



British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly

Tionól Parlaiminteach na Breataine agus na hÉireann

Report from

Committee D (Environment and Social Affairs)

on

Returning the unemployed to work

Doc No. 167

Introduction

1. Committee D of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (Environment and Social Affairs) agreed at its meeting during the Assembly's plenary session in Swansea in October 2009 to undertake a short inquiry into measures for returning the unemployed to work, with the aim of reporting by the plenary meeting in Cavan in February 2010. The timetable made the inquiry necessarily compact, and ideally the committee would have spent more time examining the area. However, during the time allowed the committee was able to hear evidence in Rhyl (north Wales), Dublin and Belfast. We heard evidence in person from a range of groups and individuals, and engaged with national governments, devolved governments, local authorities, businesses, trade unions and the voluntary sector. We also received memoranda from governments in the various jurisdictions represented in the Assembly. We are most grateful to all those who assisted us.¹
2. Although the inquiry was short, it was certainly timely. When we began it the United Kingdom and Ireland were in a deep recession. Although the recession had its genesis in the financial and property markets (the "credit crunch"), it developed into a recession comparable to others: with negative growth, reduced exports, businesses closing and rising unemployment. Fortunately it looks like we are beginning to emerge from the recession, and growth is starting to return. However, our inquiry did not only deal with those made unemployed by the recession; we also heard about those who were long-term unemployed during prosperous years: those whose unemployment had little or nothing to do with the economic cycle.
3. The effects of the recession on unemployment are undoubted. In the United Kingdom the unemployment rate for September to November 2009 stood at 2.46 million or 7.8 per cent, the highest since 1997. In Wales the unemployment rate was 8.7 per cent; in Scotland 7.2 per cent; and in Northern Ireland 6.8 per cent.² In Ireland the unemployment rate was reported to be 12.5 per cent in January 2010, the highest for 15 years and an increase of 150 per cent since the start of 2007. Although the economies may be emerging from the recession, previous recessions have shown that the level of unemployment can continue to rise after the economy returns to growth.
4. The recession has not only affected those with lower-skilled jobs; the Committee also heard about the effect of redundancies on professionals, who may have little or no experience of being out of work. Graduates have also found it difficult to find employment on leaving university. There is a danger of a "lost generation" of graduates, school leavers and apprentices, who miss out on opportunities to get on the employment ladder because of the recession, and are bypassed by the next year's group when the employment market improves. They can then become long-term unemployed.

¹ A list of witnesses is at the end of this report.

² Figures taken from Labour Market Statistics produced by the Office for National Statistics:
http://www.statistics.gov.uk/onlineproducts/lms_regional.asp

5. Social security and employment powers have not been devolved to Scotland and Wales and are exercised throughout Great Britain by the Department for Work and Pensions. In Northern Ireland social security is transferred; however the Department for Social Development in Northern Ireland operates a policy of parity with Great Britain, paying benefits at the same rates and subject to the same conditions; changes in Britain so far as possible are replicated in Northern Ireland at the same time. As a memorandum from the Minister for Social Development to the Committee put it, “Underpinning the parity principle is the argument that as people in Northern Ireland pay the same rate of income tax and National Insurance contributions as people in Britain, they are entitled to enjoy the same rights and benefits notwithstanding the fact that Northern Ireland is not self sufficient in funding the resulting benefits costs.” Employment policy is also devolved in Northern Ireland, thus enabling flexibility to suit Northern Ireland’s small business and agricultural economy. The Minister for Employment and Learning in the Northern Ireland Executive, Sir Reg Empey, told the Committee that his department had all the powers it deemed necessary. In Scotland and Wales social security and employment powers interact with a range of areas which are devolved, such as training, housing, health and personal social services.
6. As mentioned above, our inquiry has had to be short and has been conducted in a fast-moving environment. Accordingly, without prejudice to the future agenda of the committee, we feel that the newly constituted committee may want to return to this area in due course after the general election in the United Kingdom.

Support for those out of work

7. The Committee have not looked in detail at the operation of all benefits provided to those out of work; to do so would be a mammoth task. However, as background it may be helpful to set out the principal measures of financial support for those out of work. In the United Kingdom Jobseeker’s Allowance is the main benefit for those out of work who are between 18 and the state pension age and who are available for and actively seeking work. The rates for a single person are £50.95 or £64.30 per week, depending on the age of the claimant. Claimants of Jobseeker’s Allowance must attend regular interviews.
8. One of the other requirements for claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance in the UK is that the claimant cannot work 16 hours or more per week on average. The justification for this rule appears obvious: you don’t want to be paying out of work benefits to someone who is working a fair amount. However, we have heard significant evidence that the effect of the rule is to hinder people from returning to work. The inflexibility of the rule means that for some people, who perhaps can’t or aren’t ready for full-time work, it is more cost-effective to do no work and claim the Allowance than to work over the 16 hours and lose the

Allowance. For example, Rhyl Football Club³ offers jobs doing coaching and volunteering for those claiming the Allowance. Many participants enjoy the work, and gain a lot from it; but because they can only do it for 16 hours in a week boredom can set in, and they can turn to less constructive activities. The rule also hinders employers, who may want workers to do a few more hours to meet demand and gain experience. On the basis of the examples we've heard, **we recommend that the UK Government urgently review the operation of the 16-hour rule, with a view to making it much more flexible and turning it into a tool to help people into work rather than acting as a cap on how much they can work.**

9. In the United Kingdom those unable to work because of illness or disability can get the Employment and Support Allowance, which replaced Incapacity Benefit and Income Support in 2008. The Allowance consists of two phases: the assessment phase of 13 weeks during which a claimant's ability to work is assessed, and the main phase after 14 weeks, if the assessment shows that the illness or disability limits the claimant's ability to work. During the assessment phase the rates paid are the same as for Jobseeker's Allowance; during the main phase they increase to £89.80 or £95.15 per week.
10. In the Republic of Ireland Jobseeker's Benefit is paid to insured persons unemployed for at least three days in six who are available and looking for work and, unless a casual worker, have suffered a substantial loss of employment. For those between 18 and 65 years old it is payable for a maximum of 312 days per year. Jobseeker's Allowance is a means-tested payment made to those who are unemployed for at least three days in six and not entitled to Jobseeker's Benefit. Both Jobseeker's Benefit and Jobseeker's Allowance are made up of a weekly personal rate of €196 for adults plus €130.10 for a qualified adult and €29.80 for a qualified child. Lower personal rates are paid in certain circumstances for those under 25.
11. In the Republic of Ireland those unemployed for more than six months are eligible to apply for the Work Placement Programme run by FÁS (Foras Áiseanna Saothair, the National Training and Employment Authority). That allows those unemployed to take up work in the public, private or voluntary sectors for up to nine months whilst continuing to receive full social benefits. It operates at no cost to the organisations concerned. The Programme has two strands: one offering 1,000 places for graduates, and the other offering 1,000 places for non-graduates. Graduates need not be in receipt of social benefits in order to enter the scheme. Though we heard suggestions that the programme was modest in its scope and not available to businesses that had made recent redundancies, it appeared to be one way around the problem encountered in the United Kingdom with the 16-hour rule.
12. FÁS also runs the Community Employment scheme for the long-term unemployed and for early school leavers. It offers part-time and temporary

³ Rhyl Football Club is involved in the Rhyl City Strategy, described below.

placements in jobs based within local communities, with participants able to seek other part-time work during their placement. After the placement, participants are encouraged to seek permanent part-time and full-time jobs elsewhere based on the experience and skills they have gained while in the scheme. FÁS offers grants to community employers towards the cost of hiring people under the scheme. There are currently 23,000 places on the Community Employment scheme, offering placements in fields ranging from genealogy to childcare; a further increase in the number of places is planned for 2010.

13. In order to facilitate those on certain social welfare payments in Ireland to improve their skills and qualifications, the Department of Social and Family Affairs runs the Back to Education Allowance scheme. Participants in the scheme are paid a weekly allowance equivalent to the maximum standard rate of the social welfare payment they were receiving prior to starting an approved course of study, plus an annual allowance of €500. The allowances are paid to people wishing to participate in approved second or third level courses of education. In general, applicants must have been in receipt of social welfare payments for three months for second level courses or 12 months for third level courses; however, those awarded statutory redundancy may access the scheme immediately.

Long-term unemployed

14. The national unemployment figures cited above do not reveal wide regional variations in the rates of those who are out of work. The Committee heard evidence about and saw for itself areas in which the level of unemployment had been stubbornly high for years, where generations had never experienced work, and for which a recession made almost no difference to whether or not people would be employed. These long-term unemployed tend to concentrate in certain areas. There is a danger that, as the economy recovers and unemployment begins to decline, such people disappear from the radar as worklessness becomes less of a political priority. **We urge governments not to lose sight of the long-term unemployed, and to prioritise finding work for them, regardless of the macroeconomic situation.**
15. The long-term unemployed may not all feature on the unemployment statistics. Often they are claiming a range of benefits. The causes of their unemployment are myriad. In some families people haven't worked for generations, and children grow up without any expectation in their family or amongst their peers that they will get a job; the opposite, in fact. Some don't have the skills necessary for employment, such as basic literacy, numeracy or interpersonal skills. Some are physically unfit for work. Others lack the confidence to set out on the path to work. With such people it is not as simple as finding a vacancy and them filling it—they are very far from the workplace. **On the basis of our observations we think it essential that governments recognise that returning the long-term unemployed to work is not a simple process for which there are easy answers; it is long-term, and some of the measures necessary may not yield immediate or measurable results.**

Rhyl City Strategy

16. The Committee visited Rhyl in north Wales to look in particular at the operation of the Rhyl City Strategy. The Rhyl City Strategy is one of 15 areas in the United Kingdom (and one of two in Wales) which are part of the Department for Work and Pensions' City Strategies initiative. City Strategies aim to tackle worklessness in the areas that are currently furthest from the UK Government's aim of 80 per cent employment. The 15 City Strategy pilot areas were due to finish in March 2009, but the scheme was extended for a further two years.
17. The scheme aims to bring together local partners, granting them the freedom to experiment with new ideas in order to tailor services to local needs. Skills and training are provided to those out of work in response to the needs of local employers, with the aim of significantly increasing employment rates. Most of the City Strategies are (as their name implies) in major cities (for example, Glasgow, Liverpool and Greater Manchester) or urban areas; Rhyl's covers the smallest geographical area and population, covering only 27,000 people. Nonetheless, the decline in Rhyl as a British seaside town since the 1970s made a good case for it attaining City Strategy status.
18. The Rhyl City Strategy is run by an Executive Board, which brings together senior representatives of different departments in the Welsh Assembly Government, Denbighshire County Council, North Wales Police, the local health board and various other bodies concerned with worklessness. Board members' responsibilities inside the boardroom and in their other jobs were linked. A wider Consortium of over 50 organisations meets quarterly to share ideas and information and support the implementation of the business plan. The voluntary sector plays a particularly significant role in the strategy. In 2008 the Executive Board was formed as a Community Interest Company, which allows it greater freedom to innovate. Important though the governance structure is in bringing together local partners, **we were pleased to hear that the Rhyl City Strategy Board was not concerned with theorising, bureaucracy or procedures, but was focused on delivering results. That can be seen as a model for elsewhere.**
19. The objective of the City Strategy is to halve the gap between the employment rate of Rhyl (61.3 per cent) and that of Wales (70 per cent) by 2011, focusing on the most disadvantaged areas. For example, the west ward of Rhyl had an unemployment rate of 51 per cent; the south-west ward was only marginally better. The Strategy concentrates on the smallest possible areas, targeting particular neighbourhoods and streets. It does not seek "quick wins", but aims to tackle the most difficult areas in a long-term way. Success in reducing unemployment during a severe recession is likely to be hard, but there are signs that Rhyl is performing better than the rest of Denbighshire as a result of the Strategy. For example, between November 2007 and February 2009 the number of claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance in Denbighshire excluding Rhyl went up by 86 per cent; in Rhyl it increased by only 49 per cent. The respective reductions in claimants of Incapacity Benefit over that period were by 4.6 per

cent in Denbighshire and 7 per cent in Rhyl. As a result of the Strategy's success further funding has been forthcoming.

20. The Committee had the opportunity of visiting a few of the organisations central to the Rhyl City Strategy. One of these is the Rhyl Youth Action Group, based at the Rhyl Hub. 1,000 young people are associated with the Group, 80 per cent of whom are not in employment, education or training (NEETs). It brings together various government bodies, businesses and charities in one location, in the heart of one of the most deprived areas in Rhyl. The Hub combines a youth centre with a leisure area with facilities for training and educating young people and finding them work. For example, adjacent to the youth café (which those using it were responsible for running) is a centre with computers for users to search for jobs and apply to college. Also in the Hub is a mock shop containing all the usual features of a retail environment for preparing people for retail work. The shop can be adapted to any supermarket's software, such that if a supermarket considers opening a store in Rhyl local people can be appropriately trained to work there. The Hub is linked to Llandrillo College Rhyl (covered below), such that young people could move easily from the Hub to studying.
21. The Committee also visited Rhyl Football Club, and heard about the Football in the Community scheme aimed at the hardest to reach groups. The objective is to use young peoples' interest in football to find them a route into training and work. Coaching schemes are run, and study sessions offered in conjunction with football training. The Football Club links to Llandrillo College Rhyl, and improves young peoples' health and self-confidence, as well as providing constructive activities for the workless.
22. The Committee met the Director of Llandrillo College Rhyl, which plays a central role in the City Strategy. The College is not a traditional college operating a set curriculum from September to June; rather, it provides whatever training and courses are necessary to meet local demand, with a particular focus on those from the most disadvantaged areas. For example, when a new supermarket opens in the area it would provide a course to train prospective workers, perhaps linking in with the training shop at the Rhyl Hub in doing so. Courses are run in basic skills for those who have been unemployed the longest, who may need significant training before they can acquire a job. The College also is involved in national schemes to reduce unemployment, such as the Future Jobs Fund (covered below) and the Welsh Assembly Government's ProAct and ReAct schemes⁴.
23. **We were particularly impressed by how the Rhyl City Strategy is operating and the innovation shown by those involved in it. Its momentum is maintained by inspired and effective leadership. It seems to have gained the**

⁴ The ProAct scheme provides training for employees who are on short time working, and helps companies retain skilled staff who may otherwise be made redundant. It provides up to £2,000 per individual towards training costs and a wage subsidy of up to £2,000 per individual whilst the training is being undertaken. The ReAct scheme provides funding of up to £2,080 to employers who recruit individuals made redundant in the past six months and up to £1,000 to employers for new recruits' job-related training.

trust of the local community—not an easy task in such an area—and is a good example of bringing together local people and organisations to tackle local worklessness. Whilst it is in its particulars unique to Rhyl, the working methods are something that governments across jurisdictions can learn from.

Future Jobs Fund

24. The Future Jobs Fund is run by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Communities and Local Government department, and aims to create 150,000 jobs for 18 to 24 year olds who have been out of work for nearly a year. It is part of the Young Person's Guarantee, which gives everyone between 18 and 24 who has been looking for work for a year an offer of a job, work experience or training lasting at least six months. £6,500 is provided for each job on the scheme, 50,000 of which are targeted at unemployment hot spots. The money is to be spent between October 2009 and March 2011. Rhyl City Strategy was successful in its bid for a Future Jobs programme, offering opportunities to a broad range of young people. Similar programmes operate in the Republic of Ireland covering those aged 15 to 20, with evidence that they are operating successfully and targeting people soon after they become unemployed. Whilst we heard evidence that the Future Jobs Fund is working well there is a chance that it misses some 16 and 17 year olds who leave school without finding work, who by the time they get to 18 have no habit of going to work or college. Accordingly, **we recommend that the UK Government review the age range of the Future Jobs Fund, and seriously consider whether it should also cover those aged 16 and 17.**

Public sector procurement

25. The Committee heard evidence on how the public sector can make better use of procurement policy to reduce unemployment in areas where it is concentrated. In particular, many public sector bodies appear to favour large firms when tendering contracts. Such firms have greater turnover and so appear less at risk of folding, thereby jeopardising the contract; they may be more used to handling large contracts and delivering on time; they may offer a lower cost for the contract than smaller, local organisations; and they are more likely to hold independent accreditation. It is common for the same firms to collect many public sector contracts. Often the justification for awarding contracts to big firms is European Union rules, or perhaps a misinterpretation of EU rules. However, such firms do not necessarily employ people local to the area where the service is to be provided. We have also heard that in some local authorities there is a shortage of procurement officers, which may lead to rushed consideration of bids and a tendency to grant contracts to those big firms already known to the authority. Procurement officers may bundle a number of contracts into one and tender them all to one firm.

26. However, we think there is scope to take a more rounded view of public sector procurement. The lowest price offered may not necessarily be the best option in

terms of the cost to the taxpayer as a whole. If procurement could be used to give jobs to the unemployed, the exchequer would save on benefit payments and gain tax from them. There may be further benefits in savings on health and from crime and anti-social behaviour. We have heard of the benefits that can result from “social clauses” being included in contracts. These are clauses that provide for specifications achieving social objects, which can include creating jobs in areas of high unemployment. In places such as Northern Ireland—where one-third of the workforce is employed by the public sector and a further one-third is employed as a result of public sector spending—such clauses can clearly have significant benefits. **We recommend that public sector procurement policy changes to give greater weight to the social benefits that contracts can achieve, and in particular that the effect on employment in the local area be given considerable weight.**

European Union schemes

27. The Committee heard about certain measures being taken at European Union level to tackle unemployment. Parts of the United Kingdom and Ireland are in receipt of money from the European Social Fund: Ireland will receive €375 million between 2007 and 2013. The Fund is one of the EU’s Structural Funds and targets key groups of people with the aim of reducing economic disparities. In order to receive funds local agencies need to part-finance projects seeking funding; we have heard that on occasions that can cause difficulties. With the enlargement of the EU, funding in future may be less likely to be given to the United Kingdom and Ireland and be directed instead towards the poorer regions of eastern Europe.
28. The Interreg programme provides funding for projects that work across regions in the EU. It is financed by the European Regional Development Fund, with a requirement for co-financing by local bodies, similar to the requirement in respect of the European Social Fund. The work we heard about in Rhyl has benefited from funding from the Ireland-Wales Interreg programme. Another scheme is EURES—the European Jobs Mobility Portal. That is designed to facilitate labour mobility across the EU by fostering co-operation between national employment services and providing information, advice and job-matching services for workers and employers wishing to benefit from the free movement of persons in the EU. The Committee heard how the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre had made use of the EURES scheme.

The need for simplification

29. During our inquiry we have not sought to explore in detail each jurisdiction’s means of supporting the unemployed and schemes for moving them back into work. However, one thing that has struck us is the sheer number of schemes that are in operation. For example, in England those who are workless may participate in the New Deal, the Flexible New Deal, Work Trials, Work Choice, the Work Preparation programme or other schemes. At the government level, in addition to schemes mentioned elsewhere in this report, there are the Deprived

Areas Fund, Employment Zones, Programme Centres, Local Employment Partnerships, the National Employment Partnership, the Rapid Response Service and more. For those in Wales there are also the Workforce Development Programme, the Basic Skills Employer Pledge, the Young Recruits Programme and Pathways to Apprenticeship. Other jurisdictions also have an array of schemes.

30. Each individual scheme was doubtless set up in response to a particular need or to address a particular problem. Given the extent of the worklessness problem there is bound to be complexity to the solutions. However, for the person who is unemployed or the business looking to recruit from amongst the workless, the plethora of different regimes can be bewildering and even off-putting. Therefore, **we recommend that each jurisdiction should review in the round the various schemes they have for assisting the workless, with a view to simplifying and reducing the number of schemes to make them more accessible to the unemployed and those looking to help the unemployed.**

One size does not fit all

31. The Committee heard evidence from Councillor Stephen Houghton, the author of the UK Government's *Tackling Worklessness Review*⁵. The review was set up to examine how English local authorities and their partners can do more to tackle the estimated 6 million people who are workless. One of its key recommendations is that local authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships⁶ are central to the task of tackling worklessness and should make it one of their mainstream objectives. They should focus their efforts on the most disadvantaged people and neighbourhoods and be as flexible as possible in spending funds in the way that has the greatest impact. It recommended that the framework for integrating skills, employment and wider support for the workless should be simplified into three tiers: Worklessness Assessments should be carried out by every local authority; Work and Skills Plans can be entered into by those authorities wanting to align budgets and co-commission services; and Work and Skills Integrated Budgets could be used in those areas willing to pool and align budgets between central government and local authorities and co-commission a substantial portion of relevant funds. The Future Jobs Fund, described above, was one of the other recommendations in the review.
32. Central to the review was the idea that decisions about worklessness have to be taken on the basis of local knowledge and to focus on small areas. Flexibility in doing so is key. That theme was one common to much of the evidence we heard. Unemployment is as varied as the unemployed; they are not homogenous and services for them need to be localised and personalised. What works for an inner city may not work for a seaside town. There is a role for governments and national bodies in showing leadership and sharing information, but national stipulations do not work. Those in the hardest to reach groups do not react well

⁵ www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/tacklingworklessnessfinal

⁶ Local Strategic Partnerships are bodies that bring together at a local level different parts of the public sector and the private, business, community and voluntary sectors to enhance co-operation and provide co-ordination.

to impersonal schemes and instructions; rather, we have seen evidence of how people trusted in the local community can bring them on the path to work. Some require training in basic “life skills” before they can find work; others are more ready to begin applying. Those made redundant as a result of the recession are likely to have different requirements to those whose families have all been unemployed for generations. **We recommend that governments and all those involved in the back to work agenda recognise that it is essential that all aspects of it are focused on local needs and, where possible, delivered locally.**

Summary of conclusions and recommendations

- A. We recommend that the UK Government urgently review the operation of the 16-hour rule, with a view to making it much more flexible and turning it into a tool to help people into work rather than acting as a cap on how much they can work.**
- B. We urge governments not to lose sight of the long-term unemployed, and to prioritise finding work for them, regardless of the macroeconomic situation.**
- C. On the basis of our observations we think it essential that governments recognise that returning the long-term unemployed to work is not a simple process for which there are easy answers; it is long-term, and some of the measures necessary may not yield immediate or measurable results.**
- D. We were pleased to hear that the Rhyl City Strategy Board was not concerned with theorising, bureaucracy or procedures, but was focused on delivering results. That can be seen as a model for elsewhere.**
- E. We were particularly impressed by how the Rhyl City Strategy is operating and the innovation shown by those involved in it. Its momentum is maintained by inspired and effective leadership. It seems to have gained the trust of the local community—not an easy task in such an area—and is a good example of bringing together local people and organisations to tackle local worklessness. Whilst it is in its particulars unique to Rhyl, the working methods are something that governments across jurisdictions can learn from.**
- F. We recommend that the UK Government review the age range of the Future Jobs Fund, and seriously consider whether it should also cover those aged 16 and 17.**
- G. We recommend that public sector procurement policy changes to give greater weight to the social benefits that contracts can achieve, and in particular that the effect on employment in the local area be given considerable weight.**
- H. We recommend that each jurisdiction should review in the round the various schemes they have for assisting the workless, with a view to simplifying and reducing the number of schemes to make them more accessible to the unemployed and those looking to help the unemployed.**
- I. We recommend that governments and all those involved in the back to work agenda recognise that it is essential that all aspects of it are focused on local needs and, where possible, delivered locally.**

Committee meetings

Swansea plenary: 19 October 2009

Lord Dubs (Chair), Johnny Brady TD (Co-Chair), Senator Dan Boyle, Senator John Ellis, Jeff Ennis MP, Dr Dai Lloyd AM, Chris Ruane MP and Jim Wells MLA.

Rhyl: 22–23 November 2009

Lord Dubs (Chair), Johnny Brady TD (Co-Chair), Senator Dan Boyle, Senator John Ellis, Jeff Ennis MP, Senator Francis O'Brien and Chris Ruane MP.

Dublin: 17–18 January 2010

Lord Dubs (Chair), Johnny Brady TD (Co-Chair), Senator Dan Boyle, Senator John Ellis, Jeff Ennis MP, Dr Dai Lloyd AM, Chris Ruane MP, Iain Smith MSP and Jim Wells MLA.

Belfast: 31 January and 1 February 2010

Lord Dubs (Chair), Johnny Brady TD (Co-Chair), Senator Dan Boyle, Senator John Ellis, Jeff Ennis MP, Senator Francis O'Brien, Chris Ruane MP, Iain Smith MSP and Jim Wells MLA.

Cavan plenary: 22 February 2010

The Committee is indebted to the witnesses listed below who gave up their time to meet the Committee on their fact-finding visits.

Rhyl

Councillor Hugh Evans, Leader of Denbighshire County Council
Shane Owen, Projects Manager, Rhyl Youth Action Group
Roger Seddon, Ireland Wales Programme Development Officer North Wales, Department for the Economy and Transport, Welsh Assembly Government
Tracey Jones, Football in the Community Manager, Rhyl Football Club
Gren Jackson, Head of Business and Skills Division, Department for Skills, Welsh Assembly Government
Celia Jones, Director of Rhyl College
Gareth Matthews, Director, Rhyl City Strategy
Alison Thomas, Project Manager, Rhyl City Strategy
Barry Mellor, Chair of Executive Board, Rhyl City Strategy

Dublin

Seamus Hempenstall, Principal Officer, Further Education, Department of Education and Science
Tony Donohue, Head of Education, Social and Policy Innovation, Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)
Dara Calleary TD, Minister for Labour Affairs
Ciarán Sheils, Director of Employment Services, FÁS (the National Training and Employment Authority)

Belfast

John McMullan, Chief Executive, Bryson Charitable Group
Brian McGinn, Director of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Bryson Charitable Group
Liam McNeill, Director of North City Training (part of the Bryson Charitable Group)
John Woods, Consultant, Bryson Charitable Group
Sue Ramsey MLA, chair, Employment and Learning Committee, Northern Ireland Assembly
Councillor Stephen Houghton, Leader of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and author of the UK Government's *Tackling Worklessness Review*
Frank Tipping, Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre
Sir Reg Empey MLA, Minister for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland Executive