



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 6 June 2018

Session 5



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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

17th Meeting 2018, Session 5

CONVENER

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)

*Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)

*Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green)

*Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP)

*Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)

*Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)

*Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con)

*Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD)

*Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP) (Committee Substitute)

Michael Cross (Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council)

Euan Duncan (Scottish Secondary Teachers Association)

Jackie Galbraith (Colleges Scotland)

Alison Henderson (Scottish Chambers of Commerce Network)

Terry Lanagan (Association of Directors of Education in Scotland)

Dr Gill Stewart (Scottish Qualifications Authority)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Roz Thomson

LOCATION

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)

Scottish Parliament

Young People's Pathways

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 6 June 2018

[The Deputy Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Interests

The Deputy Convener (Johann Lamont): I welcome everyone to the Education and Skills Committee's 17th meeting in 2018. I remind everyone to turn their mobile phones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting. We have received apologies from the convener, James Dornan, which explains why I am in a more powerful position today. I am delighted to welcome Clare Adamson as his substitute.

The first item of business is a declaration of interests following a change in the committee's membership. I welcome to the committee Gordon MacDonald, and I take the opportunity to thank Ruth Maguire for her valuable contribution to our work. I invite Gordon MacDonald to declare any relevant interests.

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): I have no relevant interests to declare.

Decision on Taking Business in Private

10:00

The Deputy Convener: Item 2 allows the committee to agree on whether to take in private today's review, and future reviews, of the evidence in its inquiry into young people's pathways.

Members indicated agreement.

10:01

The Deputy Convener: The substantive item on the agenda is our first evidence session on young people's pathways. The basis for the inquiry includes a survey of 900 young people that provides detail on their experiences in considering which options to pursue in the senior phase of school and beyond. The committee agreed, on the basis of the survey responses, to hold a short inquiry into progress that has been made against two of the recommendations that the commission for developing Scotland's young workforce produced in 2014. Those recommendations relate in the main to the provision of vocational pathways and careers guidance in the senior phase of school.

Today we will hear from a panel of witnesses that represents organisations that are involved in delivering on those recommendations. In future weeks, we will hear from Sir Ian Wood and from Education Scotland and Skills Development Scotland, which are key agencies in delivering on the recommendations. We will then hear from the Minister for Employability and Training. As part of the less formal work to inform our inquiry, a delegation from the committee will visit Shetland next week. In addition, the convener held a focus group meeting last week with members of the young women lead programme in order to hear their experiences. I thank the young women for sharing their personal views to inform the committee's work. A write-up of the focus group's discussion is in paper 2.

I welcome to the meeting Michael Cross, who is interim director of access, skills and outcome agreements at the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council; Euan Duncan, who is professional officer with the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association; Jackie Galbraith, who is vice principal with responsibility for strategy and skills at Ayrshire College and who is representing Colleges Scotland today; Alison Henderson, who is chief executive of Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce and who is representing the Scottish Chambers of Commerce network today; Terry Lanagan, who is representing the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland; and Dr Gill Stewart, who is director of qualifications development at the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

Given the size of both the panel and the committee, we have a logistical challenge aside from anything else. It would be helpful, given that you all have distinct roles in the delivery of the developing the young workforce agenda, if you could each briefly set out your organisation's role

and highlight one issue that you want to raise with the committee, in case we do not manage to get through the range of questions that we want to ask you today. You can tell us what you do and give us one core point to consider. When we go to questions, it will be not be necessary for everyone to answer every question; as you will appreciate, time would not allow for that. We will start with Jackie Galbraith and move round the table.

Jackie Galbraith (Colleges Scotland): I welcome the opportunity to give evidence to the committee on behalf of Colleges Scotland. I work at Ayrshire College, in a region in which there are significant challenges in respect of the economy and employment and the provision of opportunities for young people. The ambition for developing the young workforce, and all the policy that sits around it, is critical in enabling young people in Ayrshire to have positive futures. Ayrshire College works in partnership with schools, the developing the young workforce regional group for employers, the local authority, Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce and employers themselves to ensure that young people at all stages of school, including primary school, are exposed to vocational opportunities and what colleges do.

The one burning point that I want to highlight is the critical role of working in partnership, with shared ambitions and shared goals among all partners, to achieve the DYW agenda's very ambitious aims.

Terry Lanagan (Association of Directors of Education in Scotland): Good morning. I, too, welcome the opportunity to be here. ADES is a membership organisation, and we have officers in every local authority in every part of the country who have front-line responsibility for delivering the DYW agenda in partnership with colleges, schools, employers and others. I have been a member of the developing the young workforce programme board since its inception, and ADES is fully committed to what is a very ambitious agenda.

The one point that I want to stress is that we are just past the halfway point in a seven-year programme of significant ambition. If the DYW programme's aims are achieved and the recommendations in the Wood commission report, "Education working for all: developing Scotland's young workforce", are overtaken, we will have successfully transformed Scottish society, including the relationships between schools, employers and colleges and the preparedness of our young people for the world of work. Scotland has been struggling with that agenda during the entire time that I have been involved in education. For the first time, we are seeing real progress towards achieving those goals.

Alison Henderson (Scottish Chambers of Commerce Network): On behalf of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce network, I thank the committee for the opportunity to come along and give evidence. As a network, we are a strong supporter of the developing the young workforce initiative, and the majority of chambers of commerce are involved with and heavily engaged in its delivery through the regional DYW groups. It is a national priority of ours to help employers to engage with young people in education and to bring them into work at an early stage.

Through our engagement with chambers of commerce, it is clear that there is increasing positive momentum throughout the DYW activity. Foundation apprenticeships in particular are beginning to bubble away, and levels of engagement with employers and local authority partners continue to improve. We recognise that a lot of proactive work is being done with agencies; partnership working is key to delivering the DYW agenda that we have all bought into. We would like to see increased consistency in delivery, and we have highlighted practical issues such as timetabling and transport, and broader challenges around perception, but there is some really good practice out there from which we can learn.

To overcome one key barrier, we must drive the take-up of senior phase pathways. I would like to see sustained independence for the regional groups, which continue to support all the partnership work that is being done. We are delighted to see such employer engagement in helping to grow the initiative.

Euan Duncan (Scottish Secondary Teachers Association): I thank the committee for the invitation to be here today. I am a professional officer with the SSTA, which is a professional association and trade union that represents teachers in Scottish secondary schools. Prior to taking up my role as a professional officer, I was a guidance teacher for a number of years.

Secondary teachers, and guidance teachers in particular, are at the heart of the developing the young workforce agenda in schools, and the SSTA would welcome a long-term commitment to add guidance staff and time for guidance to secondary schools. There is a risk that placing too much focus on learning simply for work can reduce its value and diminish its impact. The challenge in schools is to prepare young people to be versatile and resilient, compassionate and risk aware, communicative and honest, and most of all to be ready for the uncharted territory that lies ahead of them. The best schools are strong teams in which the focus is on the whole child, not simply on the child as a future worker.

Unfortunately, reductions in school leadership and local authority leadership; reductions in

support in schools, such as school nurses; and the removal of home-school link workers and pupil welfare officers who are responsible for attendance mean that the teams around the child are shrinking and are less able to provide the focus that is required to make the developing the young workforce recommendations a reality. While money may not be the answer, people and time are certainly necessary to help to prepare young people to be well rounded and broadly educated.

Dr Gill Stewart (Scottish Qualifications Authority): Good morning, committee. I am from the SQA. As you well know, our role is to provide school qualifications and run the national courses, but we also have a much broader remit to provide vocational qualifications. SQA offers more than 1,400 vocational qualifications. Last year, there were 160,000-odd enrolments for those qualifications, and 122,000 people achieved various types of vocational qualifications.

The nature of those qualifications varies depending on the point that a learner has reached on their journey through life. We have qualifications that are appropriate for younger people who are entering employment or considering a particular route into employment. We also have vocational qualifications for those who are progressing through their vocational careers, perhaps through an apprenticeship training programme or a programme at college that leads to a national certificate, a higher national certificate or a higher national diploma. We also offer a wide range of workplace competence qualifications, which are called Scottish vocational qualifications—there are more than 500—and support the modern apprenticeship programme. In 2017, more than 35,000 people achieved SVQs.

On the DYW agenda, we have worked closely with Skills Development Scotland to assist it in developing the new foundation apprenticeships at Scottish credit and qualifications framework level 6, and with the relevant industry partners, which has been a very positive development. In addition, we are working with SDS to consider whether there is a need for further pre-apprenticeship programmes at SCQF levels 4 and 5 to cater for a broader range of young people who might not be at the level for entry into foundation apprenticeships.

We also have a big team of regional staff who not only support schools individually but work with the regional DYW groups and with local authorities and schools to help them to understand what type of qualifications might be appropriate to support learners in their region. We keep those qualifications up to date by constantly reviewing, through working with key employers in Scotland, whether things are changing in particular

industries. We are very proud of the vocational portfolio that we offer.

Also important to the DYW agenda is the range of soft-skills qualifications that we offer to support the broader skills to which Euan Duncan referred, which are important for young people who are entering the world of work.

Michael Cross (Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council): Good morning, convener and committee members—thank you for the opportunity to represent the SFC at this morning's session. To be brief, the SFC is the organisation that supports, challenges and funds Scotland's colleges and universities in line with the strategic guidance with which the Scottish Government provides us annually. Our role in the developing the young workforce programme is essentially to work with other partners and use our own outcome agreement regime to support colleges in growing vocational provision. If I were to leave the committee with one message, I would essentially repeat what Jackie Galbraith said. At the turn of the year, we ran a session for various partners to examine successes and challenges in the DYW agenda and to look at solutions, and the consensus view was very much that DYW is a partnership effort that demands collaboration at every point in the system.

The Deputy Convener: Those introductions were useful in capturing the breadth of expertise among the witnesses that we have in front of us.

I want to ask specifically about key performance indicators 10 and 11. In his foreword to the DYW "3rd Annual Progress Report 2016-2017", Councillor Stephen McCabe, who is spokesperson on education, children and young people for the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, said:

"despite some of the progress made in the DYW Programme, I am clear that we have simply not made enough progress in relation to addressing equalities issues relating to gender, disabled and care experienced young people."

Before I ask you specifically about that comment, I would like to ask for your views on another point. I note that one area that is regarded as making great progress is the level of youth employment. To what extent have your organisations looked at the definition of a positive destination? I am concerned that some positive destinations actually involve zero-hours contracts with very little guaranteed work and very few opportunities for training or career progression. I have raised that point with the minister. I wonder if you have a view on how we might define a positive destination in order to exclude that very insecure work, which I would regard as exploitative. I do not know who might want to kick off on that.

10:15

Alison Henderson: I am happy to start. As an employer, and as someone who works with more than 650 businesses in Dundee and Angus, I have long felt that the positive destination statistics warrant a closer look.

I am not hearing so much about zero-hours contracts, although they are certainly a challenge in certain industries, but we have heard from young people who have bounced through various training programmes that would be classed as positive destinations but are not leading to college or to an apprenticeship or an actual job. I would therefore echo what you have said.

You mentioned gender and the scenario of looked-after children. In Dundee and Angus, we have an apprenticeship ambassador programme that involves going into schools and talking to secondary 3 pupils about all sorts of different imbalances. It is really beginning to bear fruit. Before young people at S3 age met any of the apprenticeship ambassadors—many of whom are girls—their level of knowledge about apprenticeships, if they even knew about them at all, was very poor. The statistics for those young people on their keenness to be an apprentice and to look at different career paths have gone from 37 per cent to more than 75 per cent.

The Deputy Convener: Before I go on to the more general question of equalities, does anyone else want to say something specific about the definition of positive destinations?

Euan Duncan: As a guidance teacher, I can say that if a pupil came to me and said that they were considering moving into employment, I would be asking them questions. For example, does the particular employment that they are thinking about offer training or career progression? Will some kind of qualification underlie the work that they will be doing?

If we are thinking about positive destinations, and careers in particular, we need to think about highlighting jobs that actually offer some kind of training progression and qualifications—not zero-hours contracts on which people go in to wash dishes when the employer needs them, but something that gives them the opportunity to develop as a person.

The Deputy Convener: I have questions on two of the Scottish Government's key performance indicators. KPI 6 is to

“Increase the percentage of employers recruiting young people directly from education to 35 per cent by 2018.”

The Scottish Parliament information centre's summary of progress says that there has been

“No change”

and that the

“figure remained 32% between 2014 and 2016”.

KPI 11 is to

“Increase positive destinations for looked after children by 4 percentage points per annum resulting in parity by 2021”.

The progress summary says that it is

“Not met—the number of looked after children in positive destinations was 71.2% in 2015/16; a total increase of 1.9 percentage points since the baseline figures were recorded in 2012-13.”

What do we need to do to make more progress in both those areas?

Jackie Galbraith: A critical aspect is how we work with employers. In the region in which I work, there are significant challenges in the economy with regard to the jobs that are available for young people who are leaving education, but the employers with whom we work have been much more proactive in how they deal with that.

Last night, for example, we held the ceremony for our first cohort of foundation apprentices in engineering. GE Caledonian in Prestwick, which is one of the companies involved, is taking a really proactive approach, along with the college, to working with young people from primary and early secondary school to identify talent. In the process of recruiting modern apprentices from the college and supporting foundation apprenticeships, the company has offered a full-time job and modern apprenticeship to one of the foundation apprentices who was successful at last night's ceremony. A further two foundation apprentices now have full-time apprenticeships at UTC Aerospace Systems, and all the others are doing HNC aeronautical or mechanical engineering courses at college. They are all in positive destinations—the critical element is that the employer is spotting talent at an early age. The employer met a first-year pupil—a young woman—at an awareness-raising event that it was running in school, and it spotted that she had the skills and the aptitude to work in the industry. The company will continue to work with her as she goes through school to encourage her to take a career with it. The key point is how we work with employers to identify that talent and to overcome barriers, whether they are related to gender or other equalities issues.

Finally, it is critical that when care-experienced young people come through school and into college, they are fully supported to sustain their college course, which will absolutely help them to sustain employment when they reach the end of it. Ayrshire College has been committed and proactive in that area, and we have seen significant improvements in the attainment and retention of our students who are care experienced because we have targeted support to

sustain them through their college programmes. Employer engagement in that regard is critical.

The Deputy Convener: Except that that is not reflected in the figures. Does that mean that Ayrshire College is an outlier that is doing stuff that others are not doing, or is that work simply not coming through the process yet?

Jackie Galbraith: The figures may reflect my earlier point that we are only halfway through the programme and there is still some time to go. Again, I emphasise that it is a long-term programme. Tackling gender imbalance in key industries is not going to happen in two or three years, which is why we work with primary schools. Over the next two weeks, we have more than 1,000 young people coming to the college to engage with employers on science, technology, engineering and mathematics-related activity. We are investing that time and energy now, but we will not see the benefits of it until four or five years down the line.

Terry Lanagan: With regard to KPI 6, we have to remember where we started from. The Wood commission report referred to the fact that employers in Scotland had got out of the habit of recruiting directly from schools, so we were starting from a very low base. Although we have fallen slightly short of the target to which KPI 6 refers, we have made progress.

A couple of things will make a real difference. First, the employer-led regional groups, which were a key recommendation of the Wood commission, have been set up and are all now operational, but some of them have been operating for only a short time. I believe that, in the future, they will play a key role in increasing employer engagement with the DYW agenda. The second aspect, to which Alison Henderson referred, is the growth of foundation apprenticeships, which require schools and local authorities to work with colleges and employers directly to deliver them. I mentioned in my written submission that ADES, along with SDS, is holding a national event for foundation apprenticeships on 29 August. We will try to exemplify the best practice that is out there and address issues such as retention, timetabling and the perception of foundation apprenticeships among parents and young people. There are a number of initiatives in train that will have a big impact on employers' engagement over the next year or two.

Michael Cross: The committee has heard from Terry Lanagan and Jackie Galbraith about the operational realities of the position with regard to care-experienced young people in particular. The funding council operates on a series of outcome agreements that we develop with colleges and universities over the course of a year, which in short defines what the state gets for its investment

by way of outcomes. It is therefore important that we reflect the points that you make in our outcome agreements. We already target improvements in attainment for care-experienced young people and for those who suffer with a disability or from economic disadvantage. We need to put properly in place the strategic frameworks to support the activity on the ground that Jackie Galbraith and Terry Lanagan described, and we have done that.

Alison Henderson: I will highlight a couple of practical options. The DYW teams could put in place specific partnerships with schools that look after care-experienced young people, in particular. Some successful partnerships are already maintained in our schools. I also highlight the guidance and support that young people get when they are looking at university as opposed to some of the other routes. We could be more proactive in supporting young people to think about direct employment routes and apprenticeships.

It has been difficult for some parents and young people to get their head around the description of foundation apprenticeships. That has definitely been a challenge. We measure schools on exams and similar methods, which, from an outside perspective, can be counterintuitive in our work to help schools to direct resources in that area. Schools need committed and directed resources to support young people to look at such opportunities.

The Deputy Convener: I am struck by the point about foundation apprenticeships. When I taught standard grade, the foundation apprenticeship was seen as a very different kind of qualification, at a very different level, from the higher. It was difficult for me to separate that view from the very good young people who came through the foundation route and had an aspiration to do other things.

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): I put on record that I am the vice-chair of the Scottish Schools Education Research Centre, which may be relevant to our discussion this morning.

I want to go back to KPI 6. The Wood commission made 16 recommendations for employers to take on board. Jackie Galbraith mentioned the successful engagement with engineering companies in her area. Has there been any analysis of sectoral challenges—for example, in getting young people into the information technology industry or the emerging businesses in biomedical sciences? What do you see as the challenges in increasing the number of employers who engage in that process?

The Deputy Convener: Does Jackie Galbraith want to come in on that?

Jackie Galbraith: I will answer that question, but I would like to say something on the disabilities point first, if you do not mind.

The developing the young workforce regional group in Ayrshire, along with the college and other partners, holds seminars to raise awareness among employers. Over the past couple of years, for a series of events, the group has worked with the Scottish Commission for Learning Disability to promote the benefits of employing young people who have a disability and to highlight the support that is available to employees in that respect. That work is really important.

On Clare Adamson's point about the challenges for young people in getting into various sectors, I think that that is a challenge. In Ayrshire, we are aware that there is a burgeoning digital industry in Glasgow and the surrounding areas, as well as in other parts of Scotland. We have offered one of the two digital foundation apprenticeships, and we hope to offer both this year. However, there have been challenges with regard to the number of digital employers in Ayrshire. The digital industry is not well represented in Ayrshire, and that affects the ability of the young people on foundation apprenticeships to gain access to the high-quality work experience that they need. We are using different means to achieve that access, such as inviting employers from other parts of Scotland to come and speak to young people and to give them other experiences. However, it is a challenge. Access to such sectors depends on the regional economy and where the industries are.

Dr Stewart: Jackie Galbraith is right to say that there are regional challenges, but there are also some good partnerships with employers to offer digital opportunities for young people. Dundee and Angus College runs such a partnership with the code academy using national progression awards in software development. There are other such examples around the country, and there is the work that we have done with CodeClan in relation to higher-level professional qualifications in software development. There are also new developments, as there always are in digital, around cyber security. We are looking at the whole area of data science to broaden the range of pathways in the digital industry, which is key to Scotland's economic growth. There are challenges, but there are some successes. I suppose that it depends on the opportunities in each area.

Terry Lanagan: There is no one-size-fits-all solution, because the labour market varies significantly throughout the country. In a big city, it is likely that there will be employers that are major players and which employ staff in significant numbers.

I was the director of education in West Dunbartonshire, where the biggest employer by far was the council, followed by the national health service. There were a couple of medium-sized companies, but most employers in the area did not even constitute small or medium-sized enterprises—most of the operations were one-person or two-person ones. There is a significant challenge in getting that sort of organisation to engage with the process; that has to be seen as a benefit for the employer as well as for the young person. We have not yet quite managed that trick in engaging that part of the Scottish economy.

Euan Duncan: It is also important to look at the earlier part of the process. "Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2015/16", which was published in June 2017, notes:

"Looked after children with the most positive ... outcomes are those:

In foster care rather than in other care settings.

With fewer care placements in the year.

Who have been looked after for the whole year, rather than just part of it."

We are looking at the end of the process, but we need to look at the earlier part of a child's education and at how well we cater for young people when they are being cared for. How can we improve that part of their experience so that, when they are ready to move into employment, they are fit for it without having experienced the chaos that they might otherwise have encountered in different care settings earlier in their lives?

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): I was struck by Terry Lanagan's point about the difficulties for SMEs that have only one or two members of staff. How difficult is it for employers in rural areas to engage with foundation apprenticeships, for example?

10:30

Terry Lanagan: There are specific challenges in rural areas, and the employer-led regional groups have a real job to do in engaging with rural employers. I have never worked in a rural area, so I do not have direct experience, but I know from talking to colleagues that there are particular challenges for rural communities. For example, it has been highlighted to me that some communities are a significant distance away from the nearest college. There are technological solutions to that particular issue, which the Western Isles in particular has taken on board, but there is no doubt that rural areas face specific challenges.

Gordon MacDonald: You have talked about how difficult it is for small companies to take on young people. The vast majority of private

businesses in Scotland have fewer than five employees, and I understand the difficulties in that regard. However, why is it that hairdressing firms, which are usually one or two-man businesses, take on 900 apprentices a year? Is the answer to do with changing the mindset of small employers more than anything else?

Terry Lanagan: I think that it is, although I have to say that I am not an expert on hairdressing, as you can see. [*Laughter.*]

I do not have an answer to that. I do not know why hairdressers are more proactive than other businesses in pursuing that agenda.

Alison Henderson: I do not know that I can surmise with regard to the hairdresser issue. It may be that the qualification is easier and the route in is quite straightforward.

Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce is a small business with only eight employees, and we are taking on a digital apprentice. However, it has been difficult for me to work through the frameworks and decide which skills I am going to train the young person in, whereas for hairdressing the route is quite straightforward.

Our DYW regional group covers not only the city but the surrounding rural area, and we are not finding it at all difficult to get small employers to engage with the agenda. Apprenticeships work well where learning is done on the job, so the young person's learning does not necessarily need to be tied to a physical space in college, although it will be connected to their school and to the employer, who will often be close to the school anyway.

We have 48 strong partnerships across our entire secondary school remit in Dundee and Angus. A bigger problem in some of the rural areas is the availability of transport to enable young people to get to and from an employer. That is sometimes more difficult for them than getting to and from school or college.

The Deputy Convener: I am not sure that any hairdressers who are out there watching the meeting would be happy to have their job described as easy. The challenge of trying to do anything with my hair would suggest that it is beyond most of us. [*Laughter.*]

In my view, there is a broader point relating to hairdressers and similar businesses: they are sustainable businesses, and they are quite important on the high street.

Gill Stewart wants to come in before we move on to the next theme.

Dr Stewart: On the point about hairdressing, different industries have traditionally recruited their workforces in different ways. In the hairdressing

industry, there is a strong tradition of taking people on and training them in the workplace, and perhaps using a training provider to help them to develop various skills and knowledge.

There are different traditions in different industries. For example, construction is very much about apprenticeships, with a bit of support from colleges or training providers and a strong programme of on-the-job development. The engineering industry, although it offers some apprenticeships, is much more about HNCs and HNDs and taking on people from degree programmes.

We need to try to change the mindset of employers by highlighting the benefits for them of bringing young people into their businesses at an earlier stage. That gives them an opportunity to work with young people and see what they are like, and to discover the talent that exists among our young people. The experience can be enlightening for employers, and it can open their eyes. In the SQA, we have our own apprenticeships. Some wonderful young people, several of whom are care experienced, have come in through that route.

The Deputy Convener: Let us move on to senior phase vocational pathways.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): About a dozen local authorities in Scotland have senior phase vocational pathways as an option in 100 per cent of their schools, on paper at least; I will come to the question of what that means in practice in a moment. At the other end of the scale, the figure for Orkney is 20 per cent; in Fife, it is just under 40 per cent; and in Argyll and Bute, it is 40 per cent. I accept that there are geographical challenges, as we have just discussed, although those are not absolute barriers—in Shetland, the figure is 70 per cent, and the Western Isles have already been mentioned. Given that we are already halfway through the programme, as we have discussed, what progress is being made in those areas where senior phase vocational pathways are an option for only a very small proportion of young people in schools?

Terry Lanagan: I was struck by the figures to which you refer, which are in table 1 in the SPICE paper, and I believe that the parliamentary question that led to the production of those figures was possibly flawed. For instance, the table says that only 60 per cent of schools in West Dunbartonshire are involved with colleges in pursuing the vocational agenda. I know that that is not the case—the figure is 100 per cent. The difference is that, as West Dunbartonshire has invested significantly in school buildings, a lot of the vocational space is now within the schools themselves—vocational training is delivered by college staff in schools. However, the

parliamentary question asked only about delivery in colleges. There are perhaps further questions to be asked about the figures in table 1.

Jackie Galbraith: I have similar questions about table 1. My assumption is that the figures are based on senior phase vocational pathways in schools, and not on the total work that colleges and schools do on vocational pathways. In my college, 70 per cent of the courses that we deliver for school pupils are below SCQF level 6, and they are not counted in the table. Although some schools in Ayrshire may not be doing as much on vocational pathways in the senior phase, they do a significant amount of work with us on other things.

Working with the DYW regional group and the Prince's Trust Scotland, we deliver 30 courses at SCQF level 4 to half the schools in Ayrshire. That is critical in getting young people in S2, S3 and S4 to move towards vocational pathways so that that option is open to them in the senior phase, and that is where we invest our time.

Unfortunately, table 1 does not represent the total work that is done by my college, Glasgow Clyde College and others—in fact, probably most colleges across Scotland. Our staff go into half the schools in Ayrshire and work throughout the year with pupils in S4 who are at risk of going into negative destinations to try to ensure that they reach a positive destination—which, by and large, they do by moving on to college or other things. That work is not counted in the table, but it is critical, because we do not want foundation apprenticeships to be available only to young people who would achieve at SCQF level 6 anyway. We want young people who come through S1, S2 and S3 to understand the possibilities and the courses that they can take as steps along the way.

The Deputy Convener: Do you have any figures on that?

Jackie Galbraith: Yes, I have figures.

The Deputy Convener: If you could provide us with those figures, that would be helpful.

Ross Greer: I would be interested to hear Michael Cross's point of view, given the SFC's responsibility for ensuring that collaboration happens. Is provision across the country more consistent than the figures in table 1 indicate?

Michael Cross: The third footnote to table 1—the one with three asterisks—highlights Jackie Galbraith's point about sub-SCQF level 6 provision. As she said, colleges are supporting schools to deliver a wide range of provision that is not captured in the table. It is quite difficult to use SFC data to capture what is happening in school settings, and I have to say that the table is less than comprehensive.

Ross Greer: I want to turn from the overarching school level to what the figures mean in practice for individual young people. We receive a lot of anecdotal evidence of what might be called railroading, in which vocational options are nominally an option but it has been decided, long before the young person is informed, that a particular option is right for them. It is less about giving young people in school a choice about which route they take, and more about the decision essentially being made for them. Again, there is inconsistency, and the evidence is anecdotal. However, I would be particularly interested to hear views from Euan Duncan and Alison Henderson, and from Jackie Galbraith from a college point of view. Is that the reality? Are we getting to a point at which young people have genuine choices and options rather than having decisions made on their behalf?

Euan Duncan: I have been heavily involved in the course choice process for a number of years, and at no point would I tell a young person what to do. I would advise them and encourage them in their choices, but we would also speak to their parents and take into account their career aspirations and their achievements to date. We would then give them some reasoned ideas about which options they might consider choosing.

Our advice would also depend a little on the entry qualifications for a particular course and what specific opportunities might look like for them after the course. They might feel that they are being railroaded, but perhaps they are simply being given strong advice to say, "This would be a good choice for you, but there are other options." At no point would a young person ever be railroaded into doing a particular course of study, but they would sometimes be encouraged to think quite strongly about it.

Ross Greer: You mentioned parents. Are parental perceptions of vocational options changing?

Euan Duncan: Yes, I think so. Colleges and schools have done a lot of work on that. My children are currently at school, and the school frequently holds information nights to enable parents to hear a bit more about the available options. A representative from Ayrshire College will come in and speak to parents about what the courses and the foundation apprenticeships look like, which helps to build up a body of information. It would also be helpful to ensure that parents and young people in classrooms hear from those who have been through the courses or the apprenticeships, in particular when they are choosing options. When I was teaching, we did not manage to do that, partly because of a lack of time and partly because it was sometimes quite difficult to identify someone who might be a good speaker.

From time to time, however, we managed to get school leavers to come in and speak to those who were choosing options to inform them in making their decisions. The best advocates are often those who have experienced apprenticeships themselves.

Jackie Galbraith: A critical aspect is communication and what people know. To come back to employers again, if respected employers are advocating and supporting apprenticeships, parents will come on board. In Ayrshire, employers are giving their apprentices time to speak in schools, meet parents and so on.

An important issue that I worry about is how school leaver destinations are portrayed. The reality is that most people leave school and go to college, but school leaver destinations are reported as if most people go on to university, which is not the case. More than 40 per cent of young people go on to college. Some do higher education qualifications and some do further education qualifications, and approximately 26 per cent go straight to university. We need to help teachers and parents to understand that, and to understand that college offers many different routes for people to get to where they want to be. We should celebrate the validity of those options at the earliest stage.

It is critical that teachers and lecturers, and schools and colleges, can share in professional development—as I discussed with the other witnesses in the cafe earlier—because many people who work in schools do not have experience of the college sector and do not know about the rich diversity of qualifications that Gill Stewart described. It is critical that we remember that the majority of young people do not go straight from school to university. The colleges can help people to get there, but more importantly they can help people who choose not to go to university to achieve their desired aims in life.

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): I will stick with the issue of choice, but I will approach it from a slightly different angle. Do you feel that the reduction in the choice of subjects and the pressure on timetables is pushing some vocational subjects out of young people's reach and making it difficult in practice to pursue them?

Euan Duncan: I will sit on the fence a bit here. I am not a fan of the reduction in the number of subjects—a broad education is valuable, and the narrowing of subjects early in a pupil's career is not helpful. There are problems with that approach. However, one advantage has been that schools are now able to align their timetables. In Ayrshire, as in some other regions, colleges are offering school courses on particular afternoons each week. That means, for example, that young people know that Tuesday afternoon is college

afternoon and they will not miss out on the subjects that they have chosen to study in school. The afternoon could also be used for volunteering, work experience or other purposes.

In some ways, the reduction in options has enabled schools and colleges across Ayrshire to synchronise their timetables. On the other hand, it narrows choice. Occasionally, there are problems where a child wants to do a particular college course but they are not able to take their best subject as a higher at the same time, and they are stuck trying to choose between the two. There are issues in that respect.

10:45

Terry Lanagan: We have to remember that curriculum for excellence is predicated on the provision of a broad general education to the end of S3. Although it might look as if the choice in the senior phase is narrowing, you will find, if you dig a bit deeper, that that is not the case. There is evidence in the SPICe paper that youngsters are not being denied the opportunity to follow vocational qualifications—the number of courses and the number of youngsters who access those courses are both continuing to grow year on year. If there was a problem such as Oliver Mundell suggested, that would not be happening.

My second point builds on the point that Euan Duncan just made. We can look back to the age of standard grades, when there were, generally speaking, eight subjects in S4 and a maximum of five subjects in S5 and S6, with a total of 18 subjects overall. The most common pattern now is six subjects in S4—although pupils in some schools do seven and others do eight—but it is possible to do up to six subjects in S5 and S6, which makes a total of 18.

The advantage of having six-six-six—not the number of the beast, but the pattern—means that schools can timetable S4 to S6 together. An increasing number of schools are doing that. It increases the available choice, because subjects can be timetabled across different year groups, and it makes some courses more viable, because the numbers are greater. The schools that are doing it report that the motivation and behaviour of S4 pupils has improved where they are in classes with fifth-year and sixth-year pupils. I do not think, therefore, that the situation is as Oliver Mundell describes it.

Another point is that, by reducing the number of subjects in S4, we increase the possibility that youngsters will access college, because there is a bigger block of time for each subject. In the eight-subject model, there were typically three periods for a subject, and it was often not possible to timetable a college course in S4.

Oliver Mundell: I am interested in what you say, but it does not seem to match up with the reality that pupils—certainly in my constituency—describe, although that perhaps relates to some of the challenges that arise in a more rural area. I am pleased that people are getting more vocational opportunities, but you must surely accept that it creates a problem at the other end for some students. I recently visited the Roslin institute and the Royal (Dick) school of veterinary studies, and what they said matches up with what young people are saying: pupils are not able to take all the academic subjects that they need for specific choices. For example, they are not able to take three sciences, so they are having to drop sciences and take crash highers later on.

Terry Lanagan: First, it is not necessary for pupils to take three sciences in one year if they want to go into medicine or veterinary medicine. Many schools timetable for three sciences. It is easier if the school is bigger, but another factor is the effective use of consortium arrangements, which allow for a wider choice. Someone might not be able to do three sciences in their own school, but they can do the third science along the road.

Oliver Mundell: With respect, that is far more challenging in rural areas where there is no access to transport. The digital solutions that you mentioned earlier have certainly not arrived.

Terry Lanagan: There will always be additional challenges in rural areas, where schools are further apart, but we should remember that the choice of higher courses in S5 and S6, in respect of the high-tariff subjects that you mentioned, has not reduced.

Oliver Mundell: Ten years ago, those choices were there, and now they are not.

The Deputy Convener: It might be interesting to find out what actually happens at the stage when people are competing for places at university, and whether having three sciences is an advantage and makes it more likely that people will secure a place, given that there has been a reduction in the numbers. However, that is perhaps a discussion for another time, as we have quite a lot to get through. We can save things that pop up for the end of the meeting, if there is time available.

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): My question follows on from the discussion about timetabling. When I was a member of the Education and Culture Committee in the previous session of Parliament, we visited a secondary school in Edinburgh that serves an area with a cross-section of people from different demographics and from both poorer and richer backgrounds. The school had reached a difficult stage at which it had to think radically about timetabling. Parents were

trying to find other schools for their children to go to, and the school had to make a decision and sit down with the teachers and everyone else and say, "We need to do something different here—we need to be radical." It had a flexible timetable that fitted in with the local college and the need for access to various courses and businesses.

How do we get to a place where we have flexibility in schools that will give young people the option to say, "I want to do that hairdressing course," or, "I want to be involved with a college"? In my constituency, a young person might go to West College Scotland to do a particular course. How do we ensure that schools enable that in the senior phase?

Alison Henderson: I would follow best practice. One of our schools in one of the nicer parts of Dundee has done some clever timetabling on a Friday afternoon to enable its pupils to choose from electives that relate to careers guidance, practical skills and employment. We have worked with the college, which has gone into the school to run a barista academy, for example. The school has been looking at some of the sectors that are prevalent in Dundee, such as hospitality, tourism and digital skills. It has been clever in its timetabling, but that has taken a lot of hard work by a teacher who believes that the school should focus on the DYW agenda. He has talked to other schools about what has been done, but it has taken a long time for them to pick up on that.

Michael Cross: As I said at the outset, the SFC, together with Scottish Government learning directorate officials, has convened a series of workshops throughout the year to talk about DYW progress, successes and challenges, and timetabling featured as both a success and a challenge.

Together with Government, we subsequently wrote to college partners and local authorities—I would like Terry Lanagan to comment on what he thinks the outcome has been—to encourage them to explore the many areas where joint timetabling is working and see what lessons can be learned. Once again, we have tried to create a strategic mandate to allow partners to collaborate in such a way as to allow joint planning of both provision and timetabling. Perhaps Terry Lanagan can tell us whether that has been working.

Terry Lanagan: George Adam raises a real issue, but the situation is improving. Essentially, timetablers and headteachers need to change their mindset. The traditional approach to timetabling, especially in the senior phase, was that we offered a young person a menu and they literally chose a course from each column. If their choice did not fit the timetable, that was tough.

When I was working with headteachers and timetablers, I argued that that had to change and we had to start with the individual young person. I said that we had to identify what the young person saw as their plan for their journey through the senior phase and look at how we could accommodate that. That involves not just timetabling, but talking to other schools and colleges and coming up with a system that maximises the choice for young people and the number of young people who get the choices that they want. It is a challenge because it involves a much more difficult approach to timetabling, but it is possible.

As Alison Henderson said, there are many good examples across the country whereby people, often with colleges, have ripped up the timetable as it does not fit the needs of young people, and said, "This is what we need to do." We need to use good practice to ensure that that approach is rolled out more consistently across the country.

Euan Duncan: From a guidance teacher point of view, I observe that that adds significantly to the work of the person who supports young people in making their course choices. If we are going to take that approach, we will need to look at how schools are resourced to enable them to be more flexible and seek out those opportunities.

George Adam: The committee heard from the principal of the University of the West of Scotland, Craig Mahoney. He said that a lot of his success stories are not necessarily about people who finished higher education but about those who went to university as a positive destination and ended up on the vocational side of things. That brings us back to the issue of destinations. Craig Mahoney's perspective might be specific to his institution because of its history, but it offers us another way of looking at flexibility. People can go down one stream and then, all of a sudden, there is something else for them on the other side.

Euan Duncan: For us as teachers, one challenge is that, although we nurture young people through their six years of secondary education and record their destinations when they leave, we do not really know what happens to them afterwards. There is a lot of impact from what takes place in school, but we do not know what the real impact has been until many years later. We have no way of tracking it.

We might think about the different careers that people have had in their lives and the choices that they made in school. Particular things might have happened to them because of the choices that they made, but we do not know what the impact has been. The ability for teachers to reflect on that with the knowledge of what has happened to people five or 10 years after they left school might

help to inform their practice in supporting young people.

The Deputy Convener: We need to make some progress, so we will move on to theme 3, which is foundation apprenticeships.

Mary Fee: Good morning, panel. I would like to ask for your views on the different sets of targets that have been floated for foundation apprenticeships. First, I will take you through the timeline of figures. In 2016-17, the Government guidance to SDS said that there was no target. In 2017, the guidance said that the Government would provide funding for 3,000 new foundation apprenticeships during 2017-18. In 2018-19, the Government said that it would fund 2,600 foundation apprenticeships for that year and that SDS had supported 1,245 such apprenticeships in 2017-18, which would help to meet the target of 5,000 by 2019-20. Subsequently, it said that the target was 5,000 by 2019. The Government's guidance letter of 2017-18 said that the target was 5,000 foundation apprenticeships by 2018-19, and it went on to say that the target was 10,000 by 2020.

I am interested in hearing your views on the impact of those different targets and what your understanding of the target is.

Terry Lanagan: As a member of the DYW programme board, I am quite clear that the target has always been 5,000 foundation apprenticeships by 2019-20. I can see that there are discrepancies in some of the figures that you have given, but I do not think that they contradict the target of 5,000 by 2019, because progress against that target is often measured by entries, which will take place in 2019. The measurement involves 5,000 entries to modern apprenticeships by 2019-20. I do not know where the other figures have come from.

Mary Fee: The Government said that it would support 3,000 new foundation apprenticeships in 2017-18 when, in fact, 1,245 were delivered. Do you have a view on why there was a massive discrepancy between what was predicted and what was actually achieved?

The Deputy Convener: I think that Michael Cross wants to come in.

Michael Cross: I cannot answer that question. You would need to put it to Skills Development Scotland.

The Deputy Convener: Can anyone answer the question?

Jackie Galbraith: I am happy to offer a view from a practical perspective. Michael Cross spoke earlier about outcome agreements for colleges, which are partly about increasing—I think the word "intensifying" is used—what we do with foundation apprenticeships. We work really hard on that

because we believe that they are good qualifications and frameworks for some young people.

My personal view is that introducing new qualifications is a huge task, and we need to remember that foundation apprenticeships are brand new. From talking to parents, employers and young people in schools, I know that it takes a long time for people to understand that the new apprenticeships are a chunky and respected qualification.

In Ayrshire, we saw a slow start. As I said earlier, we celebrated our first cohort of engineering foundation apprentices last night—that was a cohort of 10. Our current cohort contains between 30 and 40 foundation apprentices, and we plan to increase the numbers next year. Those increases are based on what we can achieve with the schools with the knowledge that is out there. The targets are ambitious, but there is a practical element in how they are delivered.

I do not know whether anyone here will remember this—I think there are some people round the table who are ages with me—but there have been many changes to qualifications over the years. People understand qualifications best when they have been sustained over a number of years. We have to get to a point where foundation apprenticeships are sustained over a number of years, and then you will see a significant increase in the numbers. However, I am not able to comment on the inconsistency of the Government's targets.

11:00

Alison Henderson: Regarding perceptions, part of the problem is that, when foundation apprenticeships were being brought in, there was a lack of information about the level that they would be at and what it would mean for employers and colleges to work together to encourage intake. In Dundee and Angus, there are still some really slow numbers when it comes to teachers talking about the apprenticeships as a qualification and encouraging young people in. We have a big job of education to do in order to persuade parents, teachers and people in general. A question arises as to whether people would take a foundation apprenticeship as opposed to a higher. There are a whole bunch of conflicting things that are causing some problems.

Dr Stewart: Foundation apprenticeships require a work placement with an employer, and that takes time to establish in a local area. It is probably underestimated at a national level how long it takes to set some of these partnerships up. Things have moved at different paces in different

areas and different local authorities. Last week, for instance, I was speaking to representatives of a local authority in the central belt, and they talked about their strategic partnerships with 10 or 12 local employers, with clear regional economic priorities in their area. They are now putting the foundation apprenticeships in place.

Best practice from across Europe tells us that a combination of vocational skills and a significant work placement with an employer provides the best vocational experiences for young people and helps to make them successful, although they are not easy or quick to set up. In Scotland, we have probably underestimated the time that some placements take to set up, as well as the communication and engagement.

In addition, as Jackie Galbraith and Alison Henderson have said, there are new qualifications and programmes, and it takes time for people to understand them. If you have a son or daughter, you want to know what the programmes are going to do for them and whether it would be a good choice for your son or daughter to follow them. That is how we think as parents.

The qualifications are good and they will give young people credit as they go into a modern apprenticeship. They will also give them a broader understanding of the world of work, employability skills and the types of attitude that are needed in work.

Mary Fee: Has the target of 10,000 new foundation apprenticeship starts by 2020 been too ambitious, given what you said about the lack of understanding and the base work that should perhaps have been done when the foundation apprenticeships were established?

Dr Stewart: It is difficult to provide an answer to that. You have to set ambitious targets for people to aim towards.

Mary Fee: But you also have to do the partnership work. In collaboration and in setting the figure, you have to ensure that everyone is on board and understands what a foundation apprenticeship is and what it could lead to.

Dr Stewart: Yes—absolutely. With the adoption of new qualifications, things start very slowly. I am a scientist, so I am drawing an exponential curve here. Things start slowly until people understand what the programmes are about. The deliverers need to understand what they need to put in place, and the end users—the young people and their parents and carers—will then understand what is involved.

Is it wrong to set ambitious targets? I do not think so. Many steps are being put in place to address some of the challenges. I think it is good to have an ambitious target.

Mary Fee: Are there any other views on whether the target is achievable?

Terry Lanagan: It is ambitious, but I think it can be achieved. Foundation apprenticeships are now in every college region and every local authority. They are offered by 70 per cent of secondary schools. We are reaching a critical mass.

I mentioned the conference that ADES and SDS will hold in August, the aim of which is to take things to the next step, where people can see what the timetabling and other issues are and are willing to take on the challenge. The target is ambitious, but it is worth trying for, and I think it is achievable.

Euan Duncan: It is perhaps worth asking how the targets were arrived at. I am not aware of any work having been done to identify the number of young people for whom foundation apprenticeships might be appropriate.

To go back to Ross Greer's earlier question, I would hate us to find ourselves shoe-horning people into doing apprenticeships simply to meet targets. It will be far better if they are what young people want to do and they are right and appropriate for them. We need to be careful about using targets and we should not allow them to lead our thinking. Instead, we should work out what is best for young people.

The Deputy Convener: I suppose that is about the boundary between something that is ambitious and something that is unrealistic but sounds good. That can be the test.

We will move on to the next theme, which is careers information and guidance.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I have a question for Mr Duncan about careers guidance. Earlier, Mr Greer rightly referred to the fact that we have taken quite a lot of evidence from young people who do not feel that careers guidance is very comprehensive or readily understood. That theme was also flagged up by Professor Jim Scott, who was examining the issue of subject choice. Leaving that aside for now, he was concerned that he could identify a third of schools that, he felt, were not meeting the Scottish Government guidelines—through local authorities—about what parents need to know.

Mr Duncan, you mentioned earlier that you felt that one of the problems was the difficulty of resourcing such guidance in schools. As somebody with experience in the guidance sector as well as in your present role, can you tell us at what stage in school you feel we have to make a really determined effort to give youngsters all the comprehensive advice that we are looking for? What else do we have to do to ensure that they all get the information that allows them to make an

informed choice instead of being pushed in one particular direction?

Euan Duncan: The issue is that a lot of that falls on the shoulders of the guidance teacher. The role of a guidance teacher is to get to know the young people in their case load very well. That can be quite a challenge when there is a small number of guidance teachers and a large number of pupils. Latterly, I was working with a case load of upwards of 260. As you can imagine, that is quite a large number of young people to get to know really well—along with their families.

The getting-to-know-them process starts before the pupils even come to secondary school. We begin in the transition process from primary 7, and we speak to the primary school teachers. From that point onwards we are speaking to pupils regularly, we are advising them and we are encouraging them to think about careers and what might be right for them. A regular dialogue takes place.

There is no single point at which we sit the pupil down and say, "Right, it's time to make a decision about your career." You would do that only if you knew that they were very close to leaving school and there seemed to be no decision on the horizon. It is not a matter of saying, "Right. Hard crunch: we do this now," at the beginning of fourth or fifth year; it has to be a regular focus of personal and social education—PSE—all the way through secondary school. We need guidance teachers who are well trained and well informed and who know what the options are and what the pathways look like.

Guidance teachers are very busy people. We are not only focused on careers. A lot of crisis management goes on in secondary schools.

The responses to the committee's survey show that a lot of young people feel that schools focus only on the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. They might get that impression because UCAS takes up a lot of a guidance teacher's time. In the months between September and November, when UCAS is at its peak, we spend hours and hours supporting people who are thinking about applying to university. The downside is that we have less time to support other pupils in our case load. I would argue that we need to expand the number of guidance teachers in schools and to give them more time and better training so as to enable them to offer careers advice frequently, regularly and effectively.

Liz Smith: Thank you for that, Mr Duncan. I entirely agree with what you have said. I think that some people feel quite strongly that the later years of primary school can be very important in addressing the perceptions, ambitions and aspirations that young people have. Do you have

any suggestions about what could be done to ensure a better process around opening up the world to youngsters in primary 6 and primary 7?

Euan Duncan: There is real value in getting people working with youngsters in primary school, not just in guidance sessions but right across the curriculum. Some schools have been very imaginative: secondary and primary schools have collaborated, with secondary teachers working with youngsters in primary schools, and primary teachers have come to experience what happens in secondary schools.

That is a worthwhile process, and starting to talk about careers in the later years of primary school would be very valuable. What does a college course look like? What does it mean to go to university? What is an apprenticeship? That gets us away from a “people who help us” type of approach to jobs and careers advice. For instance, SDS careers officers can speak to young people in the latter years of primary school, so that they can build familiarity.

We frequently encourage young people in secondary school to self-refer to the careers officer. We have also done some proactive work to identify who needs to be seen by a careers officer. If young people feel that they can pop in and have a conversation with somebody, and that they will get good-quality, focused and informed careers advice, that provides familiarity, which is important, and I think it needs to begin quite early on.

Liz Smith: I was also on the visit to the Roslin institute a couple of weeks ago. The institute is doing outstanding work with primary children as well as secondary children. Some members of staff put it to us that some schools are unable to get their children to the institute because they are unable to afford the bus transport that is required, for example. Is the SSTA getting a lot of feedback on that particular resource problem?

Euan Duncan: We frequently hear from teachers about resource shortages, and not simply in relation to transport. There are shortages in basic things such as paper, pencils and textbooks. You have to cut your cloth according to the resources available. Schools have to make hard decisions at the moment. There are resource shortages in all areas at the moment, so we may have to think about whether to pay for a bus to go somewhere, to pay for jotters or perhaps to pay for some information technology that would allow us to move forward with national testing. Schools have to make hard decisions.

Liz Smith: My final question is for Dr Stewart. Janet Brown, who has been here a couple of times in recent evidence sessions, acknowledged that there have been some issues about the national 4

qualification. There is not a particularly strong recognition of that qualification by all parents and employers. Is there on-going work to examine the national 4 qualification? In the light of the discussions that we are having about other pathways, should it perhaps be reformed?

Dr Stewart: National 4 is currently being considered by the Government’s curriculum and assessment board. We have to think back to the question: why national 4? The debate is around whether national 4 should be internally or externally assessed. Because it is internally assessed, there are perceptions about its credibility and so on. That is the debate that has been going on.

I will explain what the curriculum and assessment group has been doing. The Scottish Government has been gathering further evidence about stakeholders’ views on national 4. A considerable body of evidence had already been gathered from a variety of sources, including parental organisations. The SQA did two rounds of fieldwork with schools. In the one at the end of 2017, the SQA asked for the views of teachers and senior managers in schools, in particular on what they thought about national 4, and the views were quite mixed.

We ran focus groups with young people who were doing either national 4 only or a combination of national 4 and national 5. The majority of the young people said that they were quite happy with national 4 being internally assessed.

The Scottish Government has been gathering further views. It has gathered further parental views, and there are still perceptions among parents about the credibility of national 4. Interestingly, employers were not concerned by the fact that national 4 is internally assessed, probably because employers are used to vocational qualifications, all of which are internally assessed and rigorously quality assured.

A body of evidence is emerging about different stakeholders’ perceptions. As I understand it, the curriculum and assessment group will be considering that body of evidence about perceptions in June, and it will think about a communication and engagement strategy with different stakeholders. However, the ultimate decision on that would be made by the Scottish Government and the Deputy First Minister.

11:15

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I want to follow up on the line of questioning around careers advice. First, however, I am quite concerned that young people’s feedback regarding UCAS forms was dismissed so quickly by Euan Duncan. As a former college lecturer, I often had

students telling me that, throughout their school life, they had felt pressured by their parents and their teachers, in that university was often considered the be-all and end-all, with college often seen as a second choice.

I have had feedback from young people, including MSYPs in a forum that I chaired, that there is a long-standing and, I suppose, old-fashioned perception among parents and teachers that apprenticeships are what people do when they cannot achieve anything else. We need to listen to young people's voices on that. How can we engage young people and parents in considering those pathways in a way that ensures that they are equally valued?

Terry Lanagan: That is part of the challenge of the whole DYW programme. Historically, in Scotland, we have tended to value academic qualifications and university entry above all else. Changing the culture around anything is the most difficult thing to do.

I will make one point about the feedback from young people. I would argue that the situation is definitely improving and that the balance is beginning to shift to a more equal view of vocational and academic qualifications.

One thing that struck me about the survey by the Scottish Parliament information centre was that 26 per cent of the respondents were over 21. They would all have left school before the DYW programme started. Indeed, many of the youngsters in the middle category—the 29 per cent aged 18 to 21—would have left school either after the programme started or during its first year. Only 36.1 per cent of respondents are currently at school. I would not dismiss the views of young people, but we should be careful about interpreting those figures, because some of the young people who responded to the survey left school seven years ago.

We have to take a lesson from that feedback, and we have to work hard at changing people's perceptions. We can do that through exemplification—we need to show that the qualifications are valuable by getting young people who have gone on to modern apprenticeships to come back into schools and talk about the value of that experience and by selling the idea to parents that such qualifications are not just for those who are not academic but are valuable for everyone, because of the life skills that they involve.

Michael Cross: To echo and endorse a point that Terry Lanagan made, more young people are undertaking senior phase pathways. Those pathways are growing very quickly and are being delivered by colleges with schools, so more youngsters are taking up the opportunity.

Euan Duncan: It certainly was not my intention to be dismissive of young people's views. What I was saying was that that was not my experience. In the work that I have been doing in school, we work very hard to make everything equal and level and we would certainly not suggest that college qualifications are in any way inferior—they are different qualifications.

Teachers are in the business of trying to encourage young people to get the best qualifications possible. As I was saying, by getting to know them, I hope we will get to a point where we can advise them and say, "Think about this," or, "Have you thought about university?"

At the end of the day, it must be the young person's choice. That has been my approach, although perhaps the approach has been different elsewhere.

Alison Henderson: A key audience in all of this is teachers. We can do the education with parents and young people, but if teachers do not buy in or if they are finding things inconsistent, they will not take that message.

I would like to see more connection between teachers and DYW activity in general. We do a lot of support work and project work with young people and, because the teachers are stretched, they will often go off and do something else rather than partake in the DYW activity. That activity could expose teachers to the world of work and to employers. Many of them will have been teachers for a long time. They will have gone in through university and will not have experienced some of the new roles in businesses.

We have inconsistencies in schools, with DYW or the role of DYW lead being bolted on to somebody's day job. That is not great, because the DYW person in a school needs to be an influencer. I would take that careers guidance responsibility and spread it broadly. Every teacher should know that DYW activity inside out, and they should be able to talk about the broad range of future jobs and the skills that are needed for them. The DYW person should be an influencer rather than a doer or the person who has to make the project activity work.

Gillian Martin: You have just opened the door for another line of questioning that I want to pursue, about the suitability of teachers who have been teaching for a very long time to be a lead person in careers guidance, given that they have taken a particular pathway themselves and they might only ever have been a teacher. It takes a lot of work to stay up to speed with what is out there. Does that model perhaps need to be looked at?

Jackie Galbraith: It is important to make best use of the resources, expertise and experience in the system. There is a really important role for

colleges, college lecturers and other college staff to work with teachers, schools, parents and young people to raise awareness. I would say that that is the experience of all colleges in Scotland. We do as much of that as we can within the resources that we have. There is perhaps something to be said for freeing up the colleges to do more of that. College lecturers are dealing with employers all the time, they understand the industries that they are training young people for and they understand the needs of employers. It is really important to tap into that.

It is important to be aware that aspirations vary. There is a big job for all of us to do in validating aspirations. Most people's aspiration is not to go to university. That does not mean that that is a bad thing—it is not a deficit. Validating aspirations is a critical thing that we need to start doing.

I can only speak about Ayrshire College, where I have worked for five years. If you ask the majority of our students why they came to college and whether it was their first choice, they will say yes. The majority of our students came to college as a first choice, and their parents would have seen that as a positive aspiration. Some of our students came for a second chance: they either did not get to university or they are adults returning, and it is a second chance for them, but the critical thing is that, regardless of whether it is their first choice or a second-chance opportunity, their experience is high value and world class, and their decision is on an equal footing with the decisions of those who choose to go to universities.

There is a really important point about getting that message out and using the careers guidance resource across the system to tackle some of the negative perceptions.

Terry Lanagan: I certainly agree with all of that. Gillian, you have put your finger on a very important point about all teachers engaging with this agenda.

I take Euan Duncan's point that guidance teachers are overworked. The DYW programme board has always been clear that the success of the DYW agenda at school level depends on all teachers engaging with it and seeing part of the work that they do through the prism of employability. Whether they are teaching biology, English or technical education, one thing that the teacher should be thinking about is the employability aspect of that—not in a narrow sense, but in the sense of the skills that they are building up for people. We have quite a way to go there. DYW leads in schools should be trying to inculcate that sort of attitude among all teachers.

Euan Duncan: Gillian Martin has made a good point about teachers perhaps not having a lot of experience of industry. In the past, there were

opportunities for teachers to go on industrial placements. In modern times, however, we are very short of backfill opportunities, so to release teachers to see what is happening at a local company is very difficult.

I know teachers who had opportunities to visit local chemical works. They visited art galleries and worked there for a while. More recently, some politicians have been engaging in "Apprentice for a Day". I do not know whether anybody here has been part of that, but it would be a great opportunity for teachers to go out and be an apprentice for a day, just to see what it is like. That is the kind of experience that they can bring back into school and use.

There is not much time or opportunity for teachers to engage meaningfully with employers. They might snatch a few words at a careers fair or they might reach out to people whom they know who are employers, but to actually have experience of industry is quite difficult.

There are some teachers who have had careers prior to teaching. One of my colleagues was a theatre nurse. I worked in finance, and another teacher was a chemical scientist. There are lots of people who have had other careers. They bring that experience into the classroom very successfully. For those who have not had that opportunity, we need to explore ways of engaging them in what employers are looking for in young people. You cannot learn it from a PowerPoint presentation; you need to get out there and experience it.

Gillian Martin: I have a question on employers. As I have mentioned, I taught in college. Trying to get work placements for students was like the poisoned chalice of the department, because it was so time consuming. We often found that employers were reluctant to take on college students, so I imagine the same is true of school pupils.

What can we do? You have mentioned some of the things that been done to encourage employers to get involved. Have any of you had any experience of shared apprenticeships or shared work experience that allows very small employers to share an apprentice?

Alison Henderson: In Dundee and Angus, we have seen some innovative ways of approaching the work experience programme. This is the problem: if a one-size-fits-all approach is taken to spending a week with an employer, it can be difficult. The young person might think, "This is not for me" on day 2, and that is not good.

GlaxoSmithKline, for example, is a massive employer. During the work experience week, it puts the young person in different departments, so they get to try out lots of different careers. We

have a strong shared apprenticeship programme that is driven by Dundee and Angus College. That involves construction, but with different construction employers. They might take a young person for four weeks, 12 weeks or six months, and the young people who follow those programmes get a good, shared experience across a number of different firms.

Earlier, I mentioned a school's timetabling arrangements on a Friday afternoon. They allow the young people in that school to find two and a half hours every Friday, from the start of term to the end of term, to go to an employer. We had a young person in who was doing that, and that changes people's thoughts on their future work path.

The Deputy Convener: We have to move on.

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): Earlier, a couple of witnesses referred to the challenges faced in rural areas. In my area of Moray, only 16.1 per cent of people are between the ages of 16 and 29, compared with a national average of 18.5 per cent—so we have fewer young people. We have 45 per cent of young people who are committed leavers, compared with 40 per cent nationally. We have fewer young people, and a bigger proportion of young people want to leave the area. That is not a good combination of statistics.

When it comes to careers advice, we adapt to local circumstances. How do you take such situations into account without going overboard by steering too far in one direction? Ultimately, it is up to the pupil where they want to develop their career or education.

Terry Lanagan: I do not know the specific answer to Richard Lochhead's local circumstance, but I go back to something that I said earlier. Each local authority has to address that subject, taking account of their own circumstances, demographics and labour market information. They need to make their careers advice as bespoke as possible.

I could not comment on the particular circumstances in Moray, I am afraid, but I think that that is how it has to be. The expertise to address those issues will be in Moray.

Jackie Galbraith: The situation in Ayrshire is not quite as stark, obviously, although we have rural areas. There are parts of Ayrshire—Dalmellington, for example—where it is challenging for young people to engage in college programmes, because of the distance between the school and the nearest campus, and also because of the availability of bus services. That is a challenge, although we are trying to find our way around it. We are trying to deal with that partly by offering more opportunities for us to deliver in or with the school. The value often lies in the young

person coming into a different environment—a vocational environment—and having the facilities there.

We are struggling with that issue, although not to the same degree, obviously, as in areas such as Richard Lochhead's constituency. I know that the Scottish funding council has a view on rurality—although we do not fall under that aspect—and I know that there are particular challenges with that. The number of young people from schools in rural areas who are engaging in vocational pathways with our college is significantly lower because of those challenges.

The Deputy Convener: That may be an area that the committee needs to reflect on.

11:30

Richard Lochhead: I have a follow-up question for Alison Henderson on engagement with employers. More and more of the employers I speak to are concerned about skills gaps. With Brexit, there could be even more skills gaps. Is there now a lot of evidence that employers want to work more closely with schools to plug those gaps?

Alison Henderson: I think there is. We can see from every regional group and from the DYW activity that employers are significantly interested in engaging. Some of that goes towards helping young people to consider the careers in their area and to stay. The earlier the engagement, the more a young person is likely to consider an employer down the road. That might be a fish-processing factory, but it has human resources advisers, finance people and managers who manage people. It is about uncovering the local jobs that exist and encouraging as many employers as we can to engage across all sectors and all sizes of business. We are seeing that.

Richard Lochhead: Making money is not everything in life, but some of Scotland's most successful entrepreneurs live in rural areas, and they have not necessarily had a university education. Among the themes that we are debating is the pressure that people face to go to university. On the point about mentors and opening young people's eyes to the success that they can have in life without having to go to university, many of the wealthiest people I know in Scotland are self-made and did not necessarily go to university. Are we putting a lot of effort into having people like that as mentors?

Alison Henderson: Yes.

Richard Lochhead: That is happening, is it?

Alison Henderson: There are a couple of practical examples. In Dundee and Angus, we have an apprenticeship ambassador programme,

and I know that other DYW regions are considering doing that. The successful no wrong paths social media campaign came out of Glasgow, and others have showed examples of people who might not have gone to university.

We seriously have to get employers to stop putting “degree essential” on job applications and person specifications. I do not have a degree and I did not go to university, yet I have been reasonably successful. We have to show young people that that is genuinely a path.

Terry Lanagan: I am a professional adviser to the Scotland’s enterprising schools initiative. Its website is worth a look, and the people there do fantastic work across the country in developing entrepreneurial skills in young people, not just in secondary schools but in primaries and nurseries. They involve entrepreneurs in mentoring and helping schools. It is an interesting website with a lot of information.

Jackie Galbraith: The DYW group in Ayrshire, along with the college and others, have done some great work—I am sure that is true across the country—in identifying employers just like that. People such as Sir Tom Hunter do great work in encouraging young people. One advantage is that a lot of engineering companies in Ayrshire are managed and run by people started as apprentices. They often do not have university qualifications—or if they have qualifications, they achieved them when they were in work. They are real inspirations to our students and young people in schools, and we use them to discuss where they have got to and where they started. That helps people to identify with that.

Gordon MacDonald: When I served on the Education and Culture Committee, in session 4, my world of work had just been introduced as a software tool for young people. Do you have a view on how effective that piece of software has been in better equipping young people to make informed choices about their future?

Euan Duncan: I have used it extensively with my pupils. It has gone from strength to strength. When it was first introduced, it was fairly basic, but it is now a very useful tool.

It is not just a website; it is a suite of tools for people of all ages. It is not just aimed at school pupils; people can use it at any point in their lives and at any stage in their careers. From that point of view, getting young people familiar with it is fantastic because, as they move on from school into other stages of their lives, they can go back to it. If they have an online account, they can go back to things that they have stored. It has a CV builder tool, and there are all sorts of opportunities for analysing your skills, identifying your strengths, exploring employment options and thinking about

career changes, as well as information about interview skills. There is a lot on that website.

My world of work does not replace one-to-one guidance. That is not what it is about. However, it enables people to have a better quality of conversation. For example, I might encourage young people to look at my world of work and to think about their skills, abilities, qualifications, what they are doing, what they need to do and what they are interested in. That will become a useful conversation starter. We can then sit down and ask, “What have you been thinking about?” We can ask what they have been finding out from my world of work and from other sources. We can say, “Let’s talk about it. Where are you at? Where are you going? What are your aspirations?” It is a useful and helpful tool.

Dr Stewart: As a parent of a young person, I found my world of work really helpful, because my son wanted to do something that I did not know anything about. I found it useful to look at my world of work so that I could find out how things work in the sector concerned, and then structure a conversation with my son around that. That is a comment from me as a parent. I thought it was a very helpful resource.

As Euan Duncan says, it does not replace face-to-face support, but it is a useful resource that identifies career structures within different industry sectors and relates them to apprenticeship programmes, to HNCs, HNDs, degree programmes and so on. It is a useful resource.

Euan Duncan: I noticed that there was a question about the possibility of it creating digital exclusion. It is optimised for use on mobile phones, so anybody with access to a mobile phone can use it. It does not rely on people having a laptop or desktop computer or a wired internet connection. It can be used anywhere with wi-fi or mobile data.

Gordon MacDonald: We were talking about the challenge of changing the culture and parents’ perceptions. What you said was really interesting. Do you think that enough parents are engaging with and aware of the website? Do you think that the SDS’s roll-out of the ambassador programme and getting youngsters to talk about the website at parents’ nights and so on—which I note that about 160 schools have done—will be helpful in raising its profile with parents?

Dr Stewart: Those sorts of things must help to raise awareness. Euan Duncan might want to comment on that.

Euan Duncan: Absolutely. As I was saying earlier, the experiences of young people who have used the site are helpful. We were discussing apprentices, and when you get apprentices to talk to young people about being an apprentice, they

understand it better. When you get young people or parents to talk about how they have used my world of work, it builds momentum, and people understand how they can use it.

One thing that I would do would be to say to pupils, “Now go home, show your parents the website and discuss what we have been doing here.” That would be a homework task. That is not something that has to be written; it is an experience.

Gordon MacDonald: One feature of the website is Marketplace, which can be used by employers as a matching tool, if my understanding is correct, for work experience and so on. How do we encourage employers to engage more, especially bearing in mind our earlier conversation about small employers being reluctant to take on young people?

Euan Duncan: We engaged with the local chamber of commerce, which was where a lot of the work experience opportunities came from. It has been two or three years since I was involved in that, so I do not have up-to-date information, but perhaps somebody else can pick up on that.

Alison Henderson: I can certainly talk about employer engagement with Marketplace. We have seen that it has not been so popular from an employer perspective. Teachers are keen to use it extensively, and it works well for them. It works well for employers if they know what they want to deliver. When we were considering our DYW regional group creation, we said that we almost needed a menu for employers. They could do an inspirational talk, they could offer work experience or they could take on a young person as an apprentice. However, Marketplace does not do that quite so well compared with a situation where an employer knows that they could deliver an hour-and-a-half talk on chemical engineering, for instance. Marketplace works very well when an employer has a clear thing that they might want to deliver, but it is perhaps not such an obvious solution for an employer who is not so sure what they would use it for.

The Deputy Convener: Thank you for that. We will now move on to the learner journey review.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I will start by way of a supplementary point on my world of work. My anecdotal take on it—from the point of view of pupils—is not quite as glowing as Euan Duncan’s, I must confess. To make a specific point or question out of it, I would say that it is all very well if people have a laptop, a tablet or a PC at home, but a lot of kids do not have those or do not have access to those. Can I take it from your earlier answers that you accept that face-to-face inspirational talks or discussions are every bit as

important as having another website that kids are meant to get to?

Euan Duncan: Definitely. As I started off by saying, the challenge in schools is that guidance teachers, who have the job of bringing together all the pieces of a young person’s jigsaw, need every tool that they can find to facilitate good quality discussion.

It is important that young people take a bit of responsibility themselves. You cannot force them down particular routes and say, “I think you should be a”—whatever it is; you want them to consider different ideas. Young people who have investigated my world of work have found other ideas. One young man who was a very keen rock climber decided that he wanted to be an aerial rigger, so he took up his skills, his passion and his confidence with being at height. He found that through my world of work. There was an idea of something that he could do that fitted in with his interests.

Tavish Scott: Good—thank you.

I want to ask a couple of questions of Terry Lanagan, given that he said earlier that he has been involved in this area right from the start. Terry, you specifically mentioned the importance of cultural change and—I hate this word—transformational change. I have just used the word, but I hate it. Anyway, you spoke about the cultural change that is necessary in schools. That is principally about leadership by headteachers, is it not?

Terry Lanagan: It is about leadership at various levels. The headteacher certainly has a key role to play, as do college principals. Other staff, including the DYW lead in each school and individual teachers, also have an important role to play. There is no doubt that the headteacher’s vision and the way in which they choose to push the DYW agenda is at the heart of it.

Tavish Scott: Many committee colleagues have mentioned the need to recognise that many schools still push an academic route. Despite what might be said about former learning guidance staff, that attitude is still prevalent. How do you think those barriers have been broken down during the first three or four years of implementing the programme?

Terry Lanagan: The first thing to say is that we must be careful not to go too far and undervalue the academic route. For some young people, a university degree is the best thing that they can do. The evidence is still that someone’s chances of long-term, high-quality, highly paid employment are far higher if they have a university degree. It is important to bear that in mind.

However, one of the pressures that schools have been under for many years concerns that competitive element around exam results, positive destinations and so on. I would like to think that the DYW agenda moves us to a more collaborative approach with the young person at the centre. In schools, we try to deliver the advice, guidance and opportunities that are best suited to each individual. That is about schools knowing their students and what is best for them.

The other aspect is that what might appear to be best at one point in a young person's journey is not always going to be best. I have a niece who has a first-class degree in law from Glasgow university. She runs a restaurant, and she is very happy doing that. People change their minds. It is a matter of developing the whole person and seeing the young person in the round. That is the key.

Tavish Scott: I wonder if I could ask Michael Cross to relate his comments to that question. What is the funding council doing to answer that point about being target driven in terms of policy? Does the funding council have a role in breaking that down into a more subtle approach, if I can put it that way?

Michael Cross: We are charged with delivering a series of objectives by the Scottish Government. In many instances, we need targets for that. However, the regime that we operate through outcome agreements—Jackie Galbraith might want either to confirm this or to take issue with it—is about the relationship between the funding council, as manifest in an outcome manager, and the college. That ought to be a consensual relationship, not a didactic one.

I hope that we are striking the right balance between ambitious targets that move Scotland's economic and skills agenda forward, and giving colleges space to deliver.

11:45

Tavish Scott: Jackie Galbraith, do you think that young people are at the centre of this debate?

Jackie Galbraith: I think they are, but school leaders, college leaders and employers have their own sets of priorities and tasks to get through. It is a matter of negotiating, through that, what resources we can allocate to make things happen.

For example, we are meeting all Ayrshire headteachers in a couple of weeks to have that strategic discussion, because it requires us all—colleges, schools and others—to free up resource in order to be successful. Schools, colleges and others have limited resources. The only way to make things work is if we agree shared targets. That means our own shared targets: not just the

big targets that come from Government, but what we think is practical in a regional sense. We can then allocate whatever resource we can to achieve that. That goes back to my first point, that the partnership is critical. Headteachers have a critical role to play in that.

Tavish Scott: In the first two years of developing Scotland's young workforce, there was specific funding, which I guess you all would have had been able to pitch for. That went, however. In my experience of Government policy, when no money is specifically identified with something, it is called mainstreaming. Everyone is responsible for it and no one is responsible for it. Is the strategy still working effectively? Euan Duncan mentioned the pressure on guidance staff, which is familiar to all of us who go into schools all the time. Where does the strategy fit along with everything else?

Terry Lanagan: In my view, that has not happened with this initiative. The funding was always going to be for two years, and people knew that, so it was about setting up and testing out certain things.

The programme board has always been clear that, in schools, the DYW programme is an integral part of curriculum for excellence. It goes a long way towards delivering the skills for work agenda, which is at the core of curriculum for excellence. It has continued to be driven in schools and local authorities because everybody sees the value of that agenda for Scotland's future and for individual young people. I have not heard anyone argue against the agenda that is being pushed through DYW or against the work that the Wood commission did. That is very unusual in education, and the commitment to that agenda is definitely on-going, regardless of the removal of the funding.

Tavish Scott: How does developing Scotland's young workforce fit with the publication of the "15-24 Learner Journey Review" and the process called the "learner journey"? Is there a danger that, once again, teachers will see yet another big publication coming through that has great ministerial import? I am sorry, but are we not still meant to be doing developing Scotland's young workforce? How do those things fit together—or do they?

Terry Lanagan: I was involved in the work on the learner journey, and there is a seamless fit between the two. Any document that tries to describe the process of a learner journey has to take account of the workforce aspect of that agenda and the transferable skills that young people should have. I can see no contradiction or tension between the two.

Michael Cross: That is very much our view. The process is fluid and is focused on the learner,

with resource being allocated accordingly. That is how we see it.

Dr Stewart: The learner journey clearly tries to tie together the whole education and skills landscape, of which schools are a key part. It talks about more work-based learning in the senior phase of school, and about how we can shorten learner journeys. I think it is very much in keeping with that.

It is broader, but it very much builds on the DYW agenda. For me, it is clearly not just another initiative; it is part of the broader landscape of education and skills in Scotland that is vital for our economy and for ensuring that our people thrive in the future.

Tavish Scott: I get all that, but when do hard-pressed headteachers and teachers have time to read yet another publication?

Euan Duncan: That is always the challenge in schools. We are bombarded with information. That was a big part of the bureaucracy review. There was simply too much out there for teachers and headteachers to try and read in order to keep abreast of all the new developments. If you keep it to one side of A4, you might have a chance.

Tavish Scott: Indeed. Thank you for that. That is what I wanted to hear.

The Deputy Convener: Thank you all for your evidence today and for the great discipline with which you provided it. Educators know how to keep to time, which is very much appreciated.

I am sure that you will have things that you wanted to say, or further information that you think would be helpful to us. Please feel free to come back to the committee with anything further. Jackie Galbraith spoke about some figures, but that also applies to any other comments that you might not have had the opportunity to make during the evidence session.

Thank you very much for your attendance. I appreciate the amount of time that you have spent with us this morning.

That concludes the public part of today's meeting.

11:50

Meeting continued in private until 12:10.

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Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

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