



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Employment and Learning

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Review of Youth Training: Department for
Employment and Learning

13 May 2015

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for Employment and Learning

Review of Youth Training: Department for Employment and Learning

13 May 2015

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Robin Swann (Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson
Mr William Irwin
Ms Anna Lo
Mr Fra McCann
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Ms Claire Sugden

Witnesses:

Mr Michael Armstrong	Department for Employment and Learning
Mr David Broadhurst	Department for Employment and Learning
Ms Carol Magill	Department for Employment and Learning

The Chairperson (Mr Swann): I welcome from the Department Carol Magill, head of the new initiatives unit; Mr David Broadhurst from the review of youth training branch; and Mr Michael Armstrong from the new initiatives unit. Carol, when you are ready.

Ms Carol Magill (Department for Employment and Learning): Good morning. First, I apologise on behalf of the director, Yvonne. I think that you have already got a message that she is unable to join us this morning. She would like her apologies noted. If you are content, we will talk through the presentation that we have shared with you, being as brief and concise as we can. We are then open to questions. As always, we welcome your input and comments.

I will say a little bit about the background to youth training. We recently completed a public consultation. We published that consultation in November and set out a range of interventions that serves as a blueprint for Northern Ireland's future youth training system. We had 26 different proposals, which were grouped under four themes: the core components of the youth training system; supporting young people; delivering and employing engagement structures; and ensuring quality. The interim report proposed the establishment of a new youth training system at level 2 — broadly equivalent to GCSE — to deliver professional and technical training through a new baccalaureate-style award that equates to five GCSEs from A* to C, including English and mathematics. All participants will have access to structured work-based learning, and it is intended that the new system will be open to all 16- to 24-year-olds who require skills development at level 2, whether they are in employment, starting a new job or currently not in employment.

You have received all our feedback on the consultation. We had quite robust stakeholder engagement. We had two roadshows, with over 130 attendees representing 90 organisations,

including employers, training organisations and awarding bodies. About 40 groups from the community and voluntary sector were represented at those events. As the views of young people are essential as we go forward, we spoke directly to 104 young people through 12 workshop sessions, in Dungannon, Enniskillen, Newtownards, Lurgan, Belfast and Londonderry. Those young people included a cross section of experience. We had young people enrolled in entry level and right up to level 3. We had representatives from a range of sectors, and, again, you have been furnished with all the formal and informal youth consultation. We had 61 formal responses, including 18 responses from individual young people. Overall, the responses to the consultation indicated that there was broad support for the 26 proposals in the interim report. The majority of the questions posed in our consultation document received a high level of positive response, with all but five responses receiving over 80% support. We will take into account the proposals and the feedback from the focus group as we develop our draft policy commitments.

At this point, I will hand over to David to talk through those in quite a bit of detail.

Mr David Broadhurst (Department for Employment and Learning): Good morning. I will talk you through some of the draft policy commitments as they sit. It is largely what will make up our final report, subject to change, obviously.

The following four draft high-level policy commitments are ones to which we think that we did not get such a good response. We have tried to acknowledge that and adjust them. They got between 65% and 80% support.

The first commitment is that, where required, young people will be supported to achieve what we call a full level 1, which we define as four GCSEs from D to G, including English and maths or equivalent qualifications. The Department recently awarded a total budget of £20-odd million to 13 organisations across Northern Ireland through the European social fund (ESF) to deliver a series of level 1 interventions that we hope will be able to make young people access and support their future progression into youth training at level 2. The Department will work with providers over the coming 12 to 18 months, with a view to ensuring progression and facilitating seamless progression into the new youth training offer when it starts.

There is also the Pathways to Success strategy, which has been in existence for three years and is currently being reviewed. It looked at Skills for Life and Skills for Work level 1 to try to ensure that those will make entry into level 2 much easier. On the four GCSEs at grades D to G requirement, it is fair to say that our original proposal received a mixed response from stakeholders. Some said that it was too low, some said that it was too high and some said that it did not take into account equivalent qualifications. One thing that we have taken on board from the consultation is that it should be a guide. Overall, 67% of respondents thought that it was a fairly good idea, but more as a guide and not as an absolute. It should not be another barrier to young people accessing youth training.

That commitment will entail consideration of the appropriate equivalent level of qualifications and how best to ensure flexibility of entry and still ensure that the young person is still able achieve at level 2.

The second draft commitment is that youth training should normally be expected to take roughly two years. Again, stakeholder feedback informed our thinking around that, and people came back with points about the need for flexibility. For example, although we are still finalising what the policy commitment will be, we have been advised that certain sectors may not require two years, so it would be nonsensical to keep training at two years. However certain groups, such as those leaving care and those with a disability, require longer. Moreover, young people at that age may face a lot of issues, so provision should be made for interrupted training; that is, they should be able to take a break and return to continue their youth training at a later date. We are trying to consider all of that within the proposal.

The next commitment is for sectoral partnerships, and almost 100% of consultation respondents agreed with it. The young people also liked the idea that employers would set where youth training goes. Respondents were less comfortable with the idea that sectoral partnerships should determine the duration, structure and timing of work placements because of concerns that that would equate to micromanagement by us and, consequently, would be unresponsive to the needs of individuals and employers. The commitment will make clear that any such guidelines for sectoral partnerships will be high-level guidelines only.

The next draft commitment is for a central service, which will be supported by dedicated industry consultants — an industry consultant being someone who sources work placements and liaises with the employer and the training provider. In our language, it was never intended to be "central" in the

sense of geographical location, but it was very clear from the feedback that that was what people took it to mean — that it would be Belfast-centric. Clear messages have nonetheless been received for a local focus, and we are looking to determine how that central service will best do that, using the industry consultants to ensure that each area is covered. It is not designed to override the excellent relationships that already exist between training providers and employers in local areas. Therefore, the commitment will make clear that the central service hopes to complement rather than replace those.

I will hand over to Michael to continue with the draft commitments.

Mr Michael Armstrong (Department for Employment and Learning): Good morning. David focused on the proposals for which there was between 60% and 80% support. There, we looked at the feedback and issues and tried to adjust our commitments accordingly. The rest of the policy commitments in the interim report received between 80% and 100% support. However, that does not mean that there was not feedback to take on board, and adjustments have been made to our proposals.

On the two key commitments on what the youth training system will be and what it will deliver, there was widespread support for extending the age range from the 16- and 17-year-olds currently able to avail themselves of Training for Success to those aged 16 to 24 and to make youth training accessible to those who are starting a new job, those who are already in work and need skills development at level 2, and those who are not yet in employment.

There was widespread support for the idea of a new baccalaureate-style approach to the curriculum that includes literacy and numeracy qualifications at level 2. Regarding the feedback from the consultation, we are taking on board some queries in and around the roles of essential skills and GCSEs, and we will be looking to develop that in tandem with the refresh of the essential skills strategy and the piloting of the curriculum throughout this financial year.

I will move on to some of the other commitments. Structured work-based learning received a high level of support, and online technologies were very much supported. One issue with work-based learning was the idea of work tasters for those who are not sure of their occupational area before they start a youth training scheme. Some of the feedback suggested that the idea of solely having work tasters was a bit limited. Other things that we could do include course tasters or talks from employers, as sending a young person immediately out into the workplace without some form of knowledge or skills development beforehand may leave a poor impression with the employer and may not be helpful for the young person to get an idea of what the actual work is like. Again, there were high levels of support for the Careers Service providing impartial advice and guidance before the young person starts on the training course and for pastoral support, including mentoring, to be provided to all participants.

On financial support and on flexibility for those with additional requirements, such as those leaving care or individuals with a disability, the consultation showed that there is a high level of support for those kinds of interventions. On the disability focus, there were some additional suggestions about what is currently in place for training programmes to build into our thinking on implementing the strategy.

On engaging employers, there were high levels of support for the strategic advisory forum and for funding mechanisms and incentives to grow participation by small businesses and microbusinesses.

On some of the other wider commitments, there was a clear level of support for clear branding and marketing. That was seen as an issue with the current system, where you have three distinct routes by which young people can access vocational training, and trying to unify those under one clear brand for young people to access was seen as being key. Furthermore, there were high levels of support for the quality measures, such as a registration and approval system for employers seeking to deliver the work-based aspects of youth training. Some of the suggestions that we will look to take on board include the potential for that kind of register and approval system to be a quality mark for employers, which they can then show as being part of their corporate social responsibility, because they are getting involved in vocational training for young people. In addition, there were high levels of support for the contractual agreement and for prescribed quality standards for providers of youth training.

The next commitment is on quality standards for the individuals who are delivering the training — the training providers and the mentors in the workplace. Again, there were high levels of support for tutors

having not only relevant occupational and teaching qualification but recent experience of their industry and some ideas on how that recent experience could be updated over time.

There was support for having appropriate recent experience of the industry and undertaking some training as workplace mentors. One of the issues raised in the consultation that we will be considering is an idea that for small and medium-sized employers. It might be onerous for them to undertake training as mentors, so we might build in some flexibilities.

The final commitment listed is for robust data-collection analysis and evaluation. One of the key things that we want to do is bring together the data systems that record achievement and progression under mainstream further education, the Training for Success programme and the current apprenticeships programme. We also want to add to that regular feedback from participants on their experiences of training and work-based learning.

I will hand back to Carol to cover the next steps.

Ms Magill: As you can see, the draft commitments represent a high-level policy direction for the new youth training system. I hope that we have demonstrated that we are continuing to develop those in line with the opinions and views that we received through our consultation and will receive through ongoing discussion with the Minister. We are, however, working apace, and we expect the final strategy to be published before the summer recess.

The final strategy will be written to integrate fully with the ongoing pilot activity being taken forward through the implementation of the Northern Ireland strategy on apprenticeships. Once the draft commitments and the strategy are published, we will move to piloting in this financial year. That will look at workplace-learning opportunities, mentoring and pastoral support. Some of the themes that we have mentioned this morning, we will want to move to pilot and test.

Without further ado, we can take questions.

The Chairperson (Mr Swann): Thanks, Carol. Bronwyn, you are keen to get away, so do you want to get in now?

Ms McGahan: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for your presentation. From my engagement with young people, I feel that a wee bit of dovetailing is needed with the economically inactive strategy, because there are young people out there who are categorised as being not in education, employment or training (NEET) who want to go to work. Some of them have been, for example, diagnosed as being autistic at 17 or 18 years of age and thus need support. Some of them are homeless, and finding somewhere to live becomes their priority, and that overrides education. We need to dovetail all the strategies, because it appears that there are the same issues right across the three strategies: the strategy on youth training, that on the economically inactive and that on NEETs. The same issues are occurring, but we are not getting to the nub of the problem.

Ms Magill: Certainly, when we move to pilots, there needs to be, as you say, a dovetailing with other strategies across the Department. In addition to economic inactivity, we will also pilot United Youth at the same time as youth training, and we must look at where young people could fall through the gaps and at where they need additional support to try to move on. I agree with your comments.

The Chairperson (Mr Swann): Carol, if you were to ask everybody what the ideal programme was, this would be it. However, the question is around delivery and how realistic that is. I am looking at some of your draft policy commitments. Your presentation states:

"Financial support will be provided to young people through a training wage or allowance."

At this stage, the Committee is working through concerns around the withdrawal of education maintenance allowance (EMA) from certain groups of young people. We are looking at the withdrawal of funding from the Bytes project and other projects. These are great aspirations, but they ring hollow to a lot of organisations and individuals out there. What reassurances can be given that the Department can deliver any of this? Your presentation states:

"Funding mechanisms and incentives will promote participation by small and micro businesses, encourage employment outcomes for young people in training".

That does not tie in with what the Committee sees being delivered.

Ms Magill: As far as funding is concerned, the Minister, at several stakeholder roadshows and in the House, has said that the new policy area is a commitment. Obviously, we are developing it in very challenging economic times, and I do not wish to make light of that. However, the Minister has indicated that it is a priority policy area. It is vital that we move forward and offer young people this opportunity, and it is vital for Northern Ireland's economy generally. We have the change fund secured for our pilots for the remainder of the financial year. Once the programme is fully rolled out, we will pick up funding from the, if you like, old programmes and invest it in the new programme. We are therefore confident that, despite the challenging economic environment, the funding will be found. Young people told us very strongly that they wanted a training allowance or incentive on top of their benefits, and that is included in our commitments.

The Chairperson (Mr Swann): That is what I am saying. We had young people at our previous meeting telling us very strongly that they wanted their pathways EMA to continue as well. It is fine, but we are not seeing it put into practice at this time. I am worried that the work will be seen as another set of nice words or another nice policy and will end up sitting on a shelf somewhere.

Ms Magill: All that I can do is reiterate the Minister's comments, and he has indicated that this is a priority area and that the funding will be found. We have a commitment in our strategy to pay an incentive or training allowance to young people. Young people told us that that was important to them, and our intention, despite the difficult economic conditions, is to find that money to ensure that they have an incentive to take part in the training.

The Chairperson (Mr Swann): I am not getting at you, by the way, but you have to understand where we are coming from.

You say that the tutors delivering this will be industry-based, from an occupational background and with a pedagogical qualification. How do you find such people?

Ms Magill: I refer you to my colleagues.

Mr Armstrong: In many cases, it is a matter of taking what is already there in some strands of the provision and replicating it. For example, the requirements for industry experience in the apprenticeship and training programmes will be replicated on the FE side. The FE pedagogical qualifications will be replicated across. There are ways and means of taking the best parts of existing requirements for teachers and applying them to the whole system.

The Chairperson (Mr Swann): Yes, but, from the experience of my constituency background, it is the industry and occupational tutors who then have to find a qualification as well. It is about how to get people who are industry based, have the industry knowledge but also have a teaching qualification. There are not many of them out there.

Mr Armstrong: Again, drawing from the experience of previous exercises, the Department has set a time frame within which the teacher must get appropriate pedagogical or industry qualifications so that it is not a standing start. If they are lacking in the appropriate teaching qualifications, they are given a period of time to achieve them, during which they can continue to deliver the provision. If they need industry experience, they can take time out of the classroom to update their skills in that area. It is about making sure that we have appropriate flexibilities in the programme so that we are not turning away what could be good teachers and mentors on account of them not having the appropriate qualifications on day one.

The Chairperson (Mr Swann): What is the timeline for your pilot projects and where are they going to be?

Ms Magill: We have secured funding for those through the change fund, and they will proceed in this financial year. We are at the stage of scoping out exactly what they will look like. I cannot give you a definitive timescale except to say that we will pilot in this financial year so we will proceed very soon after the strategy is launched.

The Chairperson (Mr Swann): Will you put out a call to organisations to deliver them or will it be a departmental decision as to where they go?

Ms Magill: Another of my colleagues is working on that area so I cannot give you a definitive response, but I am happy to ask that colleague to communicate to you where we are with that.

Mr Buchanan: I just have a couple of points. You had 12 workshops with 104 young people engaged. How do you identify where those workshops should be held?

Ms Magill: First, we held a workshop with young people to ask them whether this would be an appropriate way to carry out consultation. We started working with the Prince's Trust, a training organisation, and Belfast Metropolitan College. We looked at what would work best with young people, and the young people felt that animation and discussion would be a very good tool. We have a mailing list of over 4,500 organisations across Northern Ireland, including training organisations, youth organisations and employers. We did a mailshot to over 4,500 of those organisations, and the ones that came forward were those that we delivered workshops with.

We were very interested in going outside Belfast and into rural areas because there are particular issues for young people in rural areas who are looking for training who we would not capture if we just stayed within urban areas. We held an open call and we got a good response from the young people.

This was a pilot and it was a new thing for us, so we evaluated how the young people felt the workshop went. The results were that 80% of the young people we spoke to found it useful, 95% thought that the animation was a good way to communicate with them, and 96% felt that their opinion had been listened to. We are staying in touch with the young people we worked with. We are mailing out to them again this week to tell them where we are and where their views will be published, because everything will be online. We want to stay in touch with them. In addition to our mailshot, we did a lot of publicity in the newspapers and the local press. We were happy to facilitate anyone who came forward and wanted us to hold a workshop. Some organisations decided that they would take the animation toolkit and do a workshop themselves. That option was open because the toolkit was freely available online.

Mr Buchanan: OK. In your commitments, you say that youth training will be available to all young people between the ages of 16 and 24. When you say "all young people", is that irrespective of physical or learning disabilities?

Ms Magill: Yes, provided they have a level 1.

Mr Buchanan: And have you, as yet, identified any providers who will deliver the training? If someone going into a place of training has a physical disability, for example, it is more difficult for the employer or provider. It may be difficult for the provider if the person has learning difficulties, as they have to provide mentoring and so on. How will you cater for that?

Ms Magill: I will ask my colleague David to give a bit more detail about pastoral support and mentoring.

Mr Broadhurst: We have not looked at the providers yet. Obviously, we are looking at keeping what is provided at present for those with disabilities etc. We have also taken our proposals and we are thinking of how to make them disability specific. So, when we talk about mentoring, we will definitely put disability-specific mentoring in there as part of the wider blanket. When we talk about the central service sourcing employers, we would like to also specify that they should seek employers who will offer work placements to those with a disability. So, we are trying to work out ways of doing that and decide where it would be disability specific.

Mr Buchanan: I just have a fear that people with a disability could be left behind in this process, as has happened on previous occasions. I want to ensure that the commitments that you have, for example, when you are talk about "all young people", are inclusive and bring all on board.

Mr Broadhurst: Yes, we note that.

Ms Lo: I am still fairly new to the Committee and I am absolutely confused by DEL's different policies. Is this an overarching, high-principle system, when you say that all young people at level 2 will get this?

Mr Broadhurst: This will technically replace Training for Success at level 2, apprenticeships at level 2 and FE at level 2. It is bringing together and also —

Ms Lo: So it is an umbrella scheme.

Mr Broadhurst: It is trying to marry it all up, because a lot of that provision is quite similar, yet very confusing.

Ms Lo: Yes, totally. Absolutely.

Mr Broadhurst: People do not understand what you get from any one route. This, hopefully, will simplify the landscape.

Ms Lo: So all those will go and will be under the name "youth training scheme".

Mr Broadhurst: Yes, at level 2.

Ms Lo: OK. Essentially, it is working and studying provided by the training providers, then you have placements in work. Is that right?

Mr Broadhurst: Yes.

Ms Lo: Then there will be careers support and so on. It is not really much different to all the previous policies. What is the difference? Tell me what exactly is meant by "baccalaureate-style"? I hear the term all the time, but I really do not know what it is.

Ms Magill: The difference between the system that we are offering and previous or present offerings is that this opportunity will be available to all 16- to 24-year-olds, whether or not they are in employment. The baccalaureate is an award that will be equivalent to five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including maths and English. That particular award is something that employers have informed us, time and again, that young people need as a starting point to really progress and get into employment. That is why we place a lot of emphasis on ensuring that the young people have that. Even in traditional skills, where you would not have needed such a starting point, employers tell us more and more that young people really need that as the very minimum to make progress.

Ms Lo: What is the name of that level? Is there a name for it, like the NVQ etc?

Mr Armstrong: One way to think about the new curriculum is that it is a package of existing qualifications, or it could be new qualifications if they become available and are endorsed by employers. The key part would be a professional and technical aspect, similar to an NVQ, and then there will be numeracy and literacy qualifications. Employers say that those three key elements, packaged as a baccalaureate award, are the key aspects in why they would employ someone and what they would recognise. On the numeracy and literacy point, what is new is the focus on GCSE qualifications at level 2.

Ms Lo: So you are still recognising GCSE qualifications.

Mr Armstrong: Within the wider baccalaureate, yes.

Ms Lo: And the baccalaureate could be different from one sector to another, like plumbing, engineering or whatever.

Mr Armstrong: The professional and technical aspect will need to recognise the specific knowledge and skills from each sector, but the common elements could be the literacy and numeracy qualifications.

Ms Lo: OK, and then what? Will the additional parts be like the guilds or whatever?

Mr Armstrong: It will be whatever the sector determines is necessary and useful in getting work in that sector.

Ms Lo: So when the young people get into it, they will know what is required of them.

Mr Armstrong: Yes.

Ms Lo: OK. It is confusing. Thank you.

Mr Irwin: The Chairman mentioned financial support. That is vital, and I welcome the fact that the Minister made a commitment on that. Is there currently any financial support for young people in training?

Ms Magill: Do you mean in the present programmes?

Mr Irwin: Yes.

Ms Magill: There is, but that is not within my work area. I am certainly happy to ask colleagues to furnish the Committee with that information, but I would not want to try to talk you through it because it is not my work area.

Mr Irwin: OK. The Deputy Chair mentioned the fact that we are told in the document that:

"Support and flexibility will be provided for young people with additional requirements [and] individuals with a disability".

That is OK, but it is still quite vague.

Mr Broadhurst: We will scope that out during the series of pilots and engage with stakeholders, who will tell us what is required and what they need. At that stage, the flexibility will still be there for us to find out what people need, because we know what the present system does and what our proposed system can do, but we need to check whether that will work, check that it is what people want and check any things that we have not thought of.

Mr Irwin: That area is important.

Mr Broadhurst: Yes, it is very important.

Ms Sugden: I want to come back to a point that the Chair raised about employing tutors or trainers. When you do that, will the emphasis be on their industry qualifications and experience rather than their teaching qualifications, but with an opportunity to then train on the job, as with a teaching certificate or PGCE in FE? I understand that that is what currently happens in the FE colleges. How successful do you feel that is in terms of engagement with students? They do not have that foundation in teaching; I suppose that their focus is more on the industries.

Mr Armstrong: We will be looking to take advice from colleagues who work on that kind of FE model on what works and what does not. Basically, we will take the learning from all aspects of how the Department runs that type of approach of gearing up experience and qualifications and build it into the new model. There are different ways of going about it. Do you prioritise experience over qualifications? We want to scope that out and make sure that a high level of quality is assured to the young person, no matter what arrangements we have for individual tutors to increase their skills or experience.

Ms Sugden: You said that you have spoken with the employers and that they said that they would be most satisfied with the baccalaureate model. Some employers are maybe not aware of this. I understand that the standard to get any job is a basic GCSE in English and maths. How will you communicate this to all employers so that they know that it is an accredited programme and not just equivalent to a couple of GCSEs?

Ms Magill: It is key that we communicate that to employers and make sure that they understand that this is equivalent and that it is recognised. In our strategy, we have marketing and communication as a specific proposal and strand. I agree with you: it is absolutely key. When we spoke to the young people, they said that they do not want a qualification that, when they knock on the door of an employer, the employer does not know about or is confused about. That is absolutely key going forward.

Mr Anderson: Thank you for the presentation. It was pleasing to note that you said to my colleague that the workshops have taken place right across Northern Ireland, particularly in rural areas. You may not have all the information on the pilots at present, but will they be carried out right across Northern Ireland and well into the rural areas as well? Where will those take place? Have you thought about that?

Ms Magill: My view is that they need to capture urban and rural perspectives. I do not have any further detail at present on where those pilots will be. As I said, my other colleague is working on that. I am happy to furnish you with that information after this meeting.

Mr Anderson: Give it consideration anyway. That is an issue.

You said that providers had to achieve high standards. Who sets those standards and how are they enforced? Who says to a provider, "These are the standards we are looking for"?

Mr Armstrong: It is informed by the Department's quality improvement team in terms of the existing requirements for FE colleges and training providers. Basically, we will be taking advice —

Mr Anderson: Will it be equivalent to that sort of standard?

Mr Armstrong: We will be taking advice from them on what best suits our model.

Mr Anderson: Has that started yet?

Mr Armstrong: Yes, it started as part of developing the strategy.

Mr Anderson: When will that finish, or is it ongoing for a period of time?

Mr Armstrong: It builds into the piloting approach to ensure that we pilot according to what we think the quality standards will be in the new model. We then learn from the piloting when the final model comes into place in 2016-17.

Ms Magill: I want to emphasise that part of the quality assurance is making sure that young people's voices are heard. They can tell us, through the pilots, how they feel about the new system and what is and is not working. That is absolutely key. Quality standards and listening and engagement need to continue.

Mr Anderson: It will probably start with very few pilots and not be right across the Province. You will probably focus on one or two pilots to try to set standards and get feedback from the young people taking part. Am I right in saying that?

Ms Magill: I will need to come back to you on that.

Mr Anderson: We would be interested in how it is all set up.

Ms Magill: Another of my colleagues is looking into that area and he is not here today.

Mr F McCann: Thank you for the presentation. Sydney probably hit the nail on the head when he asked about what was expected of the pilots. It is about the aspirations of young people, and what happens if they do not work, although I am not wishing that on them. There has been quite a lot of debate here over a considerable period about level 2 qualifications being offered by further education colleges, and what was the main difference between those and this. When this scheme was mooted on the back of apprenticeships that were being offered, it was thought that we may be underselling

quite a number of young people who would aspire to apprenticeships but because of this youth training scheme may not be able to do that.

What is the difference between this and the level 2 qualification that was offered? Employers told us that the level 2 was not worth the paper it was written on and that they would not take on people who had a level 2. I am just trying to work out in my own head what is the difference in what is on offer now. How can kids who want to be plumbers or do bricklaying, plastering, joinery, or whatever, do that through this scheme? You are not widening their aspirations to allow them to pursue that goal.

Ms Magill: One of the key principles behind this is that employers are very much in the driving seat through the expert panel and sectoral partnerships. In developing these qualifications, employers will have a strong voice in saying, "This meets our needs. This person with this qualification will be valued in our sector". That is a key consideration in making sure that the baccalaureate fits the needs of employers and is worth the paper it is written on.

Mr F McCann: What is the difference between the level 2 that was on offer by further education colleges and what is on offer now? Technical employers said that it just did not work.

Ms Magill: I am not aware of those comments, so I will have to —

Mr F McCann: They were made at this Committee.

Ms Magill: Pardon?

The Chairperson (Mr Swann): It was the Electrical Training Trust, I think.

Mr F McCann: Technical electrician employers said that they did not recognise the level 2 that was on offer. Maybe this is completely different, but I am not sure. Youth Action and some other groups had grave concerns about the direction of youth training. It would be interesting to see a breakdown of who is on that expert panel and what industries they represent.

Ms Magill: Absolutely. We will provide that. We will also take a look at the records of the discussions that you had and come back on that.

Mr F McCann: That is fine. I appreciate that.

Ms Magill: It is difficult without the detail, and I do not wish to mislead you.

Mr F McCann: I understand that.

The Chairperson (Mr Swann): Carol, David and Michael, thank you very much for your time today.