

DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM GHNÓTHAÍ FOSTAÍOCHTA AGUS COIMIRCE SHÓISIALACH

JOINT COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AFFAIRS AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Déardaoin, 25 Eanáir 2018

Thursday, 25 January 2018

Tháinig an Comhchoiste le chéile ag 10.30 a.m.

The Joint Committee met at 10.30 a.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

Teachtaí Dála / Deputies	Seanadóirí / Senators
John Brady,	Alice-Mary Higgins.
Joe Carey,	
Joan Collins.	

I láthair / In attendance: Senator John Dolan.

Teachta / Deputy John Curran sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

Business of Joint Committee

Chairman: As we have a quorum, we will commence the meeting. We are in public session. I welcome the members to the meeting. Before we begin, I remind members, if they have mobile phones, to either turn them off or switch them to flight mode. I propose we go into private session to deal with housekeeping matters before returning to public session. Is that agreed? Agreed.

The joint committee went into private session at 9.38 a.m. and resumed in public session at 11.03 a.m.

Labour Activation Measures: Discussion (Resumed)

Chairman: I formally welcome Dr. Mary Murphy of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, NUIM, who is accompanied today by Mr. Philip Finn and Ms Nuala Whelan. I also welcome Ms Joan O'Donnell and Mr. David Lysaght from the Disability Federation of Ireland. The witnesses are all very welcome. We have received the written statements and in a moment we will ask them to make their opening statements.

Before that, I draw the attention of the witnesses to the fact that, by virtue of section 17(2) (l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the joint committee. However, if they are directed by it to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official, either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable. Those with mobile phones should turn them off or set them to flight mode. It does not just interfere with the meeting but also with recording it. I will ask the two groups to make opening statements and then members of the committee will have an opportunity to ask a number of questions. I remind my colleagues to keep questions to five minutes initially in order to give everybody a chance.

Dr. Mary Murphy: I thank the committee for the invitation to appear here today. I wish it good luck with the work. We found this difficult as we had so much to say. Broadly, we want to draw attention to ongoing issues of capacity, competence and culture in the development of Intreo and in the implementation of Pathways to Work. We also want to draw attention to the absence of a more general employment service for the broader public. We are concerned about how a "work first" activation regime works alongside weak employment regulation to potentially pressure unemployed workers into low-paid precarious employment.

The issues we really want to draw attention to today are: gender issues in what we see as a relatively careless activation regime which focuses on a male breadwinner; issues of procurement and employment services; issues around adult guidance; and issues in respect of conditionality. In respect of male breadwinner activation, labour activation rests on the nature of the social welfare regime, which is still predicated on the idea of full-time work. To be eligible

for jobseeker's payments, one has to be available and genuinely seeking full-time work. That sets up a whole scenario of rules that make our activation regime highly unsuitable for women. For example, we force lone parents whose eldest child is 14 years old or older into being available for and genuinely seeking full-time work. That really does not fit with the reality of those women and often does not fit with what their parenting obligations and values are. Professor Jill Rubery says it is like being made "to 'work like a man' while still 'caring like a woman'" at the same time. We are forcing people into very unrealistic situations. At the same time, many women who might want to access employment do not pass the availability for full-time work condition, which means that they cannot access Intreo. That would often be the case in respect of qualified adults.

We then draw attention to the nature of the rules, which results in a gendered inequality in access to active labour market measures. When we do the analysis we find that men account for three quarters of the active labour market measures available and women only one quarter. That is not necessarily an intentional result of policy design but is an outcome of the rules which are being set by the regime.

We have included in our statement some background on the recent changes to the lone parent's payment and what has been happening in that regard. We draw attention particularly to the fact that there have been some welcome reversals to cuts introduced in previous budgets but those who are really standing outside and not receiving the benefits of those welcome reversals are those who were moved from the one-parent family payment to the full jobseeker's payment. They have not benefitted from any of the reversals to the cuts.

We signal that we have been very slow to make any progress in the area of qualified adults. There are a number of targets and objectives in Pathways to Work but we have missed the deadlines. The targets with regard to the reform agenda in respect of qualified adults are highly unambitious. We suggest two reforms, namely, using the jobseeker's transitional payment and abolishing the limitation rule. Why not look at an ambitious reform that would actually make a real difference? With regard to labour market shortages and labour market supply, this is an area where we want women to come back into the workforce. It seems that this is a logical time to look at the issue in a more ambitious way.

Before I hand over to Mr. Finn and Ms Whelan, I wish to make a very short statement. I wanted to say something about the procurement of employment services and the integrated delivery of social services. We have been using a payment-by-outcome system for JobPath. There is a policy intention to extend that to the local employment services, job clubs and the social inclusion and community activation programme, SICAP. We have serious issues with this. In our research we see that the extension of tendering and commissioning into these non-governmental organisations forces them to compete with one other to meet outcome targets and it is changing how they operate and co-operate with one other on the ground. It is making them compete with one other for the attention of recipients rather than figure out what the best service for those recipients is. There is a good word used in this regard - co-opetition. This means that they are still trying to co-operate but in the context of competition, which really changes the nature of the game in which they are involved and stops them being able to integrate services for the end benefit of the recipient. We really believe that not enough attention has been paid to the quality of what is happening on the ground when it comes to looking at these procurements and at paying by results. There is a sense that we have little choice but to move into this procurement space because of European rules but we believe the application of social clauses offers more space for flexibility than we are using. We urge attention on this space because

some decisions are now being made, about local employment services, LES, and jobs clubs in particular, which bring such services into the realm of payment by outcomes.

Ms Nuala Whelan: I will speak briefly on research in which I have been involved looking at the impact of Pathways to Work on well-being and the employability of long-term unemployed jobseekers, with a particular focus on adult guidance. This recent research evaluates the effectiveness of Pathways to Work and points to the importance of focusing on well-being because the unemployed tend to have lower levels of well-being than employed people.

The study used a randomised control methodology to look at the effectiveness of high-support guidance intervention on well-being, career efficacy and some employability factors. A wider outcome of the study was that the significant reform in which FÁS and the Department of Social Protection merged, and the introduction of Pathways to Work, had a major impact on the delivery of guidance, particularly in the local employment service. It also presented a depersonalised service, which is interesting because many jobseekers felt the service had become depersonalised and was no longer about them but about a system of rules by which they and the service had to abide.

The main outcome was the missing “how to” of implementation. While the policy presents many goals that should be achieved in working with jobseekers, how to implement a guidance process was missing. An important finding was that levels of psychological distress among long-term unemployed were high and 72% of participants who presented to the local employment services scored above a clinical well-being cut-off.

Other findings suggested that high-support guidance intervention and the usual local employment service led to improvements, over time, in well-being and employability and a decrease in the levels of psychological distress as people went through the guidance process. This was particularly evident in the case of male participants. Men fare quite well in terms of high-support guidance intervention and presented much better levels of psychological well-being. Measures of employability, such as hopefulness and career efficacy, also improved for people who went through the high-support guidance intervention.

Qualitative findings were that the client-practitioner relationship was extremely important, as were the service setting and skilled staff to deliver the guidance intervention. This study is the first to examine Pathways to Work with regard to psychological well-being and employability outcomes for the long-term unemployed. It focuses on how we can develop a healthy workforce and policy documents such as Pathways to Work and Enterprise 2025 state that we should build a healthy workforce for the future. The model shows that investing in the long-term unemployed contributes to this goal.

Mr. Philip Finn: Conditionality and sanctions are a controversial aspect of activation policy. The relatively low levels of sanctions in Ireland do not provide reasons for complacency. In regimes where claimants are fearful of sanctions, one may expect high levels of compliance and low levels of sanctions. Some qualitative data from Ireland suggest that the threat of sanction negatively impacts both claimants’ well-being and their relationship to caseworkers and agencies. International evidence highlights that, while claimants are generally aware that sanctions exist within the system, there is a lack of understanding among claimants of when, how and why they are implemented or reversed. Qualitative research here suggests that Ireland is mirroring this trend. It may be the case that claimants are sanctioned for a lack of understanding rather than a deliberate choice to avoid conditions.

Further qualitative evidence suggests variable practice across regions. There is a lack of transparency in this regard, which is probably felt most acutely in respect of the practice of conditionality in the two JobPath services, namely, Turas Nua and Seetec. Transparency requires publication of sanctions across Intreo and JobPath, including reasons for sanctions, gender and age disaggregation, regional analysis and quarterly reports to be included with the Pathways to Work quarterly monitoring report. Policy learning and evaluation require a high-quality qualitative follow-up of sanctioned individuals to understand the impact of conditionality and sanctions on clients' lives, employment prospects, risk of poverty and risk of homelessness.

Current qualitative research suggests that claimants are critical of work-related conditionality, which is often perceived as failing to take account of their interests such as returning to education or personal issues, such as mental or physical health, financial concerns or their housing situation or both. This is probably most acutely felt by unemployed claimants who are experiencing and are required to meet the requirements of multiple conditional regimes such as methadone maintenance programmes. International evidence suggests that the most vulnerable individuals have a particularly poor understanding of sanction regimes.

Ms Joan O'Donnell: I thank the committee for the opportunity to speak and to share the experience of what it is like for disabled jobseekers interacting with current labour activation measures. I represent the Disability Federation of Ireland, DFI, which represents more than 120 member organisations. We have been very active in looking at policy on activation, in particular the comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities, which is a ten-year strategy designed to support people with disabilities into work. Although I will focus on this strategy, it does not belie the need for all activation measures to be accessible for people with disabilities. We must avoid the trap of "othering" people with disabilities and assuming they cannot walk through the Intreo system or other support systems like everybody else.

Two years into the comprehensive employment strategy, there has been no impact on the employment rates of people with disabilities. At the height of the boom, when long-term unemployment was at an all-time low, the percentage of people with disabilities in employment was only half of that for those without disabilities.

As far back as 2008, the OECD expressed concern that Ireland was parking people with disabilities on the sidelines of Irish life and that hiding unemployment in the wrong welfare system was a failed and costly strategy.

Today, little has changed. The numbers in work have not changed significantly and the numbers in receipt of disability allowance are increasing year on year. Yesterday's edition of the *Irish Examiner* stated that, at the end of 2017, there were 133,929 adults of working age in receipt of disability allowance and that this was rising by approximately 32,000 year on year.

This is a means-tested payment for which it is extremely difficult to qualify and people would not choose to live their lives on this. The most recent CSO survey on income and living conditions of December 2017

indicated that consistent poverty was highest amongst those not at work due to illness or disability. This is not a comfortable place for people to be.

Long-term unemployment almost halved between 2013 and 2016 and unemployment in general dropped by 5.3% in the same period but the rate of employment for people with disabilities saw just a 0.4% increase. Some 71% of adults of working age with a disability are not

in work. This figure does not equate to an unemployment rate because people with disabilities are not included in the unemployment figures, hence my point about the OECD.

The Wellbeing of the Nation report launched earlier this month points to much of what Ms Whelan from NUI Maynooth said earlier on the well-being of people with disabilities. Disabled people are more at risk of suffering the negative impacts that are commonly associated with unemployment, for example, reduced financial stability, stress, and lower levels of mental and physical health.

At the same time DFI recognises that work is not for everyone. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, which Ireland has yet to ratify, affords people the right to social protection as well as the right to work. Those who can and want to work should be supported and empowered to do so. Those for whom work is not a viable option should be supported to live the life they choose without, as is happening in the UK, having to repeatedly prove their eligibility for social protection or their incapacity to work. Everybody, regardless of their work status, should be afforded a minimum income that allows them to live with dignity.

What are people with disabilities doing if they are not in work? Based on data from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the ESRI we know that 56% are interested in some kind of training or education; 56% also state they had previously worked; 13% said they are currently working either part-time or full-time. These results are in line with the Department's administrative estimates which suggest that approximately 10% of all those in receipt of disability allowance are doing some form of work.

The ESRI also found - this is extremely worrying - that many people with disabilities are more likely to exit the labour market than to enter it. Four out of five people with disabilities acquire their disability during working age. The odds of leaving work are twice as high for people with disabilities as they are for others of working age. They are even higher for people with deafness, or learning, psychological or emotional disabilities, including mental illness. This raises many questions for us as a country, not only on how we are supporting people into work through activation but also how we are retaining people in work. There is no point in activating people into jobs which in the long term are unsustainable if we do not address serious issues relating to reasonable accommodation, what we are willing to consider as acceptable around that and also around further engagement with employers.

The current suite of interventions set out in the comprehensive employment strategy consist of many well-meaning activities and programmes that do not add up to increasing the number of people with disabilities in employment nor can it do so. We can discuss this further, but in brief it sits in a policy vacuum quite apart from the realities of the local labour market as presented by our colleagues from Maynooth University, including the precarious nature of work, youth unemployment and underemployment. While I know NESC and others are giving consideration to in-work poverty and jobless households, we are not seeing any effect and no joined-up thinking is going on.

It also locates people with disabilities in a vacuum and assumes they have only one singular identity. Gender has been mentioned this morning. The comprehensive employment strategy does not acknowledge that some of these people with disabilities are actually women. That might come as a surprise. It also does not take into account any other caring responsibilities, including child-care responsibilities, or the complexity of people's lives. We see fixing the employment problem of disabled people outside of any context, including the family context. We should view it as what the literature would describe as a "wicked" issue which demands an

appropriate response to that complexity.

The strategy also focuses on supplying people to a labour force without looking at where the jobs are. This is an ongoing issue and speaks to where the comprehensive employment strategy is located within the Department of Justice and Equality. I wish to read out a tweet that was posted on Twitter yesterday in response to the *Irish Examiner* report. One gentleman said “I’m back on DA after a year’s employment. Really don’t want to be on it but it’s so hard to find appropriate employment with a disability. The financial stress I’m under is immense and unsustainable.” This is the reality of people’s lives. The strategy individualises blame on the person who does not succeed rather than creating an employment market that is receptive to and supportive of including all members of Irish society.

We also have concerns over how narrowly work is interpreted by the CES. It is either a vocational support or people need to be professionals and we do not understand the diversity of work in between.

Underlying all that is a serious concern about the capacity of different Departments to work together to support people into work from where they are at. This kind of siloed work has its consequences. For example, it is difficult for school leavers to make life choices based on what they want rather than funding. There are two critical areas in which this is evident. First, school goers are supported throughout their school and college career only to find that once they leave all supports they had are withdrawn as they came from the Department of Education and Skills and do not carry over to a work environment. This includes funding for a personal assistant, assistive technology and any other supports they were getting. They find themselves high and dry looking at a labour market that is unsupportive.

While the education system relies heavily on the rhetoric of choice and opportunities, the literature shows that for students with severe and profound learning difficulties there is no choice. If a school leaver does not fall into the category of needing the level of support offered by a “New Directions” day service, they are not eligible for any funding at present, which means more people are being steered into day services than is desirable or necessary.

We need to look at what we understand as reasonable accommodation in the workplace. We need to overhaul our reasonable accommodation fund to make it fit for the workplace of the 21st century. Research conducted by FreedomTech, a collaboration between DFI and Enable Ireland, indicates that appropriately deployed technologies are effective ways of sustaining people in work yet there is little uptake of the grants available. This implies a complete mismatch between the design of the schemes and the need people have in work.

There are a couple of positives. We hope to see some move on medical card eligibility which has been a huge barrier for people going into the workforce in the past. We have known of people who have had to leave work because they lost their medical cards. We understand that we will hear some news from the Department of Health on this very soon. We also commend the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection on its collaboration with the sector in dealing with the tricky issue of eligibility to Disability Allowance for 16 to 18 year olds. We are working with the Department on this complex issue.

Not only do all activation measures need to be designed to be inclusive from the outset, they must be designed to meet people where they are at. This is not happening at the moment. For example, we have an employability service that very often insists that people be job-ready in order to avail of the service.

At the moment rules begin and end where Departments meet. This is not the space in which people live their lives. Last year the OECD made much comment on this kind of siloed policy-making, which it states is unsuitable for the speed at which 21st century change is occurring. It promotes the use of a systems approach to deal with the complexity. Certainly that applies to an issue such as disability and work.

The focusing on access to and performance of the institutions supporting people into work rather than requiring transformation of those institutions will not result in the inclusion we seek or the employment levels of people with disabilities that we need see. That said, we strongly assert that people with disabilities must not become a new underclass of underpaid, underemployed workers. They must have an adequate income. To do that we must completely overhaul the comprehensive employment strategy and stitch it back into the mainstream activation programme if we are to become a sustainable economy where the well-being of all is respected and people with disabilities are seen as a cohort of the population who can contribute to the collective and economic well-being of our nation.

Mr. David Lysaght: I thank the committee for inviting me to attend today. My key word is “attitude”. I was born with a disability and, like many others, I am well-educated. I have a degree and various certificates and am in the second year of my master’s degree in UCD. I am also able to drive. The Government sanctioned me to be able to drive. I have travelled across the world, climbed halfway up Everest and been to Peru. I am not building myself up. Rather, I am saying that I am well able to do things, except one thing, which is get a job and have a career.

To refer again to attitude, let me give one example. I was offered a job. At the time I was, and still am, in receipt of disability allowance. I rang up the section dealing with disability allowance and asked how I would get off the allowance as I would be getting an income. I spoke to a lady who said I would need a letter from a doctor on my rehabilitation. I asked why it was needed given that I had been offered a job with a proper income and she said that I might not be able to do the job. I thought to myself, “Thanks very much for the vote of confidence.” That is the negative attitude from the Government though. These are the people who are meant to help us.

Then I went for my medical with the company. I will not say its name. Before this, I had been working with people with disabilities one-on-one for five years through another organisation. I was a volunteer, which is quite common. During the medical the doctor asked me if I had any conditions and I said that I had some mental health issues. I thought that would be a problem but she said that it should be okay. Then I told her I have epilepsy but that I am 20 years clear and am able to drive. The doctor recommended, however, that I undertake “no lone activities”. This means that I cannot work one-to-one with a client, which was basically my job. Therefore, with a flick of a pen by the doctor, I lost my job. This was a result of the doctor’s attitude towards epilepsy.

My mental health is also affected by not having a job and feeling impoverished. A lot of people with disabilities are on the poverty line. I am also socially isolated because I cannot afford to go out with my friends. All this affects my mental health. It is also affected by the feeling of not being able to be part of and give back to society. I do not want special treatment. I just want an opportunity to give back to society and be part of it.

Chairman: I thank all the witnesses for their opening presentations but Mr. Lysaght’s first-hand experience is very insightful into what we would call the “real world” as it affects an individual. It was a powerful presentation.

Mr. David Lysaght: It does not just affect me-----

Chairman: Yes, but it was a powerful presentation from that point of view and I think it will be reflected in the comments from other members. I call Deputy Brady. I ask all members to stick to five minutes and there will be time for additional questions after it.

Deputy John Brady: I will try to keep it brief.

Chairman: That would be good.

Deputy John Brady: I thank both organisations for their presentations and concur with the Cathaoirleach on Mr. Lysaght's presentation. It was powerful and personal and it means so much to hear it first-hand. Unfortunately, we hear such stories every day of the week but it is brilliant to have heard from Mr. Lysaght.

I read the Disability Federation of Ireland's presentation and listened intently today. The increase of 32,000 people in receipt of disability allowance over the past five years is, to say the least, very concerning and it shows that the current activation measures are simply not working. The increase is enough to sound alarm bells. Have the witnesses a breakdown of the numbers of people with disabilities who are engaged in the job activation schemes such as the community employment scheme, Tús, and JobPath? Were they able to obtain those figures?

It would be interesting to hear the witnesses' views, if any, on the new Ability programme announced by Government.

On the comprehensive employment strategy, WALK PEER is one of 14 disability activation projects set up in 2012 and every year there is a concern funding will not be in place. There have been threats after threats. I have met with representatives of WALK PEER on a number of occasions and, to my mind, it is a programme that works and the people involved do fantastic work. Did the witnesses' organisations have any direct contact with WALK PEER? Do they think the programme works? It is concerned with assisting young people who are in receipt of disability allowance obtain paid employment. I think it works but I would like to hear the witnesses' views on whether this model could be replicated and rolled out throughout the State.

I have tabled numerous parliamentary questions seeking a breakdown of how many people with disabilities were employed through the comprehensive employment strategy. Surprise, surprise, the Department states that it does not record those figures. In my book, it is crazy that the Department is not in a position to assess how well the strategy is working. What are the witnesses' views on it?

Dr. Murphy's excellent presentation touched on a lot of areas which this committee has examined, including the area of lone parents. We know the high poverty levels that exist in that regard. It is much the same for those with disabilities. I want to home in on a number of specific areas because I am conscious of the time. I have huge concerns around JobPath, its impact and the privatised model the Department is rolling out. The sanctions that are imposed were touched on already but I have heard horrific cases about JobPath, Turas Nua and Seetec. I produced a report before Christmas on JobPath which deals with the first-hand experiences of those who have been engaged. I do not know if the witnesses have seen it. I also have serious concerns about the local employment service, LES, which appears to be an attempt to push this to the side. We see that through the annual decrease in referrals across the State to the local employment service which is a major concern. Staff in the local employment services would say people are forced on to the JobPath scheme and at the end of the 12-month period they go

the LES, but the LES should have been the first port of call. Do the witnesses consider there should be more of a role for the LES as opposed to JobPath?

There are major difficulties in lone parents' accessing education and we have heard different presentations on that. Do the witnesses have specific views on lone parents in terms of employment activation?

Chairman: I call Senator Higgins and she has five minutes.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: There are many questions and issues on this topic but many of them have been covered by Deputy Brady, which is excellent. I thank all the witnesses for their presentations. They were very strong and there is even more in their written submissions, which I am sure will be incorporated when we come to put together our report. There is a huge body of evidence behind all of the points the witnesses have made.

I will pick up on a few points where there is a little overlap on some issues. It was interesting that the witnesses focused on the role of the jobseeker's transitional payment. As a committee, we had recommended that being extended for lone parents up to the age of 18. One of its aspects is that it waives the requirement on full-time availability. The witnesses might comment on how that might be a useful way of offering a support and an invitation into the system to those, for example, who are currently qualified adults and others without bringing in a sanction mindset, and how it might work because it is a really practical and good proposal.

On the question around procurement rules, my understanding of the rules is that there is huge scope, particularly in areas of social services, in that they are not bound in the same way by some of the European procurement rules and there is huge scope within the social clauses. Within the European procurement rules, there are particular supports and exemptions in areas around disability and disability support within sheltered workplaces. The witnesses might like to comment on that issue. We need to have a more ambitious approach in that regard.

An issue that was raised by Mr. Finn and also potentially by Ms Whelan, was the question of appropriate placing and appropriate case-work. This is also a question for Ms O'Donnell. Are people being offered the full range of options? For example, are they being offered education and training or job-readiness supports or employment in terms of what is right for them as they move forward? That has come across as a concern as we have examined this issue in the committee and sometimes it almost seems to come down to the luck of the draw with respect to when one happens to come into a system as to what one gets offered. The witnesses might tease out that issue of appropriate placing and quality of the case-work.

A specific issue which cuts across the question of both sanctions and appropriate placing is progression plans. Do any of the witnesses have insights on that question? We have heard concerns around progression plans, which I and others have debated with the Minister. The understanding the Department seems to have is that this is a collaborative process done with the case worker and the client or citizen. However, there are concerns about how that is playing out in practice and the fear of sanctions attached if one does not sign off or agree to a particular progression plan. It would be great if the witnesses could tease out that issue.

Some of the points raised in the presentations are ones we will be able to address in our activation report but some other very important issues were flagged in the context of employment, in terms of precarious work and reasonable accommodation, which comes under the other brief of this committee. We can certainly note those issues and find other opportunities

to bring them forward. When one considers the arrangements which those with a disability in particular often have to make around their participation in employment, we can appreciate the impact precarious work, uncertain hours and uncertain arrangements can have on them. That is another interesting point of overlap.

I was very struck by what Mr. Finn said around the idea of multiple conditional regimes where people have to navigate a number of bureaucracies. I would be interested to hear comments from one of the witnesses from the Disability Federation of Ireland or the other witnesses on that issue. When people try to navigate the medical system and appointment structures, there is a set of different bureaucracies that they must navigate. The witnesses might comment on how that could be better approached and streamlined.

I would share very much the concerns regarding the LES and some of the approach in terms of the pay by results. I worry that it can be very disadvantageous for those who are more distant from the workplace and it can incentivise an element of cherry-picking. We have been told that people can walk in and seek supports, but if we are introducing a competitive dynamic where services are competing with each other for the number of people that they can show in X position at X time, I would be concerned. I have heard of excellent services that I know have done extraordinary work, for example, with hard to reach young people in empowering them to link with the workplace who have been losing out on contracts. It is vital with respect to the issue of job-readiness and investing in the emotional work required and giving those supports, that such work does not become a disadvantage to those seeking to provide supports.

I was struck by one of the witnesses' comments to the effect that those in receipt of disability allowance do not cover the cohort of those with a disability in Ireland. I imagine there is a huge cohort who may have a disability and may not pass a means test because their spouse is working and who do not have access to independent income, and may not have access to labour market access supports. The same question arises with respect to many who are qualified adults, but there are those who may not register as qualified adults because their spouse is not taking a payment. I would like to hear the witnesses' input on those who disappear from the live register and then eventually from the system and also on the jobless households pilot scheme which relates to that.

Chairman: I call Senator Dolan.

Senator John Dolan: I thank the Chairman for this opportunity to contribute. I also thank the witnesses for attending. I would honour some of the key points that were covered. Dr. Mary Murphy referred to targets competing with each other and the issue about EU procurement rules. What could we do to push out of that? What would be the one key element that might improve that?

Ms Nuala Whelan spoke about the "how to" of the implementation issue. That theme came through in the presentations and much of the discussion. I refer to the usefulness of high supports and the way they might be progressed. There were many similarities in the presentations in that in many ways there were not two different presentations. There was great synergy between them.

I ask Mr. Philip Finn if he considers there is undue, unwarranted and dysfunctional pressure on service providers to get to sanctions prematurely or too quickly?

I should mention that Ms Joan O'Donnell from the Disability Federation of Ireland and

I are colleagues and I would have done a good deal of work with Mr. David Lysaght. I also knew Dr. Mary Murphy many years ago from being involved in a similar kind of space. What are people with disabilities doing? They are not in work. Nearly 60% of them have worked previously. It seems crazy that we cannot put those people back in the saddle. They already have life experience. At the other end of that spectrum we have young people with disabilities. This raises the conundrum of value for public investment. The Departments of Education and Skills, Children and Youth Affairs and Employment Affairs and Social Protection together with the HSE, are providing supports to people. There has been a major sea change in the education supports for people with disabilities. Twenty years ago the thinking was to find a special place and put them there. Now the policy is to integrate those with disabilities in the education mainstream. We have issues on how to make this policy better. When those with disabilities come to the end of the education cycle, they face a cliff. I am not suggesting for a moment that the State stops investing in their education, but that it should get value for money and make it possible for them to use their education. In his statement Mr. David Lysaght made the point well, he states that he is well able to do things, except to get a job and have a career. I know and Mr. Lysaght knows that this is not because he cannot fulfil the role, but because a system that is not a system conspires in its own sweet way to block him. Dr. Murphy referred in her opening statement to capacity, competence and culture. Mr. Lysaght used the “A” word, attitude. The disabled are not different.

It would be very useful to get discussion and engagement with other relevant Departments. It is in the interest of the public purse to have inclusion policies for those with disabilities. Even in Departments with different agencies, they are all co-opetitioning with each other.

Ms Joan O’Donnell referred in particular to the withdrawal of supports, post school and college with people being steered into day service. I would be interested in hearing a bit more about that.

I very much appreciate the committee getting down and dirty with this issue.

Deputy Joe Carey: I apologise for being late. I thank the witnesses for their presentations. Many of the points I would have raised have been raised already.

I was struck by the presentation made by Mr. David Lysaght. If one views Mr. Lysaght’s situation in the light of the comprehensive employment strategy, what practical changes would the witnesses recommend to that approach? The employment strategy is well meaning and there is a template to try to address the challenges in the system. From a practical sense what changes would one recommend to get people back into the workplace?

Chairman: Before I hand back to the witnesses to answer a range of question, one of the points that was raised, and perhaps Dr. Murphy might be best placed to address it, is the psychological well-being of an individual who is long-term unemployed. Will she expand on that? Is the psychological wellbeing of a person who is long-term unemployed at such a low ebb that it is debilitating and prohibiting and preventing people getting back into the workforce?

I was taken by the point made by Ms Joan O’Donnell that the odds of employment exit are twice as high for people with disabilities as they are for others. She then went on to pick out a couple of particular disabilities, for example deafness, where the odds of employment exit are even higher.

I was in business long before I was in politics and we used to have a rule of thumb in our

business and it probably varies from business to business that the cost of getting a new customer was seven times higher than the cost of retaining an existing customer. It would seem to me that when there are statistics that are so out of kilter with the norm that there should be specific programmes targeted at this retention issue. Will she explain what they might look like? Senator Dolan also touched on this point when he referred to the number of people with disabilities who had worked. What do we need to do to ensure their retention at work?

Another issue for disabled people is the possible loss of the medical card. It was stated that people had concerns about taking on employment because they would lose the medical card. Does one lose it immediately, or is there a transition period? Ms O'Donnell stated that she was anticipating an announcement from the Department of Health. Will she expand a little more on that?

I suggest we take the questions in the order the opening statements were made. The witnesses can address the elements which are particular to them.

Dr. Mary Murphy: How much time do we have?

Chairman: We have half an hour, but that is not just for Dr. Murphy.

Dr. Mary Murphy: Mr. Lysaght introduced the issue of attitude, and I am picking up that point because I think that frames some of the answers to questions. If there is an underlying theme, it is that in part the attitude of the State to the issue of activation policy is very dominated by an old fashioned agenda, that it is the job of the State to control the public purse to ensure that people are doing what they are supposed to be doing for the relative payments they are on. That is what dominates their attitude when they start their engagement with an individual. The officer of the State sees the individual as a social welfare recipient who is costing the State money and the job is to manage that payment. There is a control agenda. An alternate view is to consider the individual as a citizen with particular barriers to work and with particular experiences that are causing their psychological well-being to be undermined. If we could change the attitude of the State to one that was ambitious for its citizens rather than wanting to control the cost of its problems, I think we would be at a very different starting point in our discussions.

In large part, the reason that activation is not working for people, particularly for more vulnerable people, such as those with disabilities, lone parents and the long-term unemployed is that the State is too keen to push people far too speedily through a process to get very specific outcomes from it that are predetermined by procurement outcomes and such things, rather than realistically looking at what is the situation that this person is coming from and how can we work with this person to get a long-term outcome that will be sustainable for their well-being.

I think we are not asking the right questions and that is why we are not getting the right answers. Let us look at what procurement is doing because the contractors are being paid by results. We are looking for results far too quickly. The feedback from SICAP and LES is that under their contracts they are being asked to do quite impossible things for the people with whom they are working. They see that they are forcing people far too quickly through processes. They are being forced to offer them the wrong opportunities. There is a significant level of frustration on the ground among the workers as well as the clients that they are not able to really do what the person needs. They can see what the person needs and the services are potentially there to do it, but they are not able to package them in the way that makes sense for people. I think the underlying attitude informing the design of the services need to be examined again. There are false pressures, I mentioned the false pressure of procurement dominating how we

arrange the design of the actual services themselves. We can see that on the ground. We can see organisations competing and not co-operating with each other. We can see people being referred to the wrong services. We can see people being told we cannot do anything with them for a year because some other provider has got them right now but if they can wait it out for the year, the person will be eligible for a community employment scheme again and that will be okay. There are crazy things happening to people.

I do not know if members watched “I, Daniel Blake”, which shows what happens to a person’s life when bureaucracy goes mad. We have the Irish style experience - I call them “Dónal” Blake’s stories - where people are being caught in bureaucratic quagmires because of the design of the system. We recently conducted a very large research programme on the integrated delivery of social services. What we can see is that there are a lot of integration issues not happening both vertically and horizontally on the ground. What we are assuming is connected up is not connected up and some of it is that the target organisations that clients work with, are too speedy for what people need. We are pushing them to get through education outcomes far too quickly. If we take lone parents as an example in terms of our ambition for people and look at the education and training options also, the data indicate that almost 50% of lone parents have very poor educational outcomes. Our ambition is to get them into something like a FETAC 5 course, which will get them a care job at the minimum wage and then we wonder why that is not moving people out of poverty and why activation is not working for lone parents. We know that if we want a lone parent to get a job that is sustainable in terms of lifting her and her family out of poverty, we need to invest in education at a much higher level than FETAC level 5. We need to let people move up the education ladder. Research done recently by Delma Byrne on lone parents and access to third level education, for example, shows that in terms of the student cohort in third level, only 1% of them are lone parents. They are not getting a chance to progress up the ladder into education and training options that will get them jobs that are realistic in terms of moving them out of poverty. Unless we do that, and regardless of whether our activation policy pushes them into jobs, it will not matter because those jobs will not be good enough to lift them out of poverty. That is about ambition and attitude. It is not about the attitude of the lone parent. It is about the attitude of the State towards that lone parent and being more ambitious for her and her children.

What is ironic about the reforms and the cuts to lone parent’s benefit over the past ten years is that, by accident, we designed a jobseeker’s transitional payment. In typical Irish style we did not set out to do it. We created a crisis of cuts to lone parents where we wanted to move them from the one parent family payment to jobseeker’s benefit. The political reaction was very strong and the system was forced to come up with a stop-gap arrangement, and it came up with jobseeker’s transition, but it has many positive features. For example, it is not as mandatory in terms of what happens with jobseeker’s payments in that workers are allowed work full time or part time, the three-day rule does not apply and the income disregards are better. We have created a space that has the potential to be a creative policy area. With the right investment, capacity and training of case workers I believe it offers potential for both lone parents and qualified adults, and even perhaps as models for other vulnerable groups, namely, asylum seekers coming into work and people with disabilities.

To make that work, however, there are a few aspects that are important. Jobseeker’s transition payment gives us an alternative approach to activation where people are allowed take their time and where we can be more ambitious about the level of education and training we offer but only if those options are available and if we invest in the selection and training of the case workers to ensure they are appropriate and have the right attitude to work with people. That is

crucial. Much of the feedback we get from the Pathways to Work service is that it is dependent on the individual experience of people, and that is dependent on the attitude of the individual case worker. Some of that can be achieved by training but some of it cannot. It is about the person who is picked for the job and put into it. Serious issues arise in that regard in terms of the structure of the way Pathways to Work was put together.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins asked about the five pilots for qualified adults. It is useful to consider doing those pilots but the issue is the case workers, the training and whether they are approached with the attitude of the jobseeker's transition space in terms of seeing what these qualified adults need and how we can open up a progression pathway for them or whether it is about getting them into the first low-paid job we can find and make them take it. They are two completely different worlds in terms of starting points for understanding what can be done about it.

There are a number of innovative proposals we could have about lone parents, qualified adults and other vulnerable groups that jobseeker's transition offers us a policy and institutional space to work in to be creative with, but only if we invest in the appropriate training for the workers and also the range of options, particularly education and training options rather than employment options, that give people the opportunity to lift themselves up over time. That is about the ambition of the policy for people and what the policy wants to achieve. Is it savings, getting people off the live register or welfare or well-being and a better quality of life in four or five years time? Which one do we want? Currently, it is clear that we want short, cheap outcomes and we are not putting in the level of investment, or the level of thinking or creativity, that could help us achieve the other ambition, which is better quality of lives over a longer timeframe. There were specific questions for Ms Whelan and Mr. Finn.

Ms Nuala Whelan: One of the key questions for me is to do with the psychological well-being of the jobseekers when they come in. With my other hat on, I work in Ballymun Job Centre, which manages the local employment services in the Ballymun area, and for many years I have seen how people present to the service, which often was not that well or enthusiastically about work, feeling very low in terms of their self-belief and confidence, not aware of their skills and aptitudes or what they can bring to the labour market. In the study I conducted, 85% of that long-term unemployed sample - 150 people - had previous employment. Forty per cent of them were unemployed for over five years at the point they came into the study and 72% of the full sample came in with quite high levels of psychological distress. People are entering the service like that so if the attitude is negative or punitive when they come in, we are creating an environment in which they do not feel it is safe to discuss their barriers to the labour market. They do not believe they can start to explore their career options and feel under pressure because of the conditionality attached to taking a particular job.

In my study I looked at high support intervention and whether that created different outcomes for people as opposed to what the Intreo model, the local employment service, LES, was being asked to deliver. People going through the high support services were twice as likely to end up in education and training, in an active labour market programme such as community employment, CE, Tús or something that was helping them to increase their skills than in job-seeking. Some 22% of the participants who went through the service as usual were jobseeking so they were coming in with very low levels of education, highly distressed psychologically and with no belief in or understanding of what they could contribute and yet they were being forced to take a job. They will end up in short-term, precarious work. That is the type of job they will get. I see it all the time. They are the jobs people who come in get, and they end up back in the

service after two or three months feeling worse than they did in the first instance.

It is about the “how to” of implementation. What do we do when that client walks in the door? How should the service receive them? What types of interventions might the staff choose to use depending on the specific needs of the client? That must be detailed, and that is what this study tried to do. Not everyone needs high support guidance but some people do. Some people work quite well in the normal service. Women seem to fair well with both the LES and the high support models, but men fair particularly well with the high support intervention.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: Would it be possible to make available information about that high support model the university piloted because it might be useful to the committee?

Ms Nuala Whelan: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Philip Finn: In terms of my own research I would echo much of what Dr. Murphy and Ms Whelan have seen already. I have certainly seen evidence of a work first model where people feel that they cannot discuss the barriers to work or where training and education is not being presented as a viable option for them and that they must go out and find work. As part of my own research I spoke to many people who were in education and training boards and have taken on courses. The vast majority of them had to find those courses themselves with little help from Intreo or other service providers. They couch these things in terms of the lack of dignity and respect when they go into Intreo in that a holistic view of the person is not taken account of. While we might have a better economy now, people are still living with the past in terms of mental health, financial concerns and housing problems in recent years, which creates barriers to returning to work.

In terms of a collaborative process, one of the approaches I take in interviews is to present people with the record of mutual commitments, which all jobseekers must sign. We talk about the progression plans. At the vast majority of interviews, people cannot remember signing the record of mutual commitments. They have no recollection of it at all. I think that comes down to need. People need social welfare payments like jobseeker’s allowance. When we deconstruct their records of mutual commitment during interviews, they tell us that the idea of training and education was never made available to them as something they could pursue.

I was also asked about the multiple regimes. As I have already said, it has been suggested during interviews I have done that factors like child care, a lack of education and mental health issues are preventing people from getting work. It has been considered that such factors are not accounted for by case workers. I made a similar point when I spoke about multiple regimes and conditionality. Along with one of my colleagues in Maynooth, I am currently engaged in exploratory research on unemployed drug service users. At present, an unemployed drug service user is treated in each service as a methadone patient and as a jobseeker. Consideration is given separately to these individual factors rather than how they intersect with each other. People in these circumstances are obliged to get their methadone. There is a lot of work involved in keeping appointments. They do not have enough time to look for work. They must also deal with the stigma associated with drug use. Employers are reluctant to hire drug service users. When their appointments and obligations clash, it can lead to sanctions being imposed and this can result in people being in danger of losing their social welfare or their methadone. I think there needs to be much more interaction between services. Rather than seeing the individual as a jobseeker who needs to be activated as part of the service delivery model, a holistic approach needs to be taken. The other point I would like to make about unemployed drug service users is that substance abuse is no longer regarded as a reason for being eligible for disability allow-

ance. This means that a drug service user has no option other than to be a jobseeker. As I have said, this creates all kinds of difficulties.

I was asked whether there is pressure on case workers to impose sanctions too quickly. My research focuses on the lived experience of jobseekers. It does not take account of the experiences of people who work in the services. I know from other colleagues that it is quite difficult to get institutional access to interview case workers, etc. We are not really familiar with the kinds of organisational pressures they are under. As I said earlier, the level of sanctions imposed in Ireland is still relatively low in an international context. Since the introduction of Pathways to Work, however, there have been annual increases in sanctions, from 359 in 2011 to over 1,600 last year. There is evidence that sanctions are being used more frequently. Before 2010, it was possible to disqualify people from receiving payments as a nuclear option that case workers were reluctant to use. Now there is a penalty rate that can be applied for up to nine weeks and disqualification can take place thereafter. The use of such sanctions has become a tool or technique to be used by case workers as part of their repertoire when encouraging jobseekers into particular positions or courses. While there is some evidence that the use of sanctions is increasing, it is important to acknowledge that it is still relatively low in an international context. We do not yet know how this will change in the coming years, or how it is already changing, because Ireland does not have a culture of sanctioning within the system and we do not have access to case workers to see what kinds of organisational pressures they are under.

Ms Joan O'Donnell: I would like to echo much of what has been said about attitudes. The system does not understand the people it is supposed to serve, such as lone parents, people with disabilities and people with substance abuse issues. Among the disabled cohort, the issue of having to deal with multiple regimes is multiplied again because people are dealing with medical services and their caring and family responsibilities, etc. The system does not seem to understand that people have multiple identities. It merely sees a disabled person who needs to be activated.

From our perspective, one of the big issues the system is trying to deal with is making work pay. Although a substantial report on this issue in April of last year looked at how we can make work pay, it is being done in isolation. An effort is being made to contend with the extra costs that people with disabilities encounter when they go out to work, including transport costs and the cost of accessing a medical card. It was agreed in the report in question that the medical earnings disregard should be increased from its current level of €120 a week so that people can earn more and retain their medical cards for up to three years after they start working. This was a huge barrier for people who were entering the workforce. In the past, it caused many people to leave the workforce.

We were asked where those who have left are now. Many people who have left the workforce are quite scared or nervous about engaging with the system again. I understand from the Department of Health that we can expect to hear some news in this regard before the deadline of the fourth quarter of this year. The Department says it will come in on this sooner than the deadline. We hope that will be the case. It would not be a moment too soon. This issue is keeping a significant cohort of people out of work and has been the cause of many people leaving the workforce.

Other issues, such as access to a personal assistance service, are not understood. As we have said, many supports are provided all the way up through school and college. People get the assistive technology and equipment they need, but they cannot take such supports with them when they leave. We worked last year with a woman in County Meath who had been working

with a local authority for many years. After her personal assistance supports were pulled, she could not go to the toilet during work hours. How can someone work in such conditions? What kind of violation of human rights is that?

I think it is pretty clear from everything we have been saying that this is spilling over into mental health. I think it is worth pointing out again. Many people become disengaged. The term NEETs was used in the past to describe those who are not in education, training or employment. We do not seem to use that term anymore. Those involved in the Walk project in County Louth had to walk the streets to find the people who were no longer engaging with services. The Department could not provide that information. People were not engaged with schools or other services. People in their early 20s were sitting at home and wasting away, which is not an acceptable situation for anybody to be in.

I do not have the number of people who are engaged in mainstream activation programmes at the moment. I would be curious to know whether the Department has that number. We know from the survey on income and living conditions, SILC, that unemployment in general fell from 13.9% in 2013 to 8.6% in 2016, but it did not change for people with disabilities. I think that gives a very clear answer about the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the comprehensive employment strategy. I ask the committee to consider the resources this country is putting into that strategy and all the professionals and services and so on that are involved in it, which brings me to the case workers. We are now told that case workers in Intreo are trained and ready to meet and greet people with disabilities. The reality of what we hear on the ground is very disturbing and is enough to set people back in their lives another two years. Progression often stops at the front door. It is not that people cannot get into the buildings any more, although I think some Intreo offices are still not physically accessible; it is that attitudinal access to the service, which the State purports to provide, is not actually there. We hear horrendous stories about this, not just about Intreo, but also concerns about the employability service, which is a specialist service designed for people with disabilities. A young man with an acquired brain injury, whom we interviewed as part of our preparations for our conference on employment in 2016, said of employability services that they kept asking him what he wanted to do. He had just had an acquired brain injury. He did not know what he wanted to do. He had thought this was the service that would help him to discover that. We also know anecdotally from colleagues here that people with autism similarly find they are not met with by the services or understood. Progression is very difficult in these circumstances. Mr. Lysaght will give an example of this. I am trying to figure out where else I need to go with my response before I hand over to him.

I refer to work retention, keeping people at work and stopping the seamless cycle of people being pushed into activation and then spat out at the other end by jobs that are unsustainable, precarious, low-paid and not suitable for them. Healthy Ireland began some work at the end of 2015, I think, on looking at early intervention. It invited a great many people from a very HR-focused perspective to Dublin Castle. There were only three representatives, including me, from the disability sector, which included bodies focused on arthritis and mental health. A HR response or a technical, legalistic response to early intervention will not crack this. People will continue to leave work once they acquire a disability unless we crack it. Deputy Carey asked what we could change. Stopping the cycle to which I referred is one of the most significant things we can do.

We are delighted to see the ability programme happen. There has been really good consultation with the sector as to how it should be framed and played out. However, this is a follow-on from a previous programme called the disability activation project, DACT, which WALK was

originally funded by. There has been a gap of several years and WALK has had to fight for funding in the meantime. People were being dropped and picked up according to the availability of funding. I am concerned to see whether the issues that arose out of the review of that have been brought over to the new funding programme. There is one outstanding issue which we have been trying to raise with them, namely, that assistive technology and technology in general is part of the future workplace. This is not about stacking shelves. Work is changing for all of us. I can work out of my bag here and I am sure most members can do likewise. We do not seem to understand that people with disabilities might be able to do likewise or be able to avail of more flexible working arrangements, working from home, etc. The ability programme has introduced the capacity to use assistive technology but those delivering the programme cannot give people with disabilities the technology they use without taking it off them again when they are finished the programme. It is as if, because they are no longer engaged with the programme, those delivering the programme say, "Thank you very much. We will take that back now." How can this be in the service of the people looking for work?

I could go on but I will hand over to Mr. Lysaght.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: I wish to make a quick point. The conference in 2016 Ms O'Donnell mentioned seems particularly relevant. Perhaps she might forward links to it.

Ms Joan O'Donnell: Absolutely. I have a copy of the conference report here. I will send it on to the Senator.

Mr. David Lysaght: I thank committee members for their compliments. Deputy Carey asked what practical things we can do every day. I will outline two. I was not always on DA. I first went onto jobseeker's allowance for a few years. That was fine in 2008 when the Government was investing in getting people off jobseeker's and into employment and was providing job recruitment services for people on jobseeker's, as members are aware. I went to the social welfare services and found them very helpful. I used computers to research and look for jobs. Then I decided to go on DA because it was a lot more structured and a sustainable payment for my disability. The moment I went onto DA I lost access to that recruitment service. The services providers said: "Sorry, you are not in our remit. We only look after people on jobseeker's." People on DA are the most vulnerable people in the country and need that little extra help finding a job, and then it is taken away from them. That is a practical thing that can be done: stop that and provide that service to people on DA.

Another practical thing that I quite often come up against is access to form writing. As part of my cerebral palsy I have a shake in my hand and, like many people with cerebral palsy, find it hard to write. Still, for many Department services one must fill in forms by hand. I cannot do that. I still have to go through the embarrassment of asking someone else to fill it out for me. We live in a world where we can control a robot on the other side of the world, yet we cannot put forms online. If they are online, I have no problem filling them in, but we still get paper ones, which is a barrier for me. They are two practical things that can be achieved.

Dr. Murphy said something that struck me about our Government's approach and society's approach and society seeing people on jobseeker's, DA or lone parent support as dependants. I can tell the committee from my own experience - and I guarantee members it is across the board - that this has a detrimental effect on the mental well-being of the person because no one, disabled, lone parent or able-bodied, likes to be seen as a dependant or a burden on someone. We quite often feel we have to justify why we are getting DA, why we are getting €220 a week. We are told by such people: "We are paying taxes and going to work." I would love to do that but

I cannot. That was a mental burden on me - and it is not just me, it is across the board. Again, it is back to that word, “attitude”. We need to change that.

Chairman: Before I conclude, do colleagues wish to make any further brief comments or are they all happy?

Senator John Dolan: It is as much an invitation to the committee as to the witnesses. I will leave with them that idea of needing to get engagement on this with other Departments and public entities.

Dr. Mary Murphy: A data question came up about the access of people with disabilities to active labour market measures. I put some data in about women’s access to active labour market measures. I had to do a ridiculous amount of digging to get those data. Each service provider has those data readily available, sorted by age, disability, gender and so on. If one wanted, for equality’s sake, to disaggregate the data, why does the State not just require those using State funding to give the data back in that way? If we do not know what we are doing or who is using the services, it is difficult. If the committee is making recommendations, while I know academics say to do this and to adopt that, it would make a huge difference to our ability to equality proof the delivery of services and the design of what we are doing.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: I am conscious that this is a point we did not get to touch on much but I will follow up on the question of those who may be outside the system. They are not in any part of the system because of the means test. They kind of disappear from the system. Any follow-up thoughts from the speakers would be great.

Chairman: Sometimes, we have witnesses where some are only present to advise. Today, all of our witnesses spoke and contributed. I thank them for the presentations and submissions in advance and for their responses to the questions and points raised. It was useful and informative.

The joint committee adjourned at 12.32 p.m. until 10.30 a.m. on Thursday, 8 February 2018.