



Just getting started....

The panel appointed to undertake the Independent Review of Education started work at the beginning of October. I was delighted and honoured to be asked to chair the group. There are five of us. Sir Gerry Loughran, a former head of Northern Ireland's civil service is vice-chair, with Marie Lindsay, Isabel Nisbet and Robin McLoughlin being the other members. If you are interested you can find short biographies [here](#).

Marie has very recently received the prestigious Pearson National Teaching Awards lifetime contribution award. When she appeared on the One Show, former US President Bill Clinton added his congratulations by video. Marie taught at St. Mary's College, Derry/Londonderry for 35 years and was Principal for her final 12. When asked what she was most proud of, Marie did not refer to exam passes or grades, simply saying she was most proud of "*the girls*".

We have had a very busy two months, learning about the system and familiarising ourselves with the key issues. We have met a wide range of organisations and read huge quantities of briefing materials. Essentially, we have been listening and learning.

We still have many more groups to meet. We are very keen to visit schools, colleges and other places of education. It is important that we engage as directly as possible with those who work in education, whether as teachers, lecturers, youth workers or in some other role. At the same time, we need to listen to children and young people, parents and other stakeholders such as employers. Our hope is to meet people face-to-face but the health emergency may limit our capacity to do this.

One of our first actions has been to launch an online survey which allows anyone with an interest in education in Northern Ireland to tell us what they think. It can be accessed [here](#). We hope that as many people as possible will take part. The survey is short and responding is very straightforward. Of course, those who want to provide

us with more detailed comments are welcome to go into as much depth as they wish and send us additional material.

It is vital that our review is informed by as many opinions as possible. I urge you to take the time to respond to our survey.

Keir Bloomer (Chair)