms Russam: Last year, we received £990,000 for the contracts that we bring in and deliver, including evaluations and other research work.

The Chairperson: Thank you for that.

Mr Stephen Atkinson (GEMS Northern Ireland): A career is not defined by the length of time that someone works or the job that they do. Having a career in today's world could mean working for a few years, 50-plus years or anything in between. We feel that that is very important. As a service deliverer, we have to plan to meet the needs of an ever-changing demand-led service. We would endorse a definitive fit-for-purpose strategy with coverage of guidance services to assist people at all stages of the employment continuum. However, that would need to be properly resourced. Career planning can allow an insight into a person's future. It can, if properly followed, determine your education choices, further study choices, employment choices, later-life career choices and lifelong learning. That, ultimately, will lead to a successful career.

It is often said that, in your first 10 years of employment, you should spend your time building your skills and networks and developing your competencies without putting much of an emphasis on generating wealth or income. I and my organisation have major concerns with that. Our young school leavers, for example, are getting it very rough at the minute. They are finding it increasingly difficult to land any job. Not everyone will volunteer their time to take part in a voluntary or community initiative to help them build their skills. As such, they are not getting the opportunity to hone all the skills that they will require in their future work life. That is just not happening.

We need to enhance that opportunity. We need to offer the advice, mentoring and support that will allow those young individuals the opportunity to build their skills and routes to employment. When it comes to looking for work, those young people find themselves way behind job changers or other jobseekers, who may have had an opportunity to engage with a streamlined or dedicated careers

service. I include overseas migrant workers in that, because we are seeing an increase in young students coming here from the likes of Spain.

Careers services in schools, colleges and universities concentrate on delivering services that suit a particular clientele, so to speak. At GEMS, we try to put first the individuals as they come through our door. All our services are person-centred, and they are person-centred for a reason.

The Chairperson: Stephen, will you let us pick up some of the points that you are going to make when we get into questions? The previous session ran on a wee bit. It is not that I want to stop you saying anything, but some of the points will be brought up anyway. Is that OK?

Mr Atkinson: That is fine.

Ms Russam: The subject matter of previous evidence session means that it might be useful to hear from Grainne and Joe about working with young people not in education, employment or training and how that relates to the careers offer.

Ms Grainne Hannah (GEMS Northern Ireland): In my experience, the majority of young people who have fallen through the net of mainstream educational pathways have limited experience with the Careers Service. They have either been deselected or have deselected themselves from the process, owing to issues and challenges facing them that are beyond the remit of the Careers Service. My role is to act as a safety net for such young people and to guide them towards suitable education, training and employment options by utilising the networks available to me and, in so doing, to consolidate the services available to young people.

It is my aim to dispel misguided beliefs and attitudes held towards careers guidance and highlight its benefits as a mentoring role. Where young people have become disenchanted with training and employment options, my aim is to provide tailored information and to work with them to assist them in taking ownership of their career path and to give them career management skills and confidence to act on that. I hope to work in tandem with the Careers Service, as its strategy aspires to expand beyond the schoolyard and into the community setting.

Mr Joseph Carmichael (GEMS Northern Ireland): I have worked across the community and voluntary sector for over 20 years in both a paid and a voluntary capacity. I have also worked for the Department for Employment and Learning as a careers adviser. Therefore, I have been very much on either side of the fence and, as such, feel that I have a good understanding of this area. For me, the key to delivering an effective careers education, information, advice and guidance service lies in schools being at the heart of the community that they serve.

Schools' careers departments need to be properly resourced and developed, predicated on the idea that young people, parents, grandparents and the wider community are aware of and able to access, as a point of contact, information, advice and guidance on the careers, education, training and employment options available. For that to work, there needs to be a range of support organisations from the wider learning community complementing one another. That could include counselling support organisations, Training for Success providers, LEMIS providers, disabled support organisations, employers, sector skills councils (SSCs) and others.

The Chairperson: Joseph, I am quite happy for you all to submit your written notes to us for us to have a look at them, but I just want you to talk to us. What do you think that we should do with this careers business?

Mr Carmichael: From my experience, I think that it needs to be focused in the wider community and at the heart of schools. When you talk about careers, you normally hear it first and foremost in the context of the school setting.

The Chairperson: Do you think that we do that well or not terribly well?

Mr Atkinson: It is done to varying degrees.

Mr Carmichael: It depends where you are. At the end of the day, young people and older people will have different opinions about the careers advice that they have or have not received in the school setting. More importantly, and certainly within the community and voluntary sector, it is about working

hand in hand with schools. Careers sits naturally in the education sector. We need to feed into that with the other existing community support organisations. It is about being able to access careers services.

Ms Russam: We also feel that careers advice needs to start a lot earlier. It needs to be embedded in entrepreneurial skills as well as career-management skills. There is a really serious confidence challenge for our young people coming out of school.

The Chairperson: At what age should that start?

Ms Russam: It needs to start in mid-primary school or even earlier. We have children who cannot read. We have young people in schools who come from workless households or households with inter-generational issues and challenges. Traditionally, the school has a very middle-class model of elaborated language, codes and other things, so, first, there is a need to teach our teachers entrepreneurial competencies and skills and, secondly, to see careers guidance have a proper place in the curriculum alongside such subjects as maths and English. If we cannot up the confidence in life skills and support for our young people, where do they go when they reach transitions? They make their choices for GCSEs when they are 13, and some children are already lost at that stage.

The Chairperson: Susan, two Committee members have indicated that they wish to ask a question, and others are invited to do so. We will take a couple of questions now and if there is anything that we have not managed to pull out through questions, you can address that afterwards. Is that OK?

Ms Russam: Yes.

Mr Buchanan: You have identified where there are problems within the careers service provided in schools. What work do you do with them? What link-up do you have with them to try to address that gap? We look at companies coming in from other countries. Their companies in the UK are reported to:

"find young people unprepared for the workplace and miss the supply of skilled workers".

Companies coming in from other countries are saying that they miss the supply of skilled workers. There is a gap there, and that gap needs to be addressed in the schools through career advisers. You have identified a gap. What are we doing to try to bridge that gap, overcome that problem and have young people coming forward who are skilled to meet the demands of the companies that are coming into Northern Ireland?

Ms Russam: The first answer to that is to ensure that there are effective links among industry, business and schools. Years ago, teachers used to go out to businesses for, I think, a week. I do not think that that happens any more. I also think that the curriculum needs to be much more balanced around the young people who are targeting potentially vocational skills rather than around those who are looking at an academic route. We would like to see more emphasis on choices for change.

The Chairperson: What does "choices for change" mean?

Ms Russam: If you look at the current offer for young people who are in their secondary school career, there is generally a standardised process that takes place. It is based on a traffic-light system, in which young people need a lot of help, not so much help or very little help to determine their career choices. We believe that there should be more innovation and creativity in how those young people are supported, encouraged and enabled to identify routes to innovation and work, such as setting up their own business, for instance. There needs to be much more emphasis on that. If you look at our economy, you will see that it is driven by a huge public service sector, but it is also driven by small business. Why are we not bringing small businesses into schools to look at that and other things?

It is also about encouraging ownership from teachers, parents and organisations such as ours to make that offer much more streamlined so that young people are not lost should they opt out of school at 12 or 13, or if they go into care or the criminal justice system. There should be a one-size, equality-driven careers information, education and guidance service, whether you are five, 10, 15 or 50. There should be recognition of the complementary expertise that exists and of the fact that we have more than 102 careers guidance professionals in Northern Ireland, but we do not capture that.

The Chairperson: OK. The floor is still with the Deputy Chair, but I want to say something that I say to all the people who come in front of us. This is not about the big words. We want to hear from you in simple language. Just tell us what is not working and what you would do differently.

Ms Russam: We need more connectivity and more joined-up working among the home, the school, the Careers Service and the third sector.

The Chairperson: We will come back to that.

Mr F McCann: There are a couple of things that I want to raise. I am glad that you said what you did, Chair. The inquiry that we are doing into careers is being done because we are unsure of what importance the education system attaches to careers. I have raised that here a number of times. Last year, there was an announcement that 36,000 young people left school without any sort of education. They were probably lost in the ether rather than attracted in. There are communities out there that are left to their own devices when it comes to careers and trying to develop themselves. From there, they develop problems. There seems to be a difficulty and problem at university level with going into communities and encouraging them. There also seems to be a difficulty in schools in trying to provide the level of information and encouragement that young people require to make choices.

The Chair brought us down to Armagh a number of months ago. People there told us, from the sciences point of view, that if you do not get young people when they are in mid-primary school, you have lost them. It is about how you fit into that. We have already picked up that there is no connectivity between what happens in primary school and how people make their choices there. One concern that we raised is that, in many ways, the only options that people are being given and encouraged in is the traditional educational route, which is law, medicine or teaching. We need to expand that and encourage people to take up other aspects.

We had an interesting session a couple of weeks ago with people from NISRA. They said that there is a serious skills shortage, but we are looking at tens of thousands of people out of work. They said that there was a skills shortage of 5,500 people out there. We are amazed at that. Obviously, when you break that down, you might find answers and reasons for where those skills are based.

At the end of this, we want to come out with a report that allows us to go ahead and pinpoint where the problems lie, and try to mend it for the kids of the future. Any information that you have to take us through this would be helpful. I know that it is difficult, because, at one stage, I sat where you are sitting. You spend a lot of time preparing to come in and perhaps tell us what you think we want to hear. The Chair is right. Any information that allows us to do justice to a proper report would be helpful.

Mr Atkinson: One key issue that we have come across, and that I have certainly seen in the job that I do in GEMS, is that, for young people, there is definitely the question of "What is work?", never mind "What is a career?" You have to overcome the social issues and barriers that are presented to us on a day-to-day basis before a job is an option. We are seeing more and more people coming through our service who are presenting with very limited work skills, but the jobs that they could generally have done, such as cleaning positions and retail positions, are being undertaken by people with far better qualifications and skills. Therefore, they are not even getting that opportunity.

GEMS specialises in employability skills development. It is at the core of our service, beside our mentoring and employment side of the house. Employability development is absolutely critical.

The Chairperson: What does "employability skills" mean?

Mr Atkinson: It is about looking at what a person is presenting with, first and foremost, and at how you can hone the skills that employers will look for. For example, most people imagine that doing a short accredited training course will enhance your employability. In most cases, it will, but people have to go through the education bit first. They have to understand why they are being trained. Employability development is not just about giving somebody a piece of paper. It is about being there to mentor and support people the whole way through the process of gaining that piece of paper.

For us, employability is about more than just qualifications. It is about having the confidence and self-belief to apply for a job in the first place, to attend the interview and to be able to speak in a competent way to an employer. That all falls under employability skills.

The Chairperson: The floor is still with Fra, but you might want to expand a little on your submission, if you are so minded, because I am going to ask you questions on this. Stephen, your comments about the challenges facing young people and what it is that you do to fix that are helpful. No argument has been made yet in government about building confidence or self-belief. It is a route that we are not getting people to go down. We have to make the argument to say whether that is a careers function that we should take on. On reading Hansard, you might pick up on those points.

Mr F McCann: I will, just finish, Chair, because I think that you raise an interesting point, and, Stephen, you raised it when we were in Enniskillen. The best step in life for anybody in a community who finds it difficult to get a job is to be prepared for interviews and to be given that wee bit of capacity that allows them to have confidence. That is a major step forward for people, and I think that it should be built into anything that we do.

Mr Lyttle: Thanks for your presentation, folks. I found the paper that you submitted to our careers inquiry extremely helpful. I just want to check my understanding of a couple of key points that you raised and perhaps ask you to expand on those briefly. The key points that I took from your paper were that — obviously this is a generalisation to a certain extent, as there is a lot of good work going on as well — careers advice in schools was not given adequate weight or importance, that it was under-resourced and that there was not adequate information available. In response to that, you think that careers could be a compulsory subject, there needs to be added focus on entrepreneurship and vocational subjects, and that careers advice needs to happen much earlier in the school career. You also raised concerns about accreditation, qualification and continued professional development of careers guidance providers. The only full-time course that seems to be available is at University of Ulster's Magee campus. Will you expand on those points briefly, or confirm my understanding of those issues?

Ms Russam: The issue and challenge is that there is emphasis on information and not enough on education and the guidance element of the offer. In our experience, we have also found that those young people who require most guidance are those who probably receive least guidance, because, in very many cases, they vote with their feet and are not there anyway. They have deselected themselves from school or are in the criminal justice system or other settings.

I spend my life writing reports and things, so I will try to use ordinary language, if I can. The challenge for us is to find a way in which to create connectivity for those young people, whether they are in preschool, in Sure Start settings or in primary school — right the way up — to create that careers-management, entrepreneurial-driven challenge for teachers teaching but also for young people. We have done a lot of work with partners in the Netherlands, Finland and other places where those things are taken for granted. There, teachers are igniting those sparks with young people, and parents are actively involved.

The bigger challenge is that 102 careers officers, or in and around that number, currently employed by the Department for Employment and Learning are not a sufficient number to deliver all-age careers guidance across Northern Ireland. I do not know the budget or any of that, but I know in my own mind that that is not enough. Therefore, we have to harness the expertise from other areas. At present, all our staff have an NVQ level 4 in advice and guidance or an equivalent qualification, or the postgraduate certificate.

First, we need to get the community and voluntary sector and the education sector talking to the Department to determine what careers guidance is; what the core functions of it are for employment and employability, entrepreneurial skills, links with the workplace and young people's right to change and right to choose as they go through their career — so it is not that they are automatically doomed if they do not choose right at 13 — and, crucially, to involve employers every step of the way. The current qualifications route is very narrow, and we see from the students that come to us that the experience that they get in an NGO offering all-age careers guidance is much broader. The challenge is that a young persons' schools-based, focused, training-centre-based careers service, which is fit for a number of young people but not for all ages, is still trying to be delivered. That needs to be turned on its head, and there needs to be a total rethink of what careers information, education and guidance actually is, who delivers it, where it is delivered, how it is managed and how its impact is measured. I hope that that was OK.

Mr Lyttle: Thank you.

The Chairperson: Susan, thank you very much. I have a couple of little questions. It is useful for the Committee to find out what it is that you are talking about. Perhaps you will extend an invitation to those members of the Committee who want to meet you separately, because you probably need to get into the nitty-gritty of it. We will not do it all here. I am very keen to get your real-life experience into our report. A number of things that you have said today and in your written submission have left me wanting to know more. That is the correct way to go forward. I have a couple of points, and I want us to be fairly succinct if we can. Are you recommending that careers advice should be introduced in year 6 and year 7?

Ms Russam: Yes.

The Chairperson: You highlighted the fact that teachers who have higher-priority teaching commitments may be unable or are under-resourced to provide up-to-date and impartial advice. You are saying that the designated teacher is not able to keep up to speed. That is an opinion rather than a statement of fact.

Ms Russam: This is based on our experience with young people who have experienced that service.

The Chairperson: I say to people that we need to cut the flannel. I am not referring to you, but I need to say it as it is, and sometimes we worry about offending people. This is not the case.

Ms Russam: We prefer to be positive, and it is important to point out that we work very effectively with the Careers Service as well. I will add one thing that we did not articulate as strongly as we should have. We believe that consideration needs to be given to the Department of Education having responsibility for careers information, advice and guidance in schools and the Department for Employment and Learning taking on that remit post-16. There is a requirement to have some scrutiny of that responsibility.

The Chairperson: I thought that that was the way it is.

Ms Russam: Well, that would not —

The Chairperson: OK; we will have a look.

Mr Lyttle: My understanding is that the Department for Employment and Learning creates a framework, and schools can choose how much or how little of it to use. Even from the feedback in your evidence today, there still seems to be an issue about how hands-on that school-provided careers advice is in certain contexts, and that is why I was a bit disappointed with the seeming lack of engagement with the Committee for Education on that. A huge amount of this needs to be focused at school level. That is fair enough, Chair.

The Chairperson: That is right. We will deal with that. At the moment, we will take our evidence.

Mr F McCann: During a lot of the evidence sessions up to now, and certainly with the universities, we pushed the same point that they were maybe focusing their energies on the wrong aspects of education and careers. There has to be that connectivity from the day you go to school to the day you leave university.

The Chairperson: That is the key point, and that is why I am not sure that I agree with you about giving it to DE, because it might become the Cinderella option because teachers see themselves as mainly there to teach. We could maybe embed the careers bit or do something else, but there is clearly an issue, if I am reading you correctly, that we do not start early enough to explain to people that they need an education because they will want to get a job and to explain what a job is. There will be some points on that.

Mr Anderson: In the paper, you talk about careers advisers being demotivated. Where do you get that from? It says:

"Staff can appear de motivated as their targets are unrealistic".

Ms Russam: We will need to look at the document.

Mr Anderson: How do you gather that information?

The Chairperson: It is paragraph 5.

Ms Russam: We are lost. Where is that term?

The Chairperson: It is paragraph 5 in your paper. It says:

"Careers advisors are currently spread too thin. Their case load is unrealistic".

Ms Russam: Obviously, because of our Institute for Career Guidance (ICG) role, the fact that we sit on that, our training role and the fact that we provide post-qualification development training routes and other things within that, I think that the —

Mr Anderson: Is that information coming back from the teachers?

Ms Russam: Yes.

Mr Anderson: Did you do a consultation? How did you get it?

Mr Atkinson: We had a conference event when then strategy consultation was first presented. I think that was five or six years ago. We brought together representatives from the Careers Service, education and our own voluntary and community sector. Basically, we discussed the issues in the consultation, and that was one of the areas that came out.

Mr Anderson: Was that coming out strong?

Mr Atkinson: If a careers guidance practitioner is dealing with people with the same approach, the same paperwork and the same attitudes towards their future day in and day out, it can become demoralising or demotivating. One of the key aspects of careers advice is a little bit of freedom of thought about how to deal with an individual. I have not worked for the Careers Service, but my understanding of the processes is that they are very stringent. They can only offer a certain number of opportunities, and those are mainly tailored to further education.

The Chairperson: We have a number of other sessions, and I want to bring Bronwyn in. Does anybody else want in, or can I close it after that? I want to deal with the issue that you have raised, Sydney.

Ms McGahan: Thank you for your presentation. You talk about young people perhaps having a negative experience of careers and so on. Could it also be that there is no support or encouragement from their family, and that leaves them demotivated? That may mean that you have to bring in another agency as well as the Education Department to deal with that. I sit in a neighbourhood renewal area, and I have a 16-year-old daughter who is doing learning for life and work (LLW). I get the sense that they are doing employability skills and so on, and it seems fairly comprehensive. Maybe that is a model that should be built on and young people should be encouraged to do that.

Ms Hannah: You are talking about the home environment, and there are many issues that a young person has to deal with that go beyond careers; for example, having somewhere to live, getting food and things like that. Maybe there are issues that require counselling and things like that. From my point of view, it is my job to work with the networks that I have to try to identify, through engagement with the young person, what they need to bring them up to a level where they can start thinking about jobs, careers, training and so on. I have the opportunity to do that, because I am not positioned in one place. I am mobile, and the experience that I have gained from working in the community gives me access to hear what is going on and what is available, which a careers guidance practitioner who is located in a school would not have. I just feel that the negative experience that you are referring to is borne of many things. GEMS has a unique position within the community to draw upon the networks that we have to support that.

Mr Carmichael: It goes back to the main point that I made earlier. Careers guidance does not stand alone. It starts off in the community at a young age and develops that idea forward to teenagers and

adults. On access to information, even the term "careers" throws most people. They do not even understand what you mean. It does not stand alone. It goes back to working in the community and to parents and other people talking about the whole idea. If they need support with counselling or with other things going on in their lives, for me, the school setting is an ideal arena in which to do that. Also, importantly, on the education side of things, it can deal with issues through earlier intervention, rather than letting things go on. It is key to get in —

The Chairperson: Of course, the problem is that schools get worried about having loads of initiatives piled on top of them, and they say that their job is to teach people, otherwise they are not a school any more; they are a sort of a social centre.

Mr Carmichael: To be fair, if the careers department is properly expanded and available to people, it is an important part of life — school life and future career life.

The Chairperson: There is something in that. We talk about the issue of parents and family, but the key question is this: how do you get the parents and family interested?

Mr Atkinson: To be fair to the previous presentation that you had on the Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS), that is one aspect of a service that can assist with intergenerational unemployment. I have a lot of experience of that particular programme; I have been working on it since 2007. It is not easy, but exceptional amounts of good-news stories are coming through about our dealing with a grandfather, the son and then the grandson, and moving those people towards employment. With the careers aspect, there is a generation who maybe would not consider themselves ever having, nor ever wanting to have, a career; they just want a job so that they can put bread and water on the table.

One of the big things that we talk about at almost the first point of entry for clients is making sure that we understand what their aspirations are so that we do not automatically disappoint anybody if it is not going to be —

The Chairperson: OK. I am under a wee bit of pressure for time. I apologise for that. It will be in the Hansard report; have a look at that. I will certainly come out to visit you. I am sure that if you put the thing to other people, we can spend a bit more time on it.

A couple of things that you said were really interesting. Susan, you said that those who most need advice are the least likely to get it. That is seminal. I take your point that we have not had time to address this, but I would like a bit more detail on what you say about:

"We require a Careers service that will meet the needs of an aging population who will statistically change careers 5 times during their working life."

There is an issue in that regard. Something needs to be done. I think that you mentioned a course or a conference, and you said that staff appeared to be demotivated and overstretched. Maybe you can give us something concrete, such as a response from that conference or comparative figures on how much we need to do. I agree with you: 120 advisers to do the whole of Northern Ireland is probably, in retrospect, a bit lightweight.

I am sorry to hurry you. Does anybody want to ask a question? Are you content?

Ms Russam: Would you be pleased to receive an enhanced or augmented submission from us in relation to some of the points that have been covered today and some of the wider issues?

The Chairperson: I would be delighted, Susan. In fact, I have invited other people to come along. There are issues that have been raised. Sydney was very good at bringing out certain questions. You made statements that caught our attention, and I would like you to substantiate them, if you can.

Ms Russam: We are quite happy as well to invite you out to see our local employment —

The Chairperson: It just gives us a wee bit more time. Sometimes, you have to see it to understand it. It is not that everybody can go along, but hopefully some people will go along. Your submission and your time is greatly appreciated. We would really like you to tell it as it is and let us know. Thank you very much indeed.