



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Employment and Learning

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Royal National Institute of Blind People  
Northern Ireland

9 October 2013

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

## Committee for Employment and Learning

Royal National Institute of Blind People Northern Ireland

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**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Mr Thomas Buchanan (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Sammy Douglas  
Mr Phil Flanagan  
Mr David Hilditch  
Mr Fra McCann  
Ms Bronwyn McGahan  
Mr Pat Ramsey

**Witnesses:**

Mr Chris Yung	Royal National Institute of Blind People
Ms Lisa French	Royal National Institute of Blind People Northern Ireland
Mr Martin O'Kane	Royal National Institute of Blind People Northern Ireland

**The Deputy Chairperson:** We have Mr Martin O'Kane, Mr Chris Yung and Ms Lisa French. You are very welcome to the Committee. We ask you to make a short presentation, and we will then open it up to members for questions.

**Mr Martin O'Kane (Royal National Institute of Blind People Northern Ireland):** Thank you for inviting us to talk to you about what the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) does for those who are blind or partially sighted and are looking for or are in employment.

To accompany my briefing today, I am sending around a publication that was launched by the Minister for Employment and Learning a few weeks ago. It simply tells a story of 11 men and women from Northern Ireland who are working and have some level of sight loss. It gives some simple messages about what people with visual impairments can do and are doing in the workplace on a daily basis. I hope you will take that with you.

I am joined by our employment officer, Chris Yung, who works with people with visual impairments; and Lisa French, who is visually impaired and is working.

The 2011 census recorded that 559 blind or partially sighted people in Northern Ireland were actively seeking employment. In the past three years, our service has helped over 300 people with visual impairments to get a job or stay in a job. We helped them to get a job through creating work experience opportunities, training them in skills, giving help and support with job searching, applications and interviews and by liaising with employers. To help them stay in a job, we made assessments of adjustments that are needed in the workplace and trained people to use accessible technology. So, we give support that many people with no visual improvement might need to find a job, but we have that additional knowledge about how sight loss might affect people.

That work was done by a team of five people, which is made up of a project officer, two employment officers and two technology staff. However, the achievement would not have been possible without the involvement of staff from the disability employment service, which funds the Access to Work programme. We work closely with them to ensure that appropriate support is put in place for people. The Access to Work programme funds the adjustments that are needed in the workplace, and we are very grateful that we are able to deliver that through the disability employment service.

Our service has had considerable contract success. We secured European social fund (ESF) funding for what we call our Eye Work project, and each year we take 20 people who are looking for work and put them through an employment programme. Each of those people has some level of sight loss, and we help them in three key ways: pre-employment preparation; getting a proper period of work experience; and attaining an accredited IT qualification. We say that, if you have those three elements covered, you will have a pretty good chance of finding work.

RNIB is part of a recently established consortium of seven disability organisations called Supported Employment Solutions. Through that consortium, we have won two major contracts: Workable (NI), which supports people with disabilities in employment; and Work Connect, which helps people to find employment. We are a co-partner in that consortium with six other disability organisations throughout Northern Ireland: Action Mental Health; the Cedar Foundation; Mencap, Action on Hearing Loss; the Orchardville Society; and the NOW project.

RNIB also interacts with over 100 employers each year to promote awareness of what we do in our employment programmes and to highlight the support that we can give to new employees and existing staff who have sight loss. We encourage employers to take people on work placements and receive visual awareness training so that they know the facts about employing someone with sight loss. The publication that I circulated today should complement that.

We have also established good links with the transitions coordinators in the five education and library boards and with qualified teachers of visual impairment. We provide advice and guidance to those professionals about young people with sight loss who are at school or in education and are making decisions about their future.

Excellent progress has been made in the further education (FE) sector, specifically the Southern Regional College. That college has been awarded the RNIB model of excellence, which indicates that it is very accessible to blind or partially sighted people who can go there, do courses and achieve accreditations. We want the other colleges to achieve the same level of excellence in accessibility for people with sight loss. That is the background to what we do.

What are the issues that we face in the delivery of our service? I will outline three main issues. First, many blind and partially sighted jobseekers who access our services do not have basic qualifications to allow them to get a job, or have little or no experience of work. For many, this is due to a poor learning experience at school, where generic career advice was given that did not take into account their level of sight. As a result, we need to spend an average of one to three years with many of those who are referred to us and are looking for work. We help them to establish basic IT qualifications, give them essential skills training, build up their self-confidence around being blind or partially sighted and get them some decent work experience. We feel that, if those issues were addressed at school, our service could focus on the employment stage: job applications and interview preparation.

Our second issue is employer engagement. RNIB runs employer engagement events and, through some recent events, we identified three key issues that employers have with employing someone with sight loss. The first issue is capability: what a person with sight loss can do and what their productivity levels are like. The second issue is about what support someone will need, whether that can be put in place to allow them to do a job and how much it will cost. The third issue is health and safety and whether it is dangerous to have someone with sight loss in the workplace. We are able to answer all those questions. With adjustments and some financial investment, a person with visual impairment can do a job to the same level if not more so than a fully sighted person. It just needs some adjustment. We feel that many employers are still not aware that there is potential for people with visual impairments to work.

Our third issue is the referrals to our employment contracts. We are very pleased that a number of employment programmes fund our service, but referrals are extremely low. We have nine people on Workable (NI) and 10 people on Work Connect. Although the disability employment service links with us on those programmes, participants largely refer themselves or their referral is initiated by our team. They are not coming through the doors of the jobcentres looking for work, which is in direct contrast to

the Government's agenda of getting people with disabilities, including those with sight loss, off benefits and into employment. Where are these people?

I will now go through our key asks. First, we would like an examination of the support that blind and partially sighted people receive in education and when making the transition from education to employment. Secondly, we would like the Committee to consider how we can put in place an effective programme of employer engagement that will help change attitudes to employing blind and partially sighted people and develop a greater awareness of the support programmes that are available to help people with disabilities to stay in work or get into work. Our third ask is that we would like an effective programme of engagement with blind and partially sighted people who are in Northern Ireland and who are seeking work. We want to increase the numbers using our service, so we ask that these issues be considered by the Committee.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you, Martin, for your presentation. We commend you on the work that you are doing in this field for people who are blind or partially sighted. It is somewhat alarming to see that you are working for one to three years to bring people up to an education standard before you can get them moving forward simply because of poor learning experiences at schools and that type of thing. That needs to be looked into.

You said that you work with around 100 employers each year to promote awareness. Do those employers see any barriers and difficulties in taking on someone who is partially sighted or blind because, in their business, they have to do quite a bit of work to bring it up to standard to bring these people on board? Is that much of a hindrance?

**Mr O'Kane:** The three barriers that I identified in the paper are the three main ones that employers see as issues. There is the capability issue. If an employer is taking on someone to do a job, they expect the job to be done fully, and there is the question in employers' heads of whether a person with partial sight or blindness can do that job to the same level. However, there are so many adjustments that can be put in place to help someone to do the job, and there are many examples, including in that publication, of people who are working to the same level. So, the question of capability can be answered, but many employers do not realise that, if you are partially sighted or blind, you can use a computer to do a job. You can do many jobs, but the employer needs to know how a blind or partially sighted person can do them before they will consider that person as being capable. We do not feel that enough employers are aware of that fact. When it comes to looking at an application from a person with sight loss, they have immediately made up their mind before considering their suitability for the post.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** You are right to say that awareness is one of the things that employers lack on this issue. I had a problem in my constituency in seeking to get someone who was fairly badly partially sighted into employment. We were successful and got them there after a bit of work, but it is a matter of the employers having a full grasp of the knowledge of what can be done and what can be achieved.

**Mr Flanagan:** Thanks for the presentation. It was very useful, and it is always good to hear what groups are doing; we are stuck up here an awful lot and do not see what is happening on the ground.

What level of contact have you had with officials in the Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in addition to contact with business organisations to try to resolve these problems?

**Mr O'Kane:** I spoke at the all-party group on visual impairment and delivered the same paper to it. We also met people from the disability employment service and highlighted these issues. That is why I mentioned in the paper that the disability employment service staff are working with us to get people into employment, but it is still not working, because we are not getting enough people onto our programmes.

On the education side, we linked with transition coordinators in the education sector, but we have very limited capacity to do that because we have a small team that has to focus on employment programmes. The whole area of education is very much the responsibility of the Department of Education, and we are limited about what we can provide there. We need to have more capacity to go in and work with people at school level, which we do not have at the minute.

On the business side, we run employer engagement events, but, again, we are a small team and can only run small events occasionally. We wanted a more coordinated system of engaging employers on a bigger scale to let them know about sight loss.

**Mr Flanagan:** Have you engaged with other organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Institute of Directors (IoD) or the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)?

**Mr O'Kane:** We have not gone that far with our engagement yet.

**Mr Flanagan:** It might be useful to do that because, instead of going to individual businesses, you could go to those organisations, which have hundreds and hundreds of members. That is something to consider.

What are the barriers that stop people who are blind or partially sighted from getting employment and how can they be overcome?

**Mr O'Kane:** Lisa, would you like to talk about how you do your job and how you have overcome some barriers?

**Ms Lisa French (Royal National Institute of Blind People Northern Ireland):** I came from the carer side, which I had to give up. I now work for a housing association. I did not even know how to turn on a computer, but I was taught IT skills. I am doing the IT user qualification (ITQ); I sat an exam and have just passed the first part. I work with a desktop magnifier that allows me to read the small print, and I have zoom text on the computer that brings everything up. Is there anything else?

**Mr Chris Yung (Royal National Institute of Blind People):** You have a special keyboard.

**Ms French:** I have a special keyboard that I can see, which is big and bold. There is job coaching; I had training twice a week, and I have it once a week now, because I have progressed so much. I could not have done it without them.

**Mr Flanagan:** You mentioned all the equipment that you have been given to help you have a job. Does the employer have to purchase that equipment or is there some form of grant that they can avail themselves of?

**Mr O'Kane:** I referred in my paper to the Access to Work programme, which helps to finance adjustments that need to be put in place. For example, Lisa needed a magnification package put onto a computer and she could also need a larger desktop, which would amount to £1,500. An employer can get some of that money through the programme, so they do not have to foot the bill for the whole amount. It is a very good programme, because it helps people who are in a job and it helps the employer.

Another really useful fact to know is that, if someone is new into employment and is starting a job, all their adjustments are paid for. So, the Access to Work programme will pay for 100% of their needs. There is plenty of financial assistance available if employers know that the programme is there and are willing to give someone the opportunity. They do not have to cover all those costs themselves.

**Mr Flanagan:** So, it is about getting that message out.

**Mr O'Kane:** Everybody says that Access to Work is the Government's best-kept secret. Employers simply do not know that it is there. It is there to help them and there is money there to do it.

**Mr P Ramsey:** Martin, you are very welcome. I declare an interest as a member of the all-party group on visual impairment. Some of the recent information that we received is quite worrying, bearing in mind the figures that you have given, in that 66% of the population is economically active, but the percentage of those who are blind or partially sighted and who are economically active is only 32%. That is a huge disparity that has to be examined. I take your point about the census, and the Chair's point about the stigma that is still attached to people who are blind or partially sighted. You might find that not everyone owns up to that, even on the census form. In the 2011 census, almost 31,000 people in Northern Ireland declared that they had some form of blindness or were partially sighted. How can we do things better? I listened to Lisa and, I suppose, in many regards, Lisa was very fortunate to have an opportunity at a given point in time. However, there are many hundreds, if not

thousands, out there who do not have access to improve their IT skills, for example. How can we do better with training?

**Mr O'Kane:** We need to engage with them; we need to know who they are. The numbers coming through to our user service are limited. If we do not know who they are and where they are, we cannot help them. We have about 100 people coming through our programmes every year; around 25 of those are jobseekers and around 75 are in a job. Where are all those other people who are economically inactive and may or may not be considering employment? We do not know them.

**Mr P Ramsey:** I take your point. Sammy and I attended a meeting recently. We have tried to find out where the data or information is and who holds that information. Unfortunately, the Departments that hold that information are not prepared to share it. Chair, maybe we could do something from a research perspective to find out definitively how many people are registered as blind or partially sighted in the healthcare or job and employment systems. Could we find that information out? That might assist Martin.

**Mr O'Kane:** That would be great. As an organisation in Northern Ireland, we can market our service. However, I do not feel that we are hitting enough people, because it is not being reflected —

**Mr P Ramsey:** It appears that there are data protection issues around that. However, surely there are clever ways of doing it if the end product improves people's quality of opportunity for work.

**Mr F McCann:** Thank you for the presentation. Like Pat, I put my name forward to join the working group on blind and partially sighted people. I commend you for the work that you do; it cannot be easy trying to deal with a number of employers, who probably do not have the knowledge and experience of dealing with blind and partially sighted people.

I want to pick up on what Pat said. As elected politicians, we need to ensure that any barriers are taken away. Martin, I note that you are the employment and welfare rights manager.

**Mr O'Kane:** That is right.

**Mr F McCann:** There are also quite a lot of barriers in that area. You referred to the migration from incapacity benefit to employment support allowance (ESA). Another Committee that I serve on has also looked at the work capability assessments, and Sammy was part of that. We looked at how people with difficulties and problems are dealt with. There are issues about the way in which people are assessed by the Department and how they are placed into work groups. Will you give us some idea of your thinking on that?

**Mr O'Kane:** I mentioned incapacity benefit. You will be aware that people who received incapacity benefit are being moved over to employment support allowance. That has been happening for a couple of years, and those who are moving to ESA are having their benefits reassessed.

For those who are blind and partially sighted, the criteria for being employable have been reduced. That means that someone needs to have less sight than previously to receive employment support allowance. They have upped the criteria. However, we have not found an increase in referrals from the job centres for people who have been turned down for the benefit and who should now be being asked to find employment. So although there has been a migration from the benefit, and there should be more people with sight loss in the system looking for work, proportionate numbers are not coming through the job centres.

**Mr F McCann:** That is an important point. We can talk about employability. It is essential that benefits are in place to assist people to cope with disabilities. We also need to focus on that.

Have you noticed any difficulties or problems with the work capability assessments that are carried out by Atos? I have a friend who is partially sighted, and he thought that his assessment was horrendous.

**Mr O'Kane:** We did some campaigning in that area. There were issues with how the assessments were being carried out by Atos people who simply had no knowledge of sight loss. However, the assessments are the way that they are, and I do not think that there is anything that we can do about them. People are being assessed under new criteria. We can help those who are being asked to look for work. There is an issue about those who have been asked to look for work but should not have

been. That is a welfare rights issue for the Department for Social Development. We can only do so much to help those who are employable. We can help people if they come through to us. However, regardless of the new benefits assessment procedure, not enough people are coming through.

**Mr Yung:** I want to add a little backup on the employment support allowance. One of the key components is that claimants are placed into different categories, and many are placed into support groups. Through the jobs and benefits offices, DEL funds programmes such as Work Connect, which is a six-month programme for people who are close to finding employment. It is an intense job search and structured employment skills package.

We sometimes get referrals from job centres for people who are in an ESA support group but whom they want to place in Work Connect. However, the two do not balance. The signposting to understanding is also not great, and many of the employment officers will hold their hands up and say that they do not know much about ESA and that it is dealt with by a benefits team. We sometimes get inappropriate referrals, and when we meet people, we tell them that they are too far away from employment for the Work Connect programme.

In our team meetings, we have discussed the lack of programmes for those who are maybe two or three years away from employment. However, work can still be done to get those people slowly but surely up to the mark by providing them with education and skills. It is not just about the hard, functional skills, and it is important that they learn soft skills such as interview skills and writing a CV.

**Mr F McCann:** I raised the issue because it is about how DEL personnel interact with people who may have difficulties and problems. We have argued that there needs to be an effective training programme to allow people to tap into the needs of those who are blind and partially sighted or who suffer from mental illness or other illnesses. Sometimes there is no connect between social security staff and DEL. That barrier exists.

**Mr O'Kane:** We are talking about sight loss. However, we are part of the consortium of seven disability organisations that I mentioned. They all say the same thing. They are not getting a lot of people coming through who are looking for work. One reason for that is the benefits situation.

**Mr Douglas:** Many thanks for the presentation. Like Pat, I was at the RNIB AGM on Monday. It struck me that there are some 30,000 people in Northern Ireland who are blind and partially sighted.

To return to Pat's point: 559 people are registered for Access to Work. Do you think that there could be other people who are eligible and that the numbers could be higher if the right opportunities and information were available?

**Mr O'Kane:** Certainly. A lot of people are sitting at home who left their place of work because of sight loss and should not have done so. Perhaps that happened because they could not see the computer, the lighting in the room was not right, or they simply felt that they did not want to tell their employer. They left work and are sitting at home when they could be working again. It is about getting the message out to them.

The booklet that I circulated shows the different types of jobs that people do, but people with sight loss work in a range of professions. The important thing that we want to tell employers and everybody else is that we are the RNIB — the Royal National Institute of Blind People — but most of the people whom we work with have some level of sight. Only 4% of those with sight loss can see nothing. Most people have a level of vision, and it could be that a larger point size or a larger computer screen would solve their problem. It is simply not the case that everyone with sight loss uses a cane and reads Braille.

The answer to your question is yes. There are plenty of people at home who could be working if they had the opportunity.

**Mr Douglas:** I have a quick question. What is the difference between those people and people such as Lisa, who has been very successful in moving into another job? Maybe Lisa could answer that.

**Ms French:** That could have happened to me. As I said, I was in the carer side, and I could not work there any longer because it was getting too difficult. I was thinking of leaving and sitting at home, as Martin said. However, the RNIB helped me to learn those skills, and my employer put me into an office position in which I was safe, and I was not around service users who could have harmed me.

That could definitely have happened to me. I could have gone down that slippery slope, but with help from the RNIB, I am in a job, and I am lucky that I am there.

**Mr Douglas:** This is my final, and probably most important, question. One of your key asks is to examine the support that blind and partially sighted people receive in education and in making the transition from education to employment. Is there no such support at present? Pat mentioned a number of reports that, because of data protection, the Department would not release. How do we reach the point at which we can give that support?

**Mr O'Kane:** There is support in place. As I said, there are transition coordinators who go into schools and work with people with sight loss to make sure that they are supported when they leave school. However, there are five coordinators, one for each of the boards. We find that maybe two or three meetings are held with such pupils during their time at school, and very important decisions are made on the subjects that they will choose. Unless someone has a good knowledge of a pupil coming through school, they cannot really advise on their future in an informed way. We find that those coordinators do not have specific knowledge about sight loss and eye conditions and how that affects people doing jobs. The specialist knowledge is not there, but we would be able to provide it. There is support, but I do not feel that it is geared up significantly for people with visual impairments.

**Mr Douglas:** How should we deal with that? Is it for us to carry out an investigation or a review, or should we ask someone else to do it?

**Mr O'Kane:** That is what I was asking. Could there be an examination of —

**Mr Yung:** Sorry to interrupt. I was at an event recently at Queen's University that was hosted by Dr Berni Kelly, who is one of the foremost thinkers on transitions for disabled young people. She highlighted some of the major problems. A lot of the time, there is not a connect, a social worker goes missing, there is a gap or a social worker may not be involved with a school and does not know the subjects that have been studied. Sometimes, you are fighting the attitude, not only of mainstream schools that might be ignorant about the matter but even of specialist schools that may arguably have a different or older perspective on the subjects that are offered. Maybe not as much attention and focus is put on the hard skills, such as essential skills in English. For many blind and partially sighted people, especially those with albinism, there is no reason why they should be studying essential skills in English; they should be doing a full-on English GCSE, mathematics and so forth. However, all of a sudden when they reach adulthood, everything stops. As everyone sitting round this table knows, people change again. You have had a life whereby you were cosseted, especially if you went to a specialist school, and all of a sudden there is no form of support mechanism. It would be helpful if the Committee could put pressure on for greater working between Departments — Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Employment and Learning, and Education.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** At a previous session, the Department advised us that it had nine or 10 special advisers to deal with this disability. What work are you doing with the Department to highlight the difficulties that you highlighted to the Committee today?

**Mr O'Kane:** Everything that I highlighted today, I have highlighted at the all-party working group on visual impairment. The head of the disability employment service, Terry Park, was at those meetings. We link well with the disability employment service, and it says that it is doing all that it can to help us with those issues. I have highlighted the fact that there are not enough people coming through the job centres looking for work. However, the disability employment service said that it cannot make people come through those doors to look for work. That is where we are.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** How do we bridge that gap?

**Mr O'Kane:** Where do we move on from that? I have highlighted those issues, and we have not really moved forward. I mentioned employer engagement. The disability employment service will say that it is engaging with employers to use the programmes. However, we are not seeing a level of awareness among employers about sight loss that gives us confidence that the area of disability is being properly put out there to employers.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** Does the RNIB carry out many advertising campaigns to help to highlight the issue?



**Mr O'Kane:** We market our programmes, but we are limited in that we have a small team. We will market our service, but the majority of the work that we do is DEL-funded. These are DEL programmes, so we think that there should be a bigger marketing strategy for the programme to work for everyone, not only us.

**Mr Hilditch:** Thanks for the presentation. This issue is very close to my heart. My father worked partially sighted for many years as a pipe fitter on building sites, including the shipyard. It is quite an amazing story. He had to quit when he went totally blind. That was in the days before health and safety, so it was quite an amazing story to hear.

I will follow on from the Deputy Chair's comments. If more resource was made available, would you see the RNIB as a better delivery body to try to cover the three areas that you feel are not efficient enough? You said that you are a small organisation, but if there were additional resource, would either you or the consortium be better placed?

**Mr O'Kane:** Let us look at the first ask. If we had additional resource to provide support in schools and a transition officer or transition support, we could link in with children who have sight loss in school and ensure that they are looking at the right options for leaving school and that they are getting the right support. We could definitely affect performance levels at school, which would affect how employable they are when they leave school. Resource would definitely help with that.

On the employer engagement part, I do not necessarily think that giving us resource will help. A resource needs to be identified in the Department to try to engage employers or market them on a bigger scale, not only on sight loss but on the larger disability field.

**Mr Hilditch:** Is the resource of nine or 10 departmental advisers not doing that?

**Mr O'Kane:** We do not see much employer engagement through that. Are you referring to the disability employer engagement officers?

**Mr Hilditch:** Yes.

**Mr O'Kane:** They are unable to engage directly with people on sight loss. It has to be a general employer engagement.

With our third ask, we want to increase the resource on our team only if more people were coming through looking for work. We have two employment officers who work with blind and partially sighted people, but if we were to get increased referrals, we would want to increase our staff numbers. Our numbers are small.

**Ms McGahan:** Thank you for your presentation. I have a sister who is partially sighted. Your third action point is about an effective engagement programme. Have you done any engagements with schools across the North to make them aware of the provision of your services, even by sending a letter?

**Mr O'Kane:** We have a children and youth team that will engage with schools, but there are a lot of schools. We think that there is a responsibility on the Department of Education to promote our service. For us to go out to schools and tell them about what we do is quite resource-heavy, so we are limited in what we can do. We would need assistance in trying to promote what we do throughout all schools in Northern Ireland. We do limited marketing to the education sector, but we need some help there.

**Ms McGahan:** For the price of a first-class stamp, you could send a letter to the schools to make them aware of your services. I would have thought that that would be a very important action point. I read about Andrea Begley's experiences and how she was treated at her school as regards careers advice. That is a very simple but effective way to engage with the schools initially and to make them aware of your services.

**Mr O'Kane:** Special needs careers officers are linked to the schools, and we engage with them. So, they know about our service, but they are limited in what they can provide, and we are not funded to provide any assistance. Although there are careers advisers in schools, advising young people on

where they should go, they will not bring us in to work one to one with those young people because there is no funding in place to do that. We can only do it on an advisory basis.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** We thank you for giving us your presentation and answering questions. We listened carefully to it. However, we have to make it clear that the Department cannot focus simply on one disability; it has to look at disability as a whole. We will write to the Department about access to Work Connect and see what it is doing and whether it can do any more to advertise it or take any further steps. We also will forward the Hansard report of this meeting to the Department. Does the Committee agree to do that?

*Members indicated assent.*

**The Deputy Chairperson:** We will look at the research that Pat asked about. Can you give us more detail on what you want research on?

**Mr P Ramsey:** It is clear that, particularly from a child's perspective, there has to be, either through the GP surgery or primary school, a registration point at which it is formally acknowledged that somebody is visually impaired or blind. Organisations such as RNIB have been endeavouring for decades to try to get the data on that. It is about sharing that information, even if it is done through the employment and support offices. They have to find a creative way of sharing that information so that they can make a greater impact. That is the logic of it.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** We will see what we can get on that.

**Mr O'Kane:** We came along today and highlighted issues, and some of it may appear quite negative, but the publication that we have shown today shows the positive side of getting the support to find work. We want people to know that, despite issues with sight loss, they can work and there is plenty of support if they come to us. Employers who ask for our support are very positive and work well with us. It is not as though all employers are not working to get people into employment. There is a positive side to it, but we want to improve that and engage with more people.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** Absolutely. I am sure that that is the desire of everyone around the table. The Committee and the Department will no doubt do what they can. We thank you for your presentation.

**Mr O'Kane:** Thank you.