



**YOUTH
ASSEMBLY**
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

OFFICIAL REPORT

**Youth Assembly Mandate Two 2023-25
3rd Sitting**

At 2:30 pm on Saturday 19 October 2024
Parliament Buildings, Stormont, Belfast.



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Plenary Session

Saturday 19 October 2024

The Youth Assembly met at 2.30 pm (Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Blair) in the Chair)

Deputy Speaker's Welcome

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Blair): Members, the first thing that I want to do is to welcome all of you to the third plenary sitting of the second Youth Assembly. I am very pleased that the Speaker has, again, given special permission for the Youth Assembly to gather here in the Assembly Chamber. It is a privilege for me as Deputy Speaker to be asked to preside over your event. It is great to see you take your seats again in the Assembly Chamber.

Some of you may recall that I had the honour of chairing the first plenary session of the new Youth Assembly, and I can tell you that I am delighted to be back with you again. Before we move on, I would like to introduce the two people sitting next to me at the Table, who are the Clerks. On my right is the Clerk/Chief Executive, Lesley Hogg, and to my left is Youth Assembly manager, Lucy McClelland. My role as Deputy Speaker is to chair the sitting and make sure that everything runs smoothly. Let us move on to what we have ahead of us.

Today is your opportunity to have your voice heard. Once you have updated the Youth Assembly on the activities that you have been involved in since the last plenary session, you will have the chance to debate the issue of mobile phones in schools. I know that you have wanted to hold a debate in the Assembly Chamber for some time, and that you have chosen that issue because you are passionate about it. A lot of preparation has gone into the debate, so I hope that you will take the opportunity to make your comments heard. I want to hear from all of you who want to speak. Do not worry if you do not have a speech prepared: if you just want to make a brief point, or even if you just want to agree with someone else, please feel free to do that, and I will be glad, from the Speaker's Chair, to hear from you. When other people are speaking, please listen to their views: that is about showing each other respect. I hope that you make the most of today and enjoy yourselves. If you need any help at all, please let one of the team know, and we will be happy to assist you in any way that we can.

Members' Updates

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Blair): We can now move to the second item in the Order Paper. The Youth Assembly has been busy since the plenary session in February 2024. This is your chance to update those in the Chamber on the activities that you have been involved in during that period. A number of Youth Assembly Members have prepared updates, and I will call each of you in turn.

Cara Ní Cheallaigh: Good afternoon everyone. I will give you a short recap on all the exciting and informative training that the Youth Assembly has had since its plenary meeting in February 2024. On 5 March 2024, via an online meeting, we had an informational, engaging and interactive session with the Northern Ireland Assembly's Education Service. We found out about the creation of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the impact of the Good Friday Agreement, power sharing, the difference between the Assembly and the Executive, the role of MLAs, the role of Committees and how they are formed, devolved matters and how laws are passed. About two months later, on 1 May, we had another training session with Deborah from Thrive Academy. We tackled topics such as fake news, online trolling and digital footprints, leaving us all feeling more tech-savvy than before. In June, Youth Assembly Members attended a team-building day at Belfast Activity Centre, which gave us a chance to reflect on our first eight months. We met the Clerk/Chief Executive, Lesley Hogg, to talk about her experience and highlights so far. We took part in a variety of activities, including caving, climbing, bushcraft, archery and team games.

Our most recent session took place this morning. We were very lucky to be joined by Jayne McCormack, who is a BBC political correspondent. We learned about the role of the media, managing reputational risk and how best to communicate to get our message across. As we work on our Committee projects over the next few months, we will have opportunities to develop skills in research, survey design, analysis and report writing.

Thank you very much for listening.

Donal Mullan: I am reporting on behalf of the Health Committee. We officially commenced our work as a Health Committee after the February 2024 plenary meeting. On 9 April 2024, the Health Committee took part in an online session with the Clerk of the Assembly's Health Committee to discuss the Tobacco and Vapes Bill. The Health Committee took information on board and discussed the Tobacco and Vapes Bill in detail. We then had a fantastic opportunity to present our views to the Health Committee in the Long Gallery.

When the Minister spoke in the debate on the Tobacco and Vapes Bill legislative consent memorandum in May, the Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Liz Kimmins MLA, and a number of other Members made positive references to the work of the Youth Assembly. Although the Bill fell due to the calling of a general election, we will work on it again when it returns to the Assembly, which will hopefully be in the next few months.

We held our second Committee meeting in April. At that meeting, we discussed our views with officials from the office of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young people (NICCY). We discussed children's rights in the context of health, which helped us to further develop what needs to be done as part of our work. A landmark day for the Health Committee was 18 May, as we met to consider our areas of focus for the mandate. We chose mental health in schools, as it is an issue that affects so many young people. On 30 August, the Health Committee held a stakeholder day in Parliament Buildings. We spoke with a range of stakeholders, including officials from the Department of Health and the Department of Education, an Assembly researcher and the Northern Ireland mental health champion, Professor Siobhan O'Neill.

For our next steps, we hope to meet schools that are implementing a happy schools index, and we have written to the Health Minister, who will meet us in January.

That concludes my summary on behalf of the Health Committee. Thank you to the Deputy Speaker for giving me the opportunity to address the Chamber.

Tyler Gregg: Since our plenary session in February, the Youth Assembly has engaged in project work spanning three Committees — Education, Health, and Rights and Equality — which were voted for by the Members, following a thought-provoking debate in the Chamber. My Committee, the Education Committee, undertook consideration through online Committee meetings, and we examined closely the results of our own Big Youth Survey and the 2023 report on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). At a Committee planning day in May, we decided to focus on examining the topic, "A curriculum fit for 21st century students", specifically tackling issues with the curriculum on relationships and sexuality education (RSE), careers education and learning for life and work (LLW).

On 30 August, the Committee hosted a stakeholder event in Parliament Buildings — our most important meeting to date. We had briefings and questioned officials from the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the Department of Education. We also had an information session from the Assembly's Research and Information Service (RaISe). That gave us valuable insights into what we needed to work on specifically to work towards our goal and who we needed to get information from to work with.

Our next steps will be vital, as they will lay the foundation for our project work for the rest of our mandate. We plan to meet further stakeholders such as representatives from the Secondary Students Union NI (SSUNI) and Queen's University Belfast, and find out young people's views on this important issue. We have asked to meet the Education Minister, but he replied that he is not available, which we found disappointing. We hope to meet him once we have concluded our work, particularly as we understand that there will be a curriculum review in the next few months.

Youth Assembly Members — me and six others — are involved in research on different reports, plans and work that is being published by organisations such as SSUNI, Belfast Youth Council and the Education Training Inspectorate's (ETI) inspection framework, as well as past and present works from our Government such as the 2023 independent review of education, the Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order

2007 and guidance for boards of governors. We look forward to progressing that research and updating the House early next year.

Ellie Clarke: I will report on behalf of the Rights and Equality Committee. The first meeting of the Committee took place online in March. We identified key areas of interest for the Committee, and discussed human rights and children's rights. We talked about concepts such as equality versus equity, prejudice and fairness. That was a helpful starting point for the Committee to push off from, taking with us the basic concepts of rights and equality that will form the basis of our Committee.

Our second meeting took place online in April, when we were joined by officials from the office of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People. That meeting was particularly important to us as a Committee that is focusing on the preservation and promotion of the rights of young people. NICCY gave a short presentation on its role in Northern Ireland as well as the status of children's rights in the country today.

The Committee planning day in May was a great opportunity for our Committee to meet and to organise ourselves in choosing what area of focus we would investigate and deciding what stakeholders we would be interested in speaking to. There was a huge variety of subject areas that interested us, from the Irish language to the LGBTQ+ community, but, eventually, we settled on the topic of young women's rights in schools. Our members had a lot of great ideas regarding stakeholders we could speak to in August, and the planning day really helped the Committee to better shape our vision. The following month, we had our third online Committee meeting, which was especially important for discussing what stakeholders we would like to speak to in order to inform the Committee's investigations. NICCY and the ending violence against women and girls strategy group at the Executive Office seem to be the most obvious groups that we have to speak to due to their very active role in protecting the rights of girls and women. It was useful to hold this meeting before our stakeholder day so that our Committee had a clearer understanding of who we would be speaking to as well as of their areas of expertise and experience.

Most recently, in August, our stakeholder day took place in Parliament Buildings. It was vital to our Committee that we spoke to groups such as the Executive Office and the ending violence against women and girls strategy team, as their resources will be endlessly useful to us by informing us of the current status of girls' rights in schools and, thus, wider society. It was really great to see that everyone in the group is very enthusiastic about our chosen focus area and has their own experiences and interests that will be essential to our investigation. Currently, we are researching key documents such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to summarise how the information featured is relevant to young girls in schools today and using other articles such as SSUN's sexism and harassment in schools report and the ending violence against women and girls strategy to inform us.

We are also considering questions that we could ask students in a survey in the near future. Our meeting with Jamie Plant from the Education Authority (EA) Youth Service will definitely help us with this, and we will meet her at our next meeting in November. We have written to the First Minister and deputy First Minister about our Committee work, and we hope to hear from them soon. We hope to potentially outline a sexism policy that advises on combating misogyny in schools by tackling sexism at the grassroots. It has been a successful year for the Youth Assembly and for the Rights and Equality Committee so far, and we look forward to presenting our work down the line.

Caleb Hazley: I am a member of the Youth Assembly Business Committee, which consists of 15 Youth Assembly Members, five from each of our Committees: the Health Committee, the Education Committee and the Rights and Equality Committee. The Business Committee has a variety of roles. We share information between Committees so that we can keep up to date with what is happening in the other Committees. We also consider external requests for collaboration with other organisations such as charities and various governmental departments, and we consider consultation requests. We decide whether each request is applicable to our values as a Youth Assembly and whether we have capacity to take the work on.

We have discussed various training opportunities that we think would be the most useful for the Youth Assembly. Finally, we inform Youth Assembly communications, such as the monthly newsletter and our various social media platforms. Throughout our meetings in the past year, we have been trained in how to write a blog and how to take part in Mentimeter surveys relating to social media posts and have enjoyed many fun icebreakers and activities. We feel that the Business Committee has an important role in the Youth Assembly as it allows us as young people to be a youth-led organisation and enhance our skills.

Mia Murray: Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Youth Assembly Members about our work with the Northern Ireland Assembly Committees. Once the Northern Ireland Assembly got up and running again in February, so too did the Northern Ireland Assembly Committees. Over the past year, the Youth Assembly has jumped at numerous opportunities to meet them and discuss issues relevant to young people. These have included the Committee for Health, the Committee for the Economy, the Committee for Communities and the Committee for Education.

First, in March 2024, we had our first interaction with the Education Committee when I gave evidence to it on the issues presented to us in the Big Youth Survey. This survey asked young people in Northern Ireland about what they would like their Youth Assembly to focus on. There were over 1,800 responses. The three key issues in the Big Youth Survey were health, education and jobs, followed closely by rights and equality. I discussed those issues with the Education Committee, along with the curriculum, mental health, the impact of the recent teachers' strikes in schools, lack of environmental education, free school meals, cost of uniform, special educational needs provision and student voice.

2.45 pm

Following that, in April 2024, the Youth Assembly was given the opportunity to give our views to the Health Committee on the Westminster Tobacco and Vapes Bill. In April, we had our first online meeting with the Committee Clerk at which we discussed our concerns and questions about the Bill, before, one week later, coming up to Parliament Buildings to discuss our opinions, stories and experiences with the MLAs on the Health Committee. We had a quick snippet of the action that afternoon when we were led down to watch the Committee meet and take on board our suggestions.

When the Health Minister later introduced the Bill in the House, it was incredible to see that some of our suggestions, such as raising fines for those who provide tobacco and/or nicotine vape products to those underage. Sadly, the Bill fell after the announcement of the general election; however, it will be picked up again, and the Youth Assembly will have another opportunity to give evidence at that point.

In May 2024, the Committee for Education and the Committee for Economy had a joint meeting at which they discussed careers education in schools. We were invited to go along and watch that unique event, and we had some time to chat with the MLAs and the members of the independent review of education panel to give our opinion on careers — over a delicious lunch, as always.

Youth Assembly Members met over the summer to create the children and young people's version of the relationships and sexuality education survey with the Clerk of the Education Committee. The survey was launched in September. Earlier this week, we attended a stakeholder event with the Committee to discuss RSE and other issues that we feel passionate about. The Youth Assembly has submitted its response to the mini inquiry. The survey is open until 29 October, so I encourage everyone to fill it in and have their views heard on such an important issue.

Last week, we met the Committee for Communities to discuss the Pensions (Extension of Automatic Enrolment) Bill, which would reduce the age at which workers must be automatically enrolled in their employer's pension scheme from 22 years to 18 and mean that we would pay into pensions from the first pound earned. We were delighted to be joined at that meeting by the Committee Chairperson, Colm Gildernew MLA, and Committee members Brian Kingston MLA and Andy Allen MLA. At the subsequent Committee meeting on Thursday 10 October, the Chairperson mentioned how meaningful the engagement with the Youth Assembly was and namechecked each Youth Assembly Member who attended.

In the next number of months, we hope to have an impact on the Justice Bill and the marriage Bill, which will be scrutinised by the Justice Committee and Finance Committee respectively. We welcome any further opportunity to work with Assembly Committees.

It is important that the Youth Assembly is embedded in the work of the Assembly. We are a diverse group and representative of all the section 75 categories. We are glad that the Committees are asking us to work with them to ensure that youth voices are being reflected in those most important laws. I record our thanks to the Clerks and staff of the Committees as well as to the MLAs who have worked tirelessly with us to make this happen.

Shea McCarthy: On Saturday 23 March, Youth Assembly Members participated in the Northern Ireland Youth Forum's North/South peace event at Belfast City Hall. It was a day full of discussion, workshops and activities as Youth Assembly Members engaged with over 120 young people from right across Ireland to partake in workshops and discuss a range of topics, including how social media can influence misinformation

and disinformation, the importance of political stability, the regeneration of public services and the importance of North/South relations. Members gathered our ideas on those issues and presented our views to all the young people in the room. It gave us the opportunity to discuss our opinions while listening to the opinions of other young people. We agreed about how important it is to share our ideas with a diverse range of backgrounds and about the value of youth voice.

As young people, we also had the opportunity to engage with decision makers. The event was sponsored by then Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Ryan Murphy, who welcomed the young people to Belfast City Hall. We also met junior Minister Pam Cameron MLA, and we spoke on youth participation and our role as the Youth Assembly before she made her keynote address. Members also met Danny Baker MLA, who represented the Education Committee. We discussed education, the importance of the youth voice and Mr Baker's work with young people through his previous role as Lord Mayor and his present role as an MLA. The event concluded with a panel of young activists discussing North/South relations, youth voice, growing diversity among young people and the arguments around lowering the voting age to 16. The North/South peace event outlined the importance of investing in our young people to ensure a better and brighter future for us all.

Bláthnaid Girvan: On 4 June, we attended the Volunteer Now Impact Awards at Belfast Castle to mark Volunteers' Week and Power of Youth Day. You may not immediately think of being part of the Youth Assembly as a volunteering activity or a social action project, but all Youth Assembly Members can bank volunteer hours every time they attend a training session, a Committee meeting, a plenary session or an event. Every Youth Assembly Member spends unpaid time doing something to benefit others. The Youth Assembly is in a unique position to advocate for young people on decisions that are made in the Assembly. We have our voices heard on legislation and work together in Committees on issues that matter to all young people. We can have a real impact on laws and policy that affect us all. Because of that, the top 15 Youth Assembly Members who had clocked up the most volunteering hours were invited to attend the event.

At the event, we met some really inspirational young people who were involved in volunteering activities and social action projects. The event was hosted by the radio presenter Ibe Sesay, and the guest speakers were the TikTok sensation, the Diabetic Duo. At the event, we were each presented with a Volunteer Now Impact Award, and the Youth Assembly was given a wooden trophy to acknowledge the work that we do. It was a really memorable evening and such an achievement to have our work recognised.

Sophie Griffin: I am going to tell you all about the Northern Ireland Assembly Women's Caucus event that some of the other female Youth Assembly Members and I attended on 18 June 2024.

The Women's Caucus is a united, cross-party forum made up of all current female MLAs. Its aim is to address the underrepresentation of women in politics in Northern Ireland. The Women's Caucus event gave us and the female MLAs the opportunity to share our experiences of interacting in the local political sphere. We also had the opportunity to discuss mutual challenges and opportunities for women. During the event, we did a quiz called "Who are we?". The quiz allowed us to get to know the MLAs who attended. We also took part in a workshop to which we had to bring an artefact that was meaningful to us. That helped us to get to know not just the MLAs but each other better. Among the artefacts were pictures of role models, artwork and books which inspired us. We also met the chairperson of the Women's Caucus, Claire Sugden MLA.

I, and other Youth Assembly Members, thoroughly enjoyed the inspiring and memorable event. It was a great opportunity to meet MLAs from a range of political parties. It was definitely the event at which we met the most MLAs in one room. We have had a commitment from the Women's Caucus that we will work together again, perhaps at the Women's Parliament next year.

Isaac Bloomer: Recently, the Youth Assembly has been involved in assisting Marie Curie with a project that it has been working on for three years to address the need for better education and support for young people in the management of grief. That matter is close to my heart, as I have lost three of my grandparents in the last four years, who were cared for by my family and me with Marie Curie assisting us.

Marie Curie asked Youth Assembly Members to complete an online survey, the outcome of which showed the wide need for support in our schools. The survey showed that 84% of respondents said that they had not seen or would not know where to find their school's bereavement policy. Some 93% of respondents said that it was important or very important for schools to offer grief education.

Bereavement support has, sadly, become hugely important in my school community, as a member of year 12 tragically passed away very suddenly in September, devastating us. Even in the Youth Assembly, one of our Members lost his mother recently.

The Youth Assembly attended a Marie Curie event on 1 August about bereavement education in Northern Ireland. At the event, we participated in workshops on what good grief education in schools looks like and how we can make it happen. We made recommendations such as that school-based bereavement support and grief education should be offered in all schools and should be a mandatory part of the curriculum. The school bereavement policy must be co-designed, well-advertised and understood across the school. All teaching staff should receive mandatory bereavement training, and bereavement should be a topic on the personal development curriculum, supported by age and developmentally appropriate teaching materials.

We look forward to attending Marie Curie's report launch in November 2024. We hope that the Education Minister will support our call for better grief education and bereavement support in schools and bring forward policy guidance for schools.

Rory Brown: On 20 August, the Children's Law Centre (CLC) hosted an event with Youth Assembly Members to talk about the REE chatbot. The CLC is an organisation that strives to protect and educate on the rights of children across Northern Ireland. In particular, it does its best to help children who are disadvantaged, such as those who are homeless or have special educational needs or mental illnesses.

It is a great organisation. However, it only has so many staff to help young people with their problems, and there is certainly no shortage of problems that young people need legal advice on. The solution to the problem is the REE chatbot, which can give advice on general questions that kids need to ask.

Throughout the day of our event, Youth Assembly Members and young people from Angel Eyes NI, Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC), Youth@CLC and Barnardo's worked together in groups to talk about questions that the chatbot might be faced with. We advised the CLC on how we think kids might word those difficult questions, so the chatbot is designed to cover any question that it could be asked.

To the dismay, or happiness, of many people, computers cannot just do our jobs for us yet. The chatbot will also have the ability to connect a young person to an online legal adviser if their question is a little too specific for the bot. We helped talk through those types of questions.

I am sure that those who attended will agree that working with the CLC to develop a modern solution to help kids who might need it was an excellent experience. It is good to know that we can help to make a difference. After all, that is what our Youth Assembly work is all about.

Nadia Mackiewicz: I will speak about the good relations week event with Syrian Youth Voice. On 14 September, to mark Good Relations Week 2024, Youth Assembly Members invited young people from Syrian Youth Voice to Parliament Buildings. The Syrian Youth Voice group is supported by staff from Barnardo's and is a group of young people from families who have fled the Syrian conflict and who now live in Northern Ireland. The members come from all over Northern Ireland.

All young people took part in workshops on this year's Good Relations Week theme of "OpportUNITY – a call to action to create a brighter, inclusive future". Two introductory speeches were held, one by a member from each organisation, with me speaking about the Youth Assembly, before we went on to icebreakers to learn more about each other. All the young people brought in personal artefacts that they felt represented their lives and identities. It was great to hear all the personal stories on how the young people chose their artefacts, why they are important and how they help to tell their unique life stories.

A wide variety of artefacts were brought in, however, the standout for that night for sure was a traditional Middle Eastern scarf that protects the wearer from the sun and sand, which was trickier to put on than we thought.

The event ended with each participant recording their hopes and dreams for the future, which were added to an art collage. The event was an amazing start to Good Relations Week and a great opportunity for all young people to learn and understand each other better. We hope that we will be able to meet up again.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Blair): I call Harrison Kerr, who is our last Member to speak on this item of business.

3.00 pm

Harrison Kerr: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am excited to share an update on the Youth Assembly's involvement in the recent consultation on school uniform that is being conducted by the Education Minister, Paul Givan. On 4 September, Youth Assembly Members met Sinead Crossan from the Department of Education online. We shared our preliminary views on the proposed school uniform Bill, which would introduce statutory guidance to ensure that school uniforms across Northern Ireland remain affordable, comfortable and sustainable for pupils and parents. We all agreed that any attempt to reduce the excessive cost of school uniforms these days is a step forward, and, overall, the Youth Assembly's response to the proposal was positive. However, Members foresaw some potential issues regarding PE kit, gender-based uniforms, price caps and the consequences of having single suppliers.

We had the opportunity to present our concerns directly to the Minister of Education, who was helpful in clarifying the guidance and addressing our concerns. He was receptive to our feedback and said that he looked forward to reading the Youth Assembly's written response to the consultation.

Since then, we have met online to articulate our views on the Bill in greater detail and to draft a group response to the survey. We will follow the consultation closely and look forward to hearing the outcome.

Looking ahead, I am confident that there will soon be further chances for us to engage with the Minister and the Department of Education on issues such as school uniform grants and free school meals. I know that I speak for us all when I say that we are eager to make sure that young people's voices are heard on those important issues.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Blair): I thank all Members who have spoken for their updates. It is clear from what we have seen and heard that you have been busy in the past few months. I am delighted that you are working closely with Assembly Committees. At this stage, I wish to point out that a number of MLAs are in the Public Gallery to hear the debate. The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People is also there. It continues to be important that your voices are heard on policy and legislation.

Mobile Phones in Schools

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Blair): We will proceed to the main part of today's business, which is a motion on mobile phones in schools. I will open the Floor for about 45 minutes. Contributors should keep their remarks brief to allow as many Members as possible to contribute. Again, Members should not talk over each other and should respect each other's views.

If you wish to speak, you should rise in your place. That is what normally happens in the Chamber. It means that we have an easy way of seeing that you want to speak. However, if it is easier for some of you, you may raise your hand to let us know that you want to speak. You can also speak from your seat when you are called, if that is easier for you.

When a Member is called to speak, you should take your seat to listen to that contribution. When that person has finished speaking, you should again rise in your place or raise your hand, so that we know that you still want to speak. When you are called to speak, please remember to wait for the light on your microphone to turn red, and then state your name, as that helps everyone to get to know each other. It also helps the staff from Assembly Broadcasting and the Office of the Official Report. If that is clear, we shall proceed.

Moved —

"That this Youth Assembly notes the guidance issued by the Department of Education on 3 September 2024 on the use of mobile phones in schools; is concerned about the cost of the mobile phone pilot scheme; recognises the importance of integrating mobile technology into school life and teaching students about digital responsibility to prepare them for the future; and calls on the Minister of Education to consult with all stakeholders, including young people, in the development of policies and procedures to ensure mobile phones can be used responsibly during the school day."

Bláthnaid Girvan: It is my opinion as a young carer that mobile phones should not be banned in schools. Banning mobile phones would have a huge impact on the health and well-being of young carers and those they care for. Mobile phones enable an instant connection between the young person and those they care for. Without that communication, young carers would struggle to find out if there was an emergency at home, check up on their loved ones during free time or get updates on important medical test results. Many young carers find it hard to balance caring and education. It is vital that mobile phone bans do not make their lives even harder.

Mia Murray: I want to speak briefly about the cost of the pilot scheme for the removal of mobile phones from schools. The Minister is proposing the removal of mobile phones from schools. The pilot scheme to roll the system out to 10 schools is to cost the Minister £250,000.

We have had a sitting Assembly for only six to eight months, and in that time we have had multiple struggles with the budget for education. Is that the correct way to spend money, when, in my community, we have vital issues in the schools estate such as crumbling schools? Is the Minister taking note that the £250,000 cost to roll the scheme out to 10 schools is probably a bit excessive? In the South, it is going to cost €7 million to €8 million to implement the scheme in all schools. If the pilot does go well, and the Minister implement the scheme in all schools, it will cost us something similar, and I honestly do not believe that the Minister has that sort of money.

Removing mobile phones in schools would be good, and it would be amazing if we could roll that initiative and the infrastructure out to secondary schools. Sadly, though, we do not live in a perfect world where we have the budget and there are more pressing matters in education that that money could go towards, for example, to patch up a school wall or make sure that there is no mould in a classroom or rats in a mobile.

I believe that the Minister's intentions are pure, and that he does want to eliminate distractions in the classroom, but maybe this is a topic for further down the line, and the Minister now needs to focus on issues more pressing than mobile phones.

Georgia Watson: Mia, I completely agree with you. First, I want to express how important the use of my phone has been for me in school. It has not only allowed me to take part better in class through games such as Kahoot! but my phone has helped me considerably during study time when I have had to watch videos for my different classes and use the videos to answer questions or to revise.

Whilst I agreed with the Education Minister that phones can be a distraction in school, it can never be a good idea to eradicate them. They have made my learning infinitely easier and more enjoyable. Spending all that money on something that will likely make education more difficult is a waste. However, a reasonable compromise could be agreed. Children of primary school age do not need to have their phones at school, for example, but this scheme could be enforced in a completely free way such as a shoebox or basket for phones. If limiting phones in secondary schools is an imperative, surely the same method would suffice. Spending all that money on something such as that when it could be spent on improving school resources or training staff is a complete waste.

To quote Naomi Long MLA:

"Each mobile comes with an off switch, which is completely free".

Caleb Hazley: A few years ago, my school introduced a phone ban. It resulted in greatly increased grades and behaviour throughout the school, and was done for free. No phone pouches were needed, just disciplinary action if you were seen to be on your phone or if your phone was turned on. That is a much better compromise than spending thousands of pounds for a few schools to get phone pouches. If we bring in the correct disciplinary actions, people will not want to go on their phones because they will be punished.

3.15 pm

Tyler Gregg: The guidance for schools regarding mobile phone use, as of 3 September 2024, found that mobile phones were increasing "attention fragmentation and addiction" for students. It also found that a third of young people by the age of 11 had viewed pornography, as found by the Children's Commissioner's report, and a fifth of young people aged 10 to 15 experienced cyberbullying. A global study links 30,000 adults, who received phones a young age, to have negative mental health. Does accepting all that justify an easier, more convenient life of communication within schools?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Blair): Thank you. Tyler switched from one side of the Chamber earlier to that side. That does not happen in here very often, Tyler, but by all means people are free to do so.

You are all doing this anyway, but this is just a small reminder to say your name at the start. Basically, everyone is doing that but it is just so that we all know who is speaking. Who wants to speak next?

Lucy Wong: I strongly disagree with the notion of banning phones in schools. Mobile devices are essential tools that can enhance learning and provide students with immediate access to valuable educational resources. A full ban may limit opportunities for research, digital literacy and communication, which are crucial skills for the modern world. Additionally, restricting phone use can hinder students' ability to coordinate with parents during emergencies and can disproportionately affect those who rely on the devices for connectivity. Instead of outright bans, schools should focus on teaching responsible phone usage and integrate technology into the curriculum to prepare students for future challenges.

Addison Kealey-Bennett: To speak further on what Yvaine pointed out, neurodivergent students have been shown to benefit more from the usage of their phones. Phones can help with sensory issues. A phone can be used temporarily for as a stim toy for those who need to do that to focus, and removing that by a blanket ban would damage their education. The points raised against phone usage in schools are not matters that schools should solve, but rather things that parents should teach their children. Rules created by the school rely on the trust of the students in their teachers to follow them. If the teachers do not trust their students, how can students trust them?

Ross MacAskill: I would like to add to what Yvaine said. If money is put into those devices — and I am not saying that they are a good thing — it is a one-time purchase but, if they put it into special educational needs (SEN) education, they have to keep a consistent flow of that money and keep putting it in every year, so that it will drive up the budget altogether.

Grace McDonald: Everyone is aware that school is a place of education, with some believing that our education should not extend beyond the realm of paper. However, the presence of technology in the 21st century is undeniable. If phones are to be erased within school, the curriculum must be reviewed as technology is included. Furthermore, this motion deprives young people of self-regulating screen time, which will undoubtedly result in an inability to self-regulate in our adulthood. Although some think that the motion will prevent antisocial youth, it will create antisocial adults.

Aiden Mac Dougall: I am visually impaired, and phones can enlarge things that are in too small a print for me when I am learning. Phones are very good for understanding, learning new things, researching and all that sort of stuff.

Joshua Gilmore: With regard to the pilot, my school has introduced a form of pouch that is Velcro and hangs on the classroom wall. That is much more efficient, cheaper and more useful than the magnetic pouches that have been proposed by the Education Minister. That also allows for students to have access to their phones at lunch and break. If they are, for example, a young carer, they have connectivity to home, and, if they need to do something, they know what to do and they have quick access.

Brooke Ewing: Smartphones are powerful educational tools. They provide a wealth of access to information at our fingertips. Using online resources can cater to various learning styles, helping our education. This instant access encourages independent learning and critical thinking, which are essential skills for the 21st century. Furthermore, teaching students to use their phones responsibly prepares them for the real world. Instead of banning phones and creating a culture of secrecy, schools should embrace technology and incorporate it into their teaching methods while also educating young people on how to use their phones responsibly.

Erin Magee: There are a number of reasons why I am in support of the use of mobile phones in schools. I believe that the large sum of £250,000 that is being invested in the pilot scheme of using mobile phone pouches to restrict access during school hours, as of 3 September 2024, is not a necessity. For such a large sum of money, much more valuable issues that we are facing could be tackled. I think that it is fair to say that the use of mobile phones in schools is not our biggest issue.

In addition, numerous concerns surrounding the new scheme have arisen. There are worries such as the impact on neurodivergent children, and those with medical conditions need their mobile phones at all times to support with any needs. Mobile phones also provide a sense of safety for some students in the case of an emergency and are needed for elder year groups for work. Attendance rates will inevitably drop if phones are taken off children in schools.

Lastly, why are young people not being given a say in this matter? Parents, guardians and teachers, alongside the children, have not been consulted whatsoever on the matter. Surely, they should be, considering that the scheme would affect them the most. In my opinion, it is a temporary solution to a much bigger problem.

Fionn McCoy: I am delighted and grateful to be able to speak today. I am against banning phones in schools for the following reasons. First, phones provide us with electronic dictionaries, maps and learning resources such as Google Classroom. Technology such as school computers in schools is great and is a valuable resource, but, due to crippling school budgets, I do not think that it can be regarded as a replacement for phones.

One of the main purposes of school is to prepare us for later life. Inevitably, phones will be part of adult life, and schools have a duty to prepare us for it. We need to look at what role phones play in schools and how to address it. I do not think that banning phones is the way forward. If phones end up being banned, the £250,000 spent on magnetic pouches is such a ginormous amount of money, and, personally, I do not think that it is possible to justify it. As I have just mentioned, schools are facing very challenging budgets. I believe it would be extremely helpful if schools could receive the money that was due to be spent on magnetic pouches.

In conclusion, I ask the Minister to continue to consult us on it. After all, the Bill is aimed at us, so our voices should be heard.

Sophie Griffin: There are many pros and cons to having mobile phones in schools. The positives are: you are able to contact family, either to let parents know about details regarding dates or new pick-up times; they can be used as a learning tool, which can be very beneficial to young people's learning; and you can also contact your friends who may be off school that day but may need your help. The negatives are: mobile phones may be used wrongly; they may become a distraction; the phones can be broken; and there can be arguments between pupils and teachers over mobile phones.

We grew up in a different generation. We grew up knowing that phones can be used to benefit our learning. I understand the Education Minister's views/reasons for the mobile phone ban, but mobile phones are now causing more disruptions in schools because of the ban, so I suggest that we be allowed our phones in schools but that they be restricted during class times unless they are being used for learning and that they be allowed at break and lunchtime as it helps us to communicate with our friends and show them videos that can help us be more social.

Lorcan McCusker: Members have made many good points, but we should ban mobile phones because we can still learn with computers. They would be a one-time purchase, and could be handed out and used continually, like the satchels.

Portia Cummings: Phones have far more potential to benefit students than hinder them. By banning phones, we are teaching impressionable children that phones are something to fear, instead of taking the opportunity to nurture an environment where students can learn to use phones to aid learning. My phone has quickly become an integral tool in my education. It has improved my long-term concentration when faced with four consecutive study periods. It is essential for taking the mandatory photos in my science practicals, and, most importantly, enables the class to be brought together by the most effective educational tool, Kahoot!

Victoria Da Cruz Marinho: We should be allowed our phones in school because some schools still use Google Classroom or other online apps for most work. Instead of trying to ban phones completely, why not have specific times when you are or are not allowed to have them out? In my school, students may not all have access to a school computer because there is a limited number of computers in a room, or because there are too many people in the computer room before registration starts. Therefore, it would be more convenient to allow students to have phones to help them to get work done if they cannot get it done at home. After all, you can do the same things on a phone that you can do on a computer. Furthermore, schools can block which apps are not to be used, and they use school Wi-Fi instead of data, so students will not be distracted and phones will not be used wrongly.

Shea McCarthy: Like many others, I support the motion, because I share their multiple concerns about the mobile phone pilot scheme. At a time when schools are unable to afford counselling services, remove mould on walls or put the heating on, throwing away £250,000 on a pilot scheme is unjustifiable. Furthermore, not all mobile phone use in schools is negative. Since lockdown in 2020, mobile phones have been used as an educational tool through Teams, Kahoot! and online feedback forms. There are many alternatives to the scheme if the Minister feels that strongly about mobile phones. What consultation has he had with teachers, young people, parents and other education stakeholders? I am sure that the Youth Assembly would be more than happy to meet the Minister of Education to discuss the issue. However, if the events of recent weeks are anything to go by, it might be fairly difficult for organisations like ours to get a meeting.

Daniel McGucken: At The High School Ballynahinch, our phones are taken from us at the start of the day and we do not get them back until the end of the day. That does not cost the school a single penny. That policy has been beneficial for several reasons. Number one, there are fewer distractions in the classroom because phones are not ringing when pupils forget to put them on silent, and, two, pupils cannot take videos or photos of other pupils, which has led to the school being a much safer environment. Leading up to the debate, I asked teachers and students for their opinion on the mobile phone policy. The teachers thought that it was a good idea. The students did not like it, but they knew that it was for their own good. After the debate, I hope that all schools across Northern Ireland implement that rule and make all schools phone-free.

3.30 pm

Paige Brennan-Collins: Before I dive into my points, I am going to assume that the majority of people in the Chamber use their phones on a day-to-day basis, whether for work, school, scrolling on social media or personal benefits. It is apparent that mobile phones play a key role in our daily lives. Mobile phones may cause problems during the school day, but I do not think we are approaching the situation as we should. Young people have grown up around mobile phones and, due to their growing influence, it will be difficult to remove mobile phones from a school setting as the years progress.

Instead of trying to remove them, why not use phones to benefit our school life and studies? Education could benefit greatly if we incorporated the use of mobile phones into our classes. Many teachers already encourage the use of mobile phones for studying. Using them in our lessons could introduce different learning skills and help students to access a higher level of understanding by using the internet. For example, in one of my drama classes, my teacher used the app Kahoot! to quiz the class on their knowledge of 'The Crucible'. Although we were being quizzed, everyone in the class was engaged in the task and had fun doing it.

I believe that students would not feel the need to access their phones during the school day if their classes were more engaging and interactive. Classes should be filled with fun and active activities to stimulate students and to help them to learn efficiently and effectively, instead of being filled with reading, writing and revising notes for six hours a day. Our curriculum is evidently outdated; we need one that will benefit our generation by keeping us interested and excited to learn instead of filling us with dread and boredom, which makes students want to escape through their mobile phones.

Finally, £250,000 is a lot of money to spend on magnetic pouches that might not produce the results we are looking for. Such an amount should be used on more concerning matters, such as providing more funding for hospitals and bettering mental health services. Introducing the pouches will not entirely help people who wrestle with their mental health on a daily basis. What will help them is experienced and well-funded mental health services. Young people do not continue to struggle with their mental health because of their phones; they continue to struggle because the right services are not being provided for them. Thank you.

Victoria Mulholland: I think that mobile phones should be completely switched off in schools, if not banned. The reason for my view is that mobile phones being allowed in class poses a distraction. Apps are designed to keep the user interested, and the constantly changing images and messages on your phone can reduce concentration. Children, especially those preparing for GCSEs, need as much concentration as possible, as they are preparing for very important exams that will decide the course of their future.

I can see where some people are coming from in saying that mobile phones should be permitted at break and lunch, but that brings the obvious risk of people taking pictures of other students or teachers without consent, which is an extreme safeguarding issue and can lead to cyberbullying. However, I agree with other Youth Assembly Members that there are better uses for such a large sum of money when disciplinary actions and cheaper alternatives exist. Thank you.

Daniel McGouran: It is my opinion that the regulation of mobile phone use in schools is entirely necessary, and that stricter regulation is very much warranted. Research has shown that the impact of phones on mental health, and phone overuse, has been massively detrimental. It is vital that we remove them from the classroom. While they are convenient for accessing learning resources such as Microsoft Teams, I feel that no amount of convenience excuses the serious impact that they have had on the mental well-being of young people. Thank you.

Charlie McFarland: I believe that mobile phones help people. I am sure we have all been sitting in class, feeling bored, when someone's phone goes off and the ringtone is a very humorous song. That greatly makes people's day better. Another thing about them is Kahoot!, which is pretty good for a lot of things.

People have been blaming phones for quite a lot of things. Going back to the days of the book, people blamed books for taking children's attention away. I believe that, once we get rid of all the phones, there will just be something else to take our attention away. I also believe that the pouches cost way too much. Thank you.

Christine Farry: I do not think that phones should be banned in schools, as I think that phones can enhance school life and assist learning if they are used for Blooket, Kahoot! or Quizlet Live or for subjects such as languages, sciences and maths. However, I do think that phones can become an issue if they start to have an effect on the lives of students. When I was in first year, everyone just sat on their phones during break and lunch and no one talked to anyone, which meant that it took a year or two for anyone to actually have any friends and not just sit on their phones. Teams can also be used for maths. When the teacher puts up a page of questions, if the students finish that page, they can move on to the next page without having to wait for everyone else to finish.

Alexandra Bowman: Personally, I am of the opinion that there is a major problem when it comes to mobile phone usage, especially in school. However, this is not necessarily the correct approach to finding a solution. Most teenagers use their phones daily, whether that is in school or outside. We rely on our phones, so completely removing them from us can cause chaos. That is evident in the fact that 45% of students across Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries feel anxious if their phones are not near them. That is because our generation has grown up during lockdowns, when we used technology in an attempt to continue our lives.

I am in lower sixth, and this ban directly affects me. For example, when doing a biology practical, you are required to take photos during the experiment. Without a phone, that becomes increasingly difficult. Many teenagers already struggle with poor mental health and have many things to worry about as it is. A phone ban in school will create more problems than it will solve, never mind the fact that there are so many things that this substantial sum of money can be put towards, such as building better schools or funding hospitals. In conclusion, this ban will only have a negative effect on the majority of people.

Catherine Fogarty: Although the phone rule can have many benefits, I have to disagree with it. At the start of this academic year, my school banned phones. That is due to the older students abusing the opportunity to use their phones. Phones are also banned during break and lunch, and I do not find that very fair at all. Although phones can help us with our work, they can also cause distractions, yet some learners listen to music or take notes on their phones. I also feel that people who have dyspraxia need their phones as they cannot read their writing, and it might also help a teacher with marking their work.

I also disagree with the pouches. They are very expensive, and all that money could be used for the greater good. I feel that if pouches are really necessary, you can just turn off the phones instead. Although it helps with grades and leads to better behaviour in my school, it can also not help at all due to some people's mental health issues and disabilities. I have to walk an hour to school every single day, and I have clubs afterwards. Sometimes, when clubs are cancelled, I have to walk back home in the rain, and that is really awful. I cannot get a lift on the way back because I cannot message my parents with my phone.

Harrison Kerr: First, I would like to say that I agree with limited access to phones in the classroom. However, I believe that a blanket ban on phones during the school day is not the correct solution. The national behaviour survey found that 29% of secondary-school pupils — 40% for Key Stage 4 — reported mobile phones being used without permission in most of their lessons. It is a problem, and it needs to be addressed. However, phone-free solutions such as the pouch scheme are extremely expensive and unnecessary when teachers could simply ask pupils to place their phone in a box at the start of the period and receive it back at the end of the period. I understand that that also means that pupils would have access to their phones during break and lunch, but the issues regarding this can be easily addressed on a provisional basis. Additionally, that would allow teachers to distribute phones to students when they need to use them, for example, for Kahoot! or Google Classroom.

Rory Brown: I acknowledge the special circumstances, such as special educational needs, that were outlined by the Minister. However, I believe that that would ostracise children with those needs, as they would be able to carry their phones and other students may view that as unfair. I also believe that the idea of phones being addictive and bad things on phones are not the school's responsibility to sort. Banning phones in schools would not be of benefit: in fact, I think that it would make things worse. I feel that it is the

responsibility of parents and schools to teach children about responsible use of phones rather than banning them to avoid that.

Mia Green: I believe that phones should be banned in schools because they disrupt teaching and learning. This year, I will be making very important decisions regarding my GCSEs and, in class, I want to be learning as much as I can. However, that is being held back by the teacher having to constantly shout at people about phones.

The other issue with phones in schools is that it is a huge safeguarding matter. People can take photos of others without their consent and say horrible things, which could destroy someone's self-esteem. However, I do not agree with spending £200,000, as that is way too much money.

Katelyn Doherty: I think that phones should be allowed in schools but only to be used when asked to by teachers, as it can be a more fun and active way of learning, or for playing learning games such as Kahoot!, for example, or for an emergency that has to be attended to. I also believe that young people should be consulted on this matter, as it affects them the most.

Leon Cyriac: I agree with most of the points that have been made, such as magnetic pouches being a waste of money. My school has a "not seen, not heard" rule, so if your phone is seen or heard during the school day without a teacher's permission, it will be taken off you and returned at the end of the day. That ensures that students can socialise without the use of mobile phones and that phones can still be used with a teacher's consent for educational purposes such as revision. The "not seen, not heard" rule has zero cost and is extremely effective.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Blair): We have about seven or eight minutes left, or possibly six or seven. I am going to try to get as many Members to speak as possible. Please continue to indicate in the meantime.

Ciaran Creber: The Education Minister has put aside £250,000 for a project that has not had much input from students and young people who will be affected the most by it. It is not a full project, but a pilot to see whether the full project is worth it. The Education Minister could have spent that money on something much more useful, such as repairing schools and their facilities. Instead, the Minister and his Department chose to spend the money on magnetic pouches to store our phones in during school hours. I have spoken to a few parents on this subject and the majority were unsupportive of the proposed project.

Daniel Gracey: I feel that phones make students feel more comfortable in school, and they should be allowed in the classroom. Picture this: you come into school on your first day, missing your parents already, and the only thing that you can think about is the end of the school day slowly edging closer, so that you can see them again. Then, your only connection to them is cut off, and you start panicking. All those worrying thoughts flood your mind, and you are drowning in them. You simply cannot focus, all because your phone is taken away: it has been stolen from you, without any of your thoughts being taken into account. Phones can help students to feel supported.

Even though there are negatives, the positives vastly outweigh them.

3.45 pm

Cara Ní Cheallaigh: According to the NHS, one out of 11 people has diabetes, and two out of three diabetics use a Dexcom. For anyone who does not know, a Dexcom is a device that tracks a diabetic's blood sugar without them having to prick their finger. It sends their bloods automatically to their phone device.

The pouches that the Assembly is considering are magnetic, ergo they will block signal. For diabetics, checking their blood is a regular occurrence and vital for their health. Diabetics are not the only ones affected by this; others include people who use heart rate monitors to check their heart rate via a phone. Were young people in those situations considered in the devising of the pilot scheme? How will their needs be met if the policy is implemented? If exclusions were made, what would they say if the exclusions were abused? A quarter of a million pounds could buy around 80,000 school dinners and thousands of medical resources and products. Why buy the pouches when we can just use hit "Power off"?

James Maginn: I would like to add briefly to the comments made by my fellow Youth Assembly Members.

In March this year, the Education Authority stated that, by the end of 2024, over three quarters of all schools in Northern Ireland would enter the red. A £25,000 pilot scheme to be implemented in just 10 schools seems almost outrageous. Could the Minister not find a more pressing issue on which to spend his Department's dwindling funds?

Shu ya Cheung: I am strongly against the ban on mobile phones in school. The misuse of mobile phones is not a structural problem in schools but a behavioural problem among students. In most schools, mobile phones are prohibited from being used during class. A behavioural problem is not something that can easily be fixed with a quarter of a million pounds. When students need to do independent study during May for their GCSEs, they will have to face distractions from their phone, and they might be left unsure of how to deal with them. Instead, the money could be invested in teaching students how to cope with distractions, given that understanding how to deal with distractions is a skill that students must learn for later life and work.

Weronika McNulty: I do not support a complete ban on phones in school, as that would make them look as though they are something negative, which is not true. Phones can be used for educational purposes, for our safety and for staying in contact with our parents when we go to and from school. If a bus is cancelled or we have to ask our parents something whilst we are in school, how can we do that without our phone? A complete ban would cause so much unnecessary stress for young people and their parents.

Darragh Kerr: Mobile phones can both help and hinder young people's education. I do not agree that students should not be able to use their mobile phone at break and lunch, as using them gives them a chance to relax, catch up with family and friends and do what they enjoy, as long as phone use is accompanied by proper supervision. At the same time, safeguarding for students is very pertinent to the guidance. For example, taking photographs of other students in school can catalyse bullying and harassment, which is why supervision of mobile phone usage should be facilitated. The multitude of skills that phones have to be considered, as they can act as a great academic tool for many. If schools are to tighten the rules on phones, many students who do not have access to iPads or laptops may miss out on parts of their education, especially in schools where iPads and laptops are not provided, placing those students at an unjustified disadvantage.

Ellie Clarke: A common defence that I have heard of the Bill is that it will reduce cyberbullying in schools and help with its subsequent impact on mental health. However, the idea that online bullying will be combated by a ban on mobile phones in schools is outlandish. People send and receive threatening, discriminatory and insulting messages not while they are in the same classroom as their peer but when they are in the four walls of their home. Parents and guardians have a responsibility to monitor their children's use of language towards others while online. Banning mobile phones in schools is only performative in any promises that it makes to reduce cyberbullying and its subsequent impact on mental health.

Catherine Fogarty: Following on from what Ellie said, mobile phones can cause cyberbullying. However, when you go home, the bullying still happens online, and schools will not stop that. Without phones in school, instead of cyberbullying, bullying will happen in general, which is the reason that I wanted to point that out.

Nadia Mackiewicz: I agree with a ban on the use of mobile phones in school. However, I will point out one fact about the pouches: products are already being sold online to disable the pouches' magnetic feature, which will make it easier for students to take out their phones.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Blair): That concludes the debate on the motion on mobile phones. It is now time for Members to vote on the motion.

Question put.

The Youth Assembly divided: Ayes 62; Noes 2

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved:

"That this Youth Assembly notes the guidance issued by the Department of Education on 3 September 2024 on the use of mobile phones in schools; is concerned about the cost of the mobile phone pilot scheme; recognises the importance of integrating mobile technology into school life and teaching students about digital responsibility to prepare them for the future; and calls on the Minister of Education to consult with all stakeholders, including young people, in the development of policies and procedures to ensure mobile phones can be used responsibly during the school day."

Adjournment

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Blair): That concludes today's plenary session. Youth Assembly Members can be assured that the Youth Assembly team in the Northern Ireland Assembly will provide a summary of proceedings and the result of the vote to the Education Minister.

I thank you all for coming today, all who made the day possible and those who supported you here as well. I am sure that Members of the Youth Assembly join me in paying particular thanks to the Assembly teams that have facilitated the Youth Assembly, particularly the Youth Assembly team. We give our gratitude to them.

I look forward to seeing your work progress in the coming months. In closing, I give my sincere thanks to you for the work that you do between plenary sessions and your engagement with public bodies across the sector.

Adjourned at 4.02 pm.