



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Employment and Learning

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Delivering Success through Excellence:
DEL Briefing

22 January 2014

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Robin Swann (Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sammy Douglas
Mr David Hilditch
Mr Fra McCann
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Alastair Ross

Witnesses:

Mr Victor Dukelow	Department for Employment and Learning
Mrs Angela Whiteside	Department for Employment and Learning

The Chairperson: I welcome the witnesses from the Department: Mr Victor Dukelow, deputy director of analytical services; and Mrs Angela Whiteside, deputy director of quality and performance. Victor and Angela, you are very welcome. Opening comments, please.

Mr Victor Dukelow (Department for Employment and Learning): Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you for your introduction. I will give a broad introduction about who we are and our work areas and then give a brief overview of the report on quality and performance that is before you today and which was published just before Christmas last year.

I am accompanied by Angela Whiteside, who is the Department's quality adviser with responsibility for advising on quality issues in further education (FE), training and employment programmes. I am the joint head of the Department's analytical services group. We produce an annual quantitative assessment of the Department's programme across its areas of responsibility, whether in skills, employment or innovation, with a view to identifying what areas are going well, where challenges exist for the Department and how they might be met. As I said, the latest report was published in December 2013, and I trust that that is the report that you have before you. If it is acceptable, Chair, I would like to give a brief overview of the report and then pass over to Angela, who will give an outline of the work that she has been involved in on the quality and performance side.

This is the fourth annual report that we have produced. As its central reference point, it uses the Programme for Government commitments that the Department has responsibility for delivering. As analysts, we find them helpful reference points to use as a focus. That is particularly the case on the skills side where we have a target of delivering 210,000 qualifications over the period of the Programme for Government. The commitments allow us to look at whether we are on track with the number of qualifications that are being delivered and to drill down into various programme areas that have responsibility for contributing to that target. It allows us to question whether the performance on

the delivery of a target is being contributed to across the board or whether one specific element of the Department's provision is contributing to that work.

The commitments also give us the opportunity to look to the future. Tomorrow's qualifications are dependent on the extent to which we can secure enrolments today and to which the retention and achievements of those enrolments follow through. Through the reporting mechanism, we can give an insight into how we might perform on the qualifications agenda. It has been a useful exercise that we have applied to our data sources to good effect.

Where they can be found, the report also sets out international benchmarks for the indicators that are set out. We have made considerable effort on that in the latest report. Yellow boxes littered throughout the report set out national and international benchmarks. That helps us to calibrate our performance in the wider context and to calibrate the scale of the challenge that confronts us. The report is accompanied by a quality and performance action plan, which sets out the steps that the Department is taking to address the issues that the report raises and how it seeks to improve performance further.

The report kicks off by looking at the context in which we are working. Like earlier reports that considered this period, it continues to point to the challenging external environment in which the Department is working.

Economic sentiments have been improving. In fact, the latest labour market figures, which came out today, are positive, as unemployment and inactivity are down and employment is up. However, when we compare ourselves to other parts of the UK and the UK as a whole, it demonstrates that the recovery has been slower to take root in Northern Ireland. There are challenges ahead for us, particularly fiscal restraint, which creates affordability issues in the delivery of some areas. The downturn has created increased demand for the kind of programmes for which the Department has responsibility. When there are weaknesses in the labour market, it is an opportunity for people to upskill and prepare themselves for the upturn, yet people are less able to afford such provision and companies are less able to afford to sponsor their employees through it. That creates an affordability conundrum, yet the figures show increased enrolments in many areas and increased qualifications, which is a positive reflection.

The report points out that we continue to have one of the youngest populations in Europe. That is positive for the future, as it will give us a potential stream of highly educated people to drive economic growth, yet the number of young people has been falling in recent times. The other challenge in a downturn is to make sure that when young people hit the labour market, or labour-market age, they are kept close to it and are given opportunities to participate.

However, the report also shows that the number of older people is increasing dramatically. It points to the fact that, over the next 15 years, the cohort of people aged 65 and over is predicted to increase by about 40%, which is quite sizeable. The challenge for the Department, particularly when the working age and retirement age is increasing, is ensuring that those people will have the skills to engage actively in the labour market.

In looking at specific indicators in the report, and taking the skills dimension first, the report points to a strong start being made against the key Programme for Government commitments. We are half-way through the PFG period, at least we were when the report was written, and already more than half the qualifications target has been delivered. No doubt, as you drill down into the various programme areas, that strong performance has been helped by increasing numbers of essential skills at level 2 and above. However, even if you exclude that programme, there has been strong growth in the number of qualifications at levels 2, 3 and 4. That is with essential skills excluded just to make sure that we get a clear picture of the other provision. Level 4 and above now accounts for about 40% of the qualifications delivered over that period. That percentage has been increasing, and I think that it resonates quite closely with the skills strategy, which demonstrates that we need a strong focus on level 4 and above skills.

The subject mix of the broader science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) qualifications is also moving in line with the strategic focus. The narrow STEM range, which excludes construction and medicine-type courses, makes up an increasing proportion of our overall qualifications. Almost one third of all level-2 and above qualifications, or one fifth of qualifications of essential skills, as excluded, comprise those narrow STEM-type courses.

Looking to the future, and thinking again about the delivery of qualifications at level 2 and above, the improvements that have been witnessed in retention and achievement rates bode well. A picture is being painted of increasing enrolments and an increasing propensity for those who have enrolled to achieve the qualification that they set out to achieve. That bodes well for the future level of qualifications that can be delivered and provided in the Northern Ireland economy.

Earlier, Dr Mary McIvor touched on the widening access agenda for FE. When you look across the programmes that DEL delivers on the skills front and at the areas of deprivation in Northern Ireland and split them into the most deprived and the most affluent fifths of areas, and look at where enrolments are being drawn from, you will find that 20% of all enrolments on the Department's areas of provision are drawn from the 20% most deprived areas. That is quite well represented, I suppose, with regard to the widening access agenda.

The report highlights that point when we compare ourselves internationally, which is something to reflect on. We are improving in a number of areas. The data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) programme for the international assessment of adult competencies (PIAAC) that we presented to you recently showed that Northern Ireland is closing the gap with the OECD average on literacy and numeracy. However, there is still a significant skills profile gap to be closed with the world leaders. There is, undoubtedly, a challenge there for the Department.

I will go quickly through the employment and innovation indicators. A similar picture is emerging on the employment side. More than half the Programme for Government target has been achieved halfway into the Programme for Government delivery period. There is a major challenge ahead for the Department due to the economic context within which we are operating. There is still a challenge ahead to reduce unemployment and economic inactivity in Northern Ireland.

With regard to innovation, the data shows that our higher education R&D expenditure is slightly below the UK and EU levels. Nevertheless, wider survey evidence shows strong engagement in our higher education sector and with the business and community sector in particular. Measures such as collaborative research and the number of spin-off companies show that Northern Ireland is punching above its weight in a UK context. That is positive, although there has been some cooling off since we last reported on this, when there was an all-time record level of business at university interaction.

To summarise, there are encouraging strategic messages from the report, including good performance against PFG commitments and an improving picture on STEM, retention and achievement and widening access. However, the operating context remains challenging. There is still ground to be made up with world leaders in some areas, and that creates a challenge for us.

Angela will now go through some of the work in which she has been engaged in addressing those issues further.

Mrs Angela Whiteside (Department for Employment and Learning): We continue to implement our quality improvement strategy across all our training, further education and employment programmes.

The Department has many measures to monitor quality, but one of our key partners is the Education and Training Inspectorate. Across training, further education and employment programmes, we ask the inspectorate to carry out a full inspection of every provider every three years.

The inspectorate has a six-point scale in which the middle is "good" and the bottom "unsatisfactory". The Department takes forward the outcomes of those inspections. Where a provider is good or better, it is pretty much left alone with regard to full inspections for the three years. However, where provision, either overall or in elements, has been found "satisfactory" or less, we enter a follow-up inspection process where the provider has to submit to us an improvement or action plan, outlining how it intends to address the weaknesses identified in the inspection.

We then have the provider monitored and do a follow-up inspection 12 to 18 months later to make sure that any poor provision is not left to remain. We keep a close eye on things to make sure that the provider is moving forward. We balance that by giving every supplier an opportunity to improve. However, we are mindful that we cannot leave poor provision to rest unattended.

The picture across our Training for Success and apprenticeship provision means that 95% of our providers are "satisfactory" or better. The remaining 5% will be going through the follow-up inspection process.

Of the six colleges, we have been implementing a schedule of whole-college inspections, where we have asked the inspectorate to look at provision across further education up to level 3 and the training provision across the two funding streams. Of our five colleges, one is to be completed; four are sitting at "good" and one at "very good".

In our Steps to Work provision, we have just completed all the inspections on the contractors. There were no issues, and a very positive picture was reported.

As we do not want to leave each provider for three years without having a measure of quality reported, we ask each one, across all areas of provision — further education, training and employment — to submit an annual self-evaluation report and a quality improvement plan, because we recognise that we cannot inspect quality into an organisation. Organisations must be responsible for monitoring and improving quality themselves. That is the idea behind an annual self-evaluation report and a quality improvement plan, and we ask the inspectorate to conduct a brief inspection annually of each provider to confirm the accuracy of the self-assessment. That means that we have a yearly measure of quality for each provider in addition to the three-year cycle.

Our other quality work includes the quarterly health checks in further education, which involves the Department meeting the governing body of each college and providing a detailed measure of progress across a wide range of indicators. We have the annual production in further education of detailed learner retention and achievement data, right down to individual course level. That is published and shared with the colleges and is benchmarked across all six. We also have the annual college development planning process, where the colleges meet the further education division, are challenged about performance and are asked to report on other areas. We have our quality managers' forum, where, in FE, we schedule a Friday morning once every quarter to share good practice internally across the six colleges. We have used it to share best practice from our six colleges on how they monitor retention and work to improve retention and achievement.

We also bring in identified good practice from outside. In May, we had a session from a high-performing college in England on how it used a systematic approach to lesson observations to drive up improvement in teaching and learning.

Over the past year, we have also introduced quality performance adjustment. Based on the retention and achievement data, courses that have been identified as underperforming are subject to a financial penalty in the following year.

In addition to inspections of training and Steps to Work, we have our contract compliance visits, whereby each supplier or lead contractor is monitored on their adherence to operational guidelines and the terms of their contract. That can often inform inspection activities because, sometimes, contract compliance activities can identify areas that would give us concern for quality. One side informs the other.

Equally, they submit an annual self-evaluation report, and we have our departmental data. We had a very successful process for Steps to Work in the form of a case conference, where all the key players in the Department and the inspectorate met to report an holistic view on how each provider was performing. We are implementing that now under the terms of the new Training for Success and apprenticeships contract.

A key feature across all our programmes is our work on teacher education. We continue to develop and enhance our teacher education programmes for further education lecturers, trainers in training organisations, in Steps to Work and our employment programmes, and those involved in delivering essential skills. We have also been working with the University of Ulster to develop continuous professional development (CPD) modules so that where areas are identified during inspections, the University of Ulster can respond by offering CPD modules that will help lecturers and trainers to improve their performance.

We also provide one-to-one support if a provider has individual difficulties, and we can pair them up with high-performing organisations. We hold internal workshops where particular thematic issues are developing.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much. You have given us a detailed briefing on your paper. I want to pick up on something that you said about Steps to Work, about how it has been greeted and about its quality. I am sure that you are aware that that issue has been raised a number of times in the Committee. Hypothetically, when the Department enters into a new contract, for example, for Steps 2

Success, do you have input into the contract on how you will assess quality, or does it arrive at your desk only after all that has been sorted out?

Mrs Whiteside: No, I have been working with my colleagues in proposing how we will monitor quality. It is not finalised yet, but we will build on the experiences that we have gained from Steps to Work.

The Chairperson: So you have an input into the development of that.

Mrs Whiteside: Yes. It will not just land on my desk.

The Chairperson: When you were giving your presentation and reporting the statistics, Victor, there were some positives on the Department's gains and successes. However, there were also some significant negatives, if I can put it that way. In the narrow STEM in mainstream further education, there is a decrease of 20% between 2007-08 and 2011-12. Did you find any reason behind that, given that the Department and the Executive are promoting STEM as a growth area?

Mr Dukelow: The decrease over the longer term was not focused on mainstream FE only. In a sense, the STEM agenda is a bit like turning a tanker around: a strategic focus has been put on it particularly over the past number of years, and that is starting to bear fruit now. The longer you look back, of course, the more you see the decline. However, in more recent times, it looks like that corner is being turned. More recent data than that presented in this report has been published since this report was brought out, and the FE mainstream picture for the STEM qualifications has increased in the past year by 20%. That is quite a positive approach and something to build on. There is no doubt that we need to work collectively in government with employers and others on the whole STEM agenda to demonstrate to people the value of the STEM qualifications and to make sure that whenever people reach the stage where they can participate in programmes that DEL delivers they have the foundation built to be able to participate effectively in STEM-type courses. Evidence has come through from the University of Ulster that shows that younger males, in particular those from working-class backgrounds, can be turned off the whole STEM agenda and the maths element particularly because they do not see the links between what they are doing in a school session in preparing for their GCSEs and the world of work. There is a job of work for us all to continue to do to persuade people. That is not just for government to do; employers also have a responsibility to demonstrate to young people, particularly young people who do not have the links or the clear lines of sight into the employment agenda, that the work that they are doing at school level or in FE, whether that is essential skills or whatever else, has a real value out there in the labour market and will act to their benefit in the longer term.

The Chairperson: You used the word "affordability" earlier. Your tables show trends in the skills indicators for higher education and widening access. For classes 4, 5, 6 and 7, there was a decrease there as well; comparatively about 5% in those specific classes. Is enough being done to address that?

Mr Dukelow: The picture is mixed across the provision that the Department offers. There is stronger participation from a widening access perspective in essential skills, for instance, and, in our training programmes, there is very strong penetration among those from the more deprived communities. How do you build a pathway and a progression route for people to increase their skill sets if they have had a difficult experience of education? It is about building the foundation on essential skills and then encouraging people and delivering progression pathways for them to step up the skills ladder. On the other side of the spectrum, the more affluent groups in Northern Ireland continue to be over-represented in higher education; although, when you compare our position with the rest of the UK, we seem to be better at integrating those from more deprived communities. There is still a job of work to be done, but there is some encouragement to be taken when we compare ourselves nationally.

The Chairperson: The comparison nationally is that we might be better off, but if we are starting to see a slow decrease, and if that is going to be attributed to affordability, we should be stepping in now to address it. It is not acceptable to come down to the GB level and feel that that is where we are going to go. We should be taking steps to address that decline at this minute. Is the problem affordability, the access or the pathway?

Mr Dukelow: No. Over the longer term, there has been quite good performance on this. It will have to be continually monitored. One of the things that we have seen in the HE data recently, and perhaps it is a response to fee issues across the rest of the UK, is that more people are applying to study

locally rather than be faced with the £9,000 fees elsewhere. In general terms, we know from other data that those who go away tend to be more affluent and higher qualified. If those people decide to stay at home, there is a risk that they will push out the more marginal student because, with the qualifications that they have, they can effectively gain a place in a local institution. You will be familiar with the fact that the Minister has announced extra places in higher education over the past years as a means of dealing with this. That is something that, as a Department, we have to keep our eye on; how those student flows are working out and the impact that they are having on the widening access agenda more generally.

Mr F McCann: Again, thanks for the presentation. It is quite obvious when we sit and listen to these presentations that you will sometimes look at us and say that we are being heavily critical of some aspects of the report, but it also shows that there is a huge amount of work going on in the system. Sometimes you find it difficult to understand how to pull all the threads together to come up with an effective strategy that allows you to deal with it. Obviously, that is the million-dollar question.

We always come back to this point. The report states that 41,000 people came off benefits over a year. We have always found it difficult to understand where they went to. Did they go into full-time employment; did they go into part-time employment; did they go into zero-hour employment; or did they emigrate? Nobody has been able to give us the answer to the question of what happens to these people when they come off benefits. I do not know whether there is anything there that will allow you to do it.

Mr Dukelow: The PFG target is about moving people into employment. Those people are being moved into employment, but the issue that we are faced with currently is the level of churn in the labour market. While we are successful, and we seem to be increasing the pace in the numbers of people being moved off benefits and into employment, those people are being replaced by people who are losing their job or by the cohort of young people who are coming from education and flowing into the labour market. They are replacing the people who are being moved off benefits. The question, and I do not have the answer, is what would have happened had we not been able to move those people into employment. We would probably now be faced with much higher levels of unemployment.

One of the concluding points that I had on that employment side is that there is a major challenge ahead to make sure that the level of unemployment is tackled. The latest figures that we have today show that, while it is down slightly, Northern Ireland's unemployment rate is still around 7.5%, which is significantly above where it was at the start of the downturn. If we want to really drive the economy forward, we need to be utilising the kinds of talents that those people have.

A multifaceted approach is required. Work on the demand side of the economy is needed, such as the kind of work that Invest NI is doing to increase demand from businesses, but we also have to keep people close to the labour market. The kind of work that we do in the Department is to make sure that people have the skills necessary for future employment and also that they have the resilience not to lose heart and are kept close to the labour market in order that their skills are not depleted and diminished in this difficult period.

Mr F McCann: Obviously, it has been a difficult period for people. You speak about the 7% mark, but that is across the board. Areas that suffered deprivation and unemployment five, 10 or 15 years ago are still the areas that suffer now, and any increases in employment do not seem to have any impact on people there moving into employment. When we talk about 7%, that does not reflect the nature of where the unemployment is situated. Sammy often talks about parts of east Belfast where there are big pockets of unemployment, and it is the same in other communities in other areas.

Mr Dukelow: That is absolutely right. Part of this, perhaps, is about finding ways, whether through the careers side of things or the work that the employment service is doing, to help people to understand what opportunities are out there and what the future opportunities are. Whether it is a matter of creating jobs in specific areas or trying to broaden people's job search activities so that they can look elsewhere and be helped to have the capacity to grasp the opportunities that exist or will exist elsewhere, how we tackle that question has to be thought through.

Mr F McCann: I have a couple of points. A number of weeks ago, Sammy and others raised the question of there being, I think, 300 part-time jobs available at the shipyard. Two hundred came from outside and 100 came from here. I spoke to a guy who stopped me. He is qualified, has worked offshore and has the skills, but he could not get a job here. You talk about pathways, but there must

be pathways for people like him — local people who have the skills and ability to do it — so that they are not turned away from jobs.

You spoke about the six colleges, and you said that one was "good" and one was "very good": what about the other four?

Mrs Whiteside: Sorry, maybe I misrepresented that. Five have been inspected, and one is still to be done. Four are "good" and one is "very good".

Mr F McCann: I think that you said that, for training providers, there are "satisfactory" and "poor" and "satisfactory" and "good" ratings. How many sit at the "satisfactory" level?

Mrs Whiteside: There are currently 44 delivering the new Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI contracts, and 13% are sitting on "satisfactory", 13% on "outstanding", 23% on "very good" and 48% on "good".

The Chairperson: Sammy, maybe Fra has asked most of what you wanted to say.

Mr F McCann: Hopefully.

Mr Douglas: It is great that he is very concerned with east Belfast.

Mr F McCann: That is because you threatened me.

Mr Douglas: Seriously, thanks for your presentation. I thought that the report was very good as well.

Last November, with most people here, I attended the European Youth Forum. The Minister spoke at that event. I think that it struck most of us that Northern Ireland was quite ahead of most European countries. In your report, paragraph E6 states that:

"While the Northern Ireland skills profile has improved steadily over the last decade, gaps remain when compared to the best performing regions and nations."

Generally, in your analysis, have you looked at other European countries? I assume that you have. That is my first question. Secondly, have you done an analysis of how we compare with our local neighbour, the Republic of Ireland?

Mr Dukelow: Yes, that is certainly part of the mix. We have looked at the analysis quantitatively and qualitatively. I mentioned the PIAAC work that we did recently. The South was included in that analysis, as were England and 25 other countries, many of them in Europe but also dotted around the globe. That provided some encouraging news for Northern Ireland on the extent to which we are closing the gap with the OECD average of countries on our literacy performance. Particularly, there has been movement at the lower level of literacy, which, again, has been a focus of our policy. We understand the need to do something on that agenda if we are to integrate those people into the labour market, because employers are increasingly requiring a minimum standard of literacy and numeracy. We hear that regularly. So, there is some really interesting evidence there.

Another piece of evidence being added to the jigsaw was a report that came out yesterday from the OECD, which looked at our vocational education and training (VET) system in its entirety from a more qualitative perspective and compared the Northern Ireland VET system with those areas internationally. It identified a number of real strengths. Building on the discussion in the previous session, one of the strengths that it identified — again, remember that this is in an international setting — was the level of engagement between employers and our providers. The FE sector in particular was flagged up as being an example of good practice. However, challenges are identified. One of the areas identified as a challenge for Northern Ireland is the apprenticeship system. It encouraged us to move the focus of the apprenticeship system so that it was at a higher level and created progression pathways through apprenticeships to higher levels. That is reflected in the consultation paper that is out at the minute. It also indicated that, if we do that, we must not leave a vacuum and there should be progression pathways into apprenticeships at level 3. Mary spoke about the youth training review that is ongoing to see how that can be handled now that we know the broad shape of the apprenticeship side that we are consulting on. I do not know whether that helps.

Mr Douglas: That is very helpful. Victor, I want to take you on to something that Fra mentioned about the person he met who may be looking for a job overseas. You talk about the reflection of:

"a legacy of historical educational underachievement and of outward migration".

How much of a problem is that? I know some of the people in that category. For them, it is a problem and the answer is to get a job overseas. How much of a problem is that for Northern Ireland, and how much is it affecting our economy?

Mr Dukelow: I suppose that migration, certainly for those leaving Northern Ireland, is often down to a demand and supply issue. Historically, a lot of people have left these shores for higher education, and up to about a third of the cohort that go into the HE sector —

Mr Douglas: Sorry, part of the problem arising from that is that many of those people never return. Is it the same with people who are highly skilled? Is this a temporary thing?

Mr Dukelow: You are right. Often those who leave find that, for them, there are better opportunities elsewhere. They can secure a better standard of living — that kind of issue. Yet, we know from examples elsewhere — if you look at the South, during the years of the Celtic tiger particularly, you see that one of the great strengths of the Southern economy was its ability to attract the diaspora back. People had achieved a level of skill that they maybe could not have hoped to achieve had they stayed in an economy that was not performing at full strength. They were able to go elsewhere, hone those skills, get really good contacts and know how to trade internationally. When the Celtic tiger was roaring, they were attracted back, because they felt that the opportunities in Ireland were attractive with being close to home and so on, and they were able to fill skills gaps that existed at that time. It can turn into a positive. If we compare that with the alternative of people staying at home and not being able to find a job or finding a job at a level that they are overqualified for, which is the better scenario? Is it the potential that they go away and hone their skills with a view that they could come back or keeping them at home? That is one to be thought through, but it certainly worked in favour of the Southern economy at that stage of its cycle.

Ms McGahan: Thank you for your presentation. You referred to the external environment and said that there are signs of recovery in some sectors, especially those that are export-focused. Would you acknowledge that the delay with the A5 project has had a very negative impact on distribution and export costs west of the Bann, thereby impacting on employment?

Mr Dukelow: It would be difficult to comment on that. I have not looked at its impact from a research perspective. I am not sure —

Ms McGahan: It is about access.

Mr Dukelow: Yes. Our strongest opportunity for growth as a region — this is reflected in the economic strategy — is to promote our export-based and export-focused enterprises and firms, whether they be large or small and wherever they are located, whether east or west of the Bann. We are faced with a position where our domestic demand is likely to be constrained for the foreseeable future because of our fiscal constraints and the debt overhang from the property market. What else will create growth other than bringing growth into the country through exporting the kind of products and services that we can provide? Wherever those are located, we need to be able to promote that export activity.

Mr Hilditch: Angela, you mentioned underperformance and a financial penalty somewhere. Where was that?

Mrs Whiteside: Yes, that was to do with FE provision. There is a sliding scale for underperformance. If the achievement for a particular course is, let us say, less than 20%, the next year that college is tasked with delivering the same provision without funding; obviously, at a much more successful level.

I want to make one other point. Going back to the grades, the grade that five out of the six colleges received — four good; one very good — was for their FE provision. On their training provision, two colleges are going through follow-up. We have found that there are some issues on the training side in colleges and that further education provision tends to be better. The purpose of the whole-college

inspections was to allow the inspectorate to view the provision in the round and for the colleges to assimilate the same standards across the piece.

The Chairperson: Victor and Angela, thank you very much for your honest and open presentation and your paper. It shows everything that the Department is doing well, but you were not afraid to highlight where there are some weaknesses that can be improved on. Thank you very much.