

Education Authority Youth Service

Regional Assessment of Need 2023



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Introduction

The Department of Education (DE) invests approximately £38m for youth work in Northern Ireland to support and encourage children and young people to mature and reach their potential as valued individuals and responsible citizens. DE notes that effective youth work supports their personal and social development needs and involves them in shaping the services designed to meet these needs to improve their own skills and life chances to create a better future for themselves and their communities. Effective youth work therefore contributes to the DE vision of every child or young person achieving their full potential at each stage of their development.

According to the National Youth Agency, youth work offers children and young people safe spaces to explore their identity, experience decision-making, increase their confidence, develop inter-personal skills, and think through the consequences of their actions. This leads to better informed choices, changes in activity and improved outcomes for children and young people.

Youth work provides safe environments and positive support through practical and social non-formal education. It removes barriers, giving socially excluded children and young people a safe place to go, someone to talk to who can quietly understand and assess their needs and help them to become active and positive participants in their society for both their own gain and public benefit.

Volunteers play an integral role in helping to facilitate and support youth work practice and sessions. Volunteer youth workers provide a high percentage of direct work with children and young people through youth clubs and youth projects, and the role of the volunteer is central to youth work provision in Northern Ireland. However, since Covid-19 there has been a considerable drop in the number of people volunteering.

The Youth Service Regional Assessment of Need brings together information from a range of different sources which include national and local statistics, reviews of evidenced best practice, local population profile information and local views from children and young people, youth workers and stakeholders through consultations.

A key objective of this Assessment of Need is to establish the level of need for Youth Service provision in children and young people from the age of 4-25 years. The core purpose of the Youth Service is to provide opportunities to help children and young people learn about themselves, others, and society, through non-formal educational activities building social and personal development.

This needs analysis will inform future planning and funding throughout the service for the next three years. The purpose of the review of Youth Service provision is to achieve a closer match between the needs of children and young people and the services to which they will have access to.

An Assessment of Need is the first phase of the process of informing the direction of a policy or strategy to support a specific group or issue. The purpose of the Regional Assessment of Need is to identify the needs and inequalities facing children and young people and vulnerable groups whose needs are not currently being met and who experience poor educational, health or social outcomes.

Understanding the needs of children and young people, demographic changes, and the geographical differences in which they reside allows planners, managers, and providers to ensure that the right services are available in the right place at the right time.

An Area Profile of Northern Ireland can be found on the [EA Youth Service Funding Site](#)

Executive Summary

Planning for the Regional Assessment of Need began in April 2020. This included a range of stakeholder, consultation and shared events, in-depth desktop research and online surveys with children and young people and other key stakeholders.

Planning youth provision is a response to local and regional needs and adapted for the children and young people involved, the money and resources available, and the staff and volunteers available to deliver. Strategic planning of youth services is informed by an analysis of the educational and social needs of children and young people as articulated by them and their communities and reflects wider DE policy and is delivered in response to the assessed need for youth work interventions, prioritised age ranges and priority groups.

Planning ensures decisions are evidence based, allows managers to organise staff, resources, and programmes effectively and efficiently, provides direction and purpose and allows us to create high quality provision to meet the needs of children and young people.

The purpose of the Regional Assessment of Need is to identify the needs and inequalities facing children and young people and vulnerable groups whose needs are not currently being met or who experience poor educational, health or social outcomes. This Regional Assessment of Need is based on six areas which look at the diverse challenges facing children and young people and they include:

Finding Our Space in Education

- There are many key factors involved in the learning journey for our children and young people
- That journey should involve key organisations, with the school acting as the lead, supporting pupils through a multi-agency and early intervention approach
- That the current curriculum requires review with the voice of children and young people essential to how any future framework is established
- There should be inclusive educational spaces that recognise the individual requirements of every learner

Healthy Minds and Bodies

- Messaging for children and young people on health issues should be tailored to them
- The focus of services should reflect the balance of provision outlined in the emotional health and wellbeing framework
- Services need to be developed that reflect the localised nature of health issues
- Child friendly resources and linked services that avoid the retelling of information repeatedly would improve both the experience and outcomes for children and young people

Safety to Thrive

- Supporting children and young people only occurs if their basic needs are being met
- Services delivered to children and young people should be founded on their rights and needs
- Keeping children and young people safe is everyone's responsibility
- Education and support are more effective and efficient than enforcement and imposing sanctions

Sharing Spaces and Minds

- Young people have access to safe shared spaces
- Positive attitudes are promoted to tackle prejudice and discrimination

The Cost to Live

- Increased access to training and employment opportunities for young people alongside financial management programmes
- Awareness is raised about the challenges those growing up in poverty face.
- Practical solutions are delivered in schools and youth centres to support those presenting as cold and hungry

The Biggest Picture

- Global issues are discussed in school and youth centres
- Young people are given opportunities to participate in social action and social enterprise projects to explore global issues

The review also reflects on the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had on the lives of children and young people and considers how the imminent cost-of-living crisis will impact the most marginalised and vulnerable.

Youth work continues to play a significant role in raising standards in education. Increasing both the access to, and the quality of, core youth work provision for children and young people is essential and fundamental to supporting any further targeted work. When this is achieved collaboratively, the benefits to children and young people in terms of youth work and wider outcomes are enhanced significantly.

Methodology

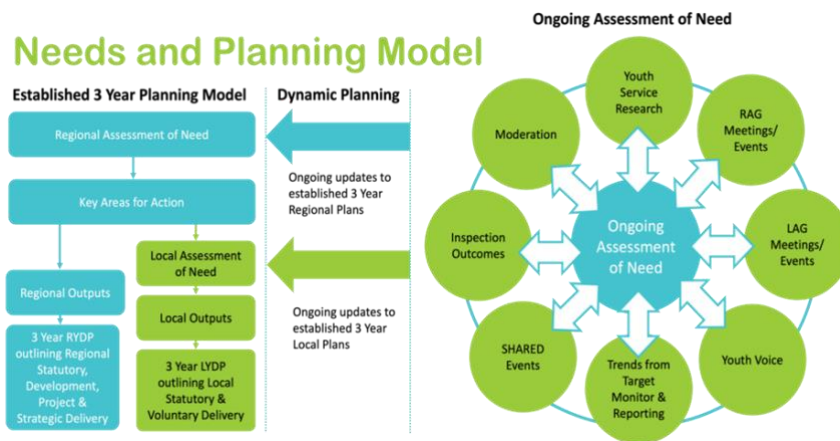
Priorities for Youth maintains that the strategic planning and resourcing of youth work must address the assessed need for youth work interventions. Therefore, an effective assessment of need is critical, given that the requirements of Department of Education funded youth work, must be set within the context of prioritised age ranges, priority groups and a clear definition of the need for all youth work interventions.

Quantifying the needs of children and young people in such a way throughout Northern Ireland is a complex and challenging task. For these purposes, Northern Ireland is a large geographical area with broad ranging and diverse needs and issues and as such there is a huge variation in needs in areas across the region.

In order to address these variations and complexities, a range of quantitative and qualitative research methods have been used to inform this Assessment of Need. The most up to date data and statistics from a range of government and administrative sources along with recent, relevant reports and research have been collated, analysed, and examined. An extensive consultation with children and young people and key stakeholders has also been undertaken.

This information from these various sources, has been integrated and compiled into this report to highlight the key issues and levels of need affecting children and young people in Northern Ireland. Both quantitative and qualitative data has been compiled to inform this needs assessment. The information and datasets used in the assessment of need process came from a variety of sources, including the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Department of Education, Health Trusts and other government and statutory agencies. These datasets were also related to a range of educational, health and socio-economic outcomes for children and young people with a clear focus on disadvantage and inequality.

Other research which has been used and quoted in this report has originated from various government, academic, voluntary and charity sources. All the information used was publicly available and unambiguous in their findings.



Desktop Research

The initial stages of the Regional Assessment of Need involved comprehensive desktop research. This was used to gather and analyse information from a range of sources. These sources were generally in the form of published data and primary and secondary research published by government departments or other statutory agencies. This information, along with a review of recent, relevant literature originating from other academic, government and charitable sources, helped identify key priority areas of need throughout Northern Ireland. Evidence gathered from these documents and reports was used to support and verify the Education Authority consultations, helping inform the discussion of the various themes throughout the report.

Surveys

Stakeholders' voices, especially those of children and young people, are important to the Department of Education, the Education Authority and the wider Youth Service community in the design, delivery, and evaluation of Youth Service provision.

Children and young people from a range of statutory and voluntary youth groups involved in DE funded Youth Work responded to an online survey of their needs and preferences for youth work. Young people not currently involved in youth services were also canvassed. A total of 6,475 survey responses were elicited.

A similar survey based on the same areas of enquiry was designed and distributed to youth workers and volunteers. There were 585 respondents to this survey. Youth workers and volunteers from a range of statutory and voluntary youth groups involved in DE funded youth work took part in the survey.

Focus Groups

The focus groups allowed for the clarification and testing of the survey findings with a view to better understanding the needs of children and young people, both met and unmet. They

also allowed young people to articulate their views and experiences in their own words and voices. This made it possible to uncover ideas, issues and themes which had not previously been considered and allowed the participants to be given an input into future decision-making processes.

More than 50 focus groups were facilitated throughout Northern Ireland, and many were hosted by our partners from the voluntary sector.

Stakeholder Engagement and SHARED Events

The Education Authority Youth Service organised a series of Stakeholder Engagement events looking into:

- Needs of children and young people after lockdown
- Digital divide
- The impact of drugs and alcohol on children and young people
- The needs of newcomer children and young people
- The needs of young parents
- Interests of children and young people
- Volunteering
- Violence against young women

These events were co-designed and delivered by young people. Along with young people, key stakeholders from a range statutory, voluntary and community organisations attended and participated in these events.

The findings from these stakeholder events have also been used to inform the Assessment of Need.

Consultation and Engagement Events

The EA Youth Service Planning and Monitoring Team and Participation Team consulted and engaged with children and young people throughout Northern Ireland on behalf of government departments and other Education Authority sections. These events focused on issues facing children and young people and included the following themes of enquiry, with the final reports and associated findings incorporated into this assessment of need:

- Special Educational Needs
- Suspensions and Expulsions
- Poverty
- Area Planning and Sustainable Schools
- Climate and the Environment
- Asylum Seekers and Refugees

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Children and Young People (CYP) Strategy
- Young Carers
- Domestic Violence
- Carers, in Partnership with Ulster University

A key concept in the design of the needs assessment methodology is participatory action research as a key first step in planning for change, recognising that people are the experts on their own lives and are best placed themselves to articulate their life experiences. This approach has therefore been applied to more effectively include vulnerable children and young people that are often excluded from decision making processes. These young people include minority ethnic groups, those with additional needs, those from the most disadvantaged areas, marginalised or isolated children and young people, children looked after, young carers, and those from other Section 75 groups.

Policy and Legislation

[Education Order \(1986\)](#)

Requirements for the statutory provision of the Youth Service were set out in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. The duties it placed on the five regional Education and Library Boards transferred to the Education Authority in April 2015. These duties are to secure the provision of adequate facilities for recreational, social, physical, cultural and Youth Service activities and for ancillary services to education.

[Priorities for Youth \(2013\)](#)

Priorities for Youth, published in October 2013, sets out the positive contribution that the Youth Service can play in achieving the Department of Education's vision that every young person can achieve to his or her full potential at each stage of his and her development.

[Children and Young People Strategy \(2020 –2030\)](#)

The Strategy for Children and Young People 2020-2030 is the overarching strategy from which will flow a variety of cross-departmental, multi-agency plans and more detailed topic-specific strategies and programmes.

The strategy sits within the context of the United Nations international human rights conventions including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the rights of children and young people with disabilities which are encompassed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government; the Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015; and the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the basis of all of UNICEF's work. It is the most complete statement of children's rights ever produced and is the most widely ratified international human rights treaty in history.

The Convention has 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child's life and set out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to. It also explains how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights.

[Department for Education Business Plan](#)

This Business Plan reflects the key activities for the Department of Education in 2022/23 under the following eight strategic priorities: Make learning accessible for all, improve the quality of learning for our children and young people, look after our children and young people, support those who need more help with learning, improve the learning

environment, tackle disadvantage and underachievement, support and develop our education workforce and effectively manage, review and transform our education system.

[Northern Ireland Act \(1998\)](#)

Section 75 of the Act requires public authorities designated for the purposes of the Act to comply with two statutory duties.

The first duty is the Equality of Opportunity duty, which requires public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the nine equality categories of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without.

The second duty, the Good Relations duty, requires that public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, and racial group.

[Community Relations, Equality and Diversity \(CRED\) Policy \(2011\)](#)

The Department of Education launched the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) policy for Youth Services and schools in March 2011. The aim of the CRED Policy was to contribute to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others by providing them, in formal and non-formal education settings, with opportunities to build relationships with those from different backgrounds and traditions within the resources available.

[The Shared Education Act \(NI\) 2016](#)

This Act provides a definition of shared education and confers a duty on DE to encourage, facilitate and promote shared education. The Act also confers a power on relevant arms-length bodies, including the Education Authority and the Youth Council for Northern Ireland to encourage and facilitate shared education.

[Fresh start \(2015\)](#)

The Fresh Start Agreement (November 2015) provides a set of inter-related and high-level proposals which seek to overcome some of the most challenging and intractable issues within Northern Ireland. One of the key issues addressed within A Fresh Start is that of legacy and the impact of paramilitary activity.

Among the strategic actions to end paramilitarism, is a commitment to a cross-departmental programme to prevent vulnerable young people becoming involved in

paramilitary activity. In 2016 the NI Executive published its Action Plan on Tackling Paramilitary Activity, criminality, and organised crime. The Action Plan states that the NI Executive should commission appropriate initiatives aimed at promoting lawfulness in schools and through Youth Work in communities.

[The New Decade, New Approach Deal \(2020\)](#)

The New Decade New Approach Deal set out to establish an external, independent review of education provision, with a focus on securing greater efficiency in delivery costs, raising standards, access to the curriculum for all pupils, and the prospects of moving towards a single education system.

They would establish an expert group to examine and propose an action plan to address links between persistent educational underachievement and socio-economic background, including the long-standing issues facing working-class, Protestant boys and deliver a new special educational needs framework to support young people with special needs to achieve their full potential.

[A life deserved - A Strategy for Looked After Children \(2021\)](#)

This joint Department of Education and Department of Health strategy committed to working together to deliver both the aims and commitments it makes to care-experienced children and young people. The strategy aimed to create the conditions to provide a system of care and education that nurtures them, always acts in their best interests, and secures the best possible outcomes for them to increase their chances of a happy and successful adult life.

[Racial Equality Strategy 2015 - 2025](#)

This strategy established a framework for action by government departments to tackle racial inequalities and to open opportunity for all, to eradicate racism and hate crime and to promote good race relations and social cohesion.

[Rural Needs Act \(2016\)](#)

The previous commitment to rural proofing was strengthened with the introduction of the Rural Needs Act. Rural proofing is the process by which policies, strategies and plans are assessed to determine whether they have a differential impact on rural areas and, where appropriate, adjustments are made to take account of rural circumstances.

[Review of Irish Medium Education \(2008\)](#)

This report, referenced in Priorities for Youth, places a requirement on the Department of Education to encourage and support informal opportunities for learning through the medium of Irish in the youth sector.

Northern Ireland in Numbers



There has been a 5.1% increase in the Northern Ireland Population between 2011 and 2021



There has been a 1.6% decrease in the youth service target age groups over the last 10 years

Youth Service Target Age Ranges



123,278 aged 4-8 years
(↓2.2%)



116,612 aged 14-18 years
(↑2%)



128,033 aged 9-13 years
(↓0.5%)



155,341 aged 19-25 years
(↓2.4%)

Urban and Rural Areas

34.5% of children and young people aged 0-25 years live in a rural area this is 1.6% lower than from the last Regional Assessment of Needs



Newcomer Pupils

There has been a 20% increase in the number of newcomer pupils in Northern Ireland since the last RAON. This equates to 18,356 newcomer children and young people.

28% of newcomer pupils are entitled to free school meals.

Top 5 languages spoken by newcomer pupils: polish 24.5%, Lithuanian 12.5% Arabic 7.5%, Romanian 6.9%.

Irish Travellers and Roma Children

There is a 7.7% increase in the number of Traveller children and young people attending schools in Northern Ireland from last RAON.

There is a 18% increase of Roma children and young people attend schools in Northern Ireland. from the last RAON.



Children Looked After (In Care)

There are 3,624 children looked after in NI as of the 31 March 2022. This is the highest number recorded since the introduction of the Children NI Order 1995.



This is an increase of 16.6% (515) from the last RAON

256 of these children looked after are on the child protection register.

This is an increase of 66% (102) since the last RAON

22% of the children in care had been looked after for less than a year, with 33% looked after for five years or longer.

Free School Meals Entitled

98,804 pupils (29%) in Northern Ireland are eligible for free school meals. (2021/21)



This is the same as the last RAON.

Children in Need

There are 24,545 children in Northern Ireland were known to Social Services as a child in need as of 31 March 2022.



This represents a 9.5% (2,131) increase from March 2020.

Some 34,969 children were referred to Social Services during 2021/22, the largest proportion of these children were referred by the Police (36.4%) This represents a 3.2% (1,084) increase from March 2020.

Child Protection Register



There are 2,346 children listed on the Child Protection Register, as of 31 March 2022.

This represents an increase of 2.2% (48) from 2020.



The most prevalent cohort on the register was the 5 to 11 years (36%) followed by 1 to 4 years (26.5%).

The main reasons for a child being on the Child Protection Register were Physical abuse and Neglect which accounted for 53% of all those on the register.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)



14,019 school aged children have been diagnosed with autism which represents a prevalence rate of 4.7% of the school aged population.

This represents an increase of 11.8% (1,475) from 2020



Prevalence rate of autism is almost 3 times higher in males than females

Prevalence rate of autism is 36% higher in the most deprived decile compared to the Northern Ireland average.

Youth Homelessness



There are 3,495 children aged up to 17 years old presented as statutorily homeless between January and June 2022

which is an increase of 12.3% from the previous 6 months.

Temporary Accommodation



3,913 children aged up to 17 years are living in temporary accommodation.

This represents an increase of 47% since July 2019.



Top 3 types of temporary accommodation

- Private single lets
- Voluntary sector hostels
- Hotel/B&B

Young Carers

There are 8,480 young carers in Northern Ireland aged 0-17 years.

According to census data (2011) it shows that there are 21,921 young carers aged up to 24 years old in Northern Ireland.

56% are female with 44% male (Census 2011).

Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)



There are currently 15,000 young people aged 16-24 Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) as of June 2022.

This is equivalent to 7.5% of all those aged 16 to 24 years in NI.

The number who were NEET decreased significantly over the year by 11,000.



This represents a 2.7% decrease from the last RAON, which represents 5,000 young people aged 16-24 years)

Youth Justice

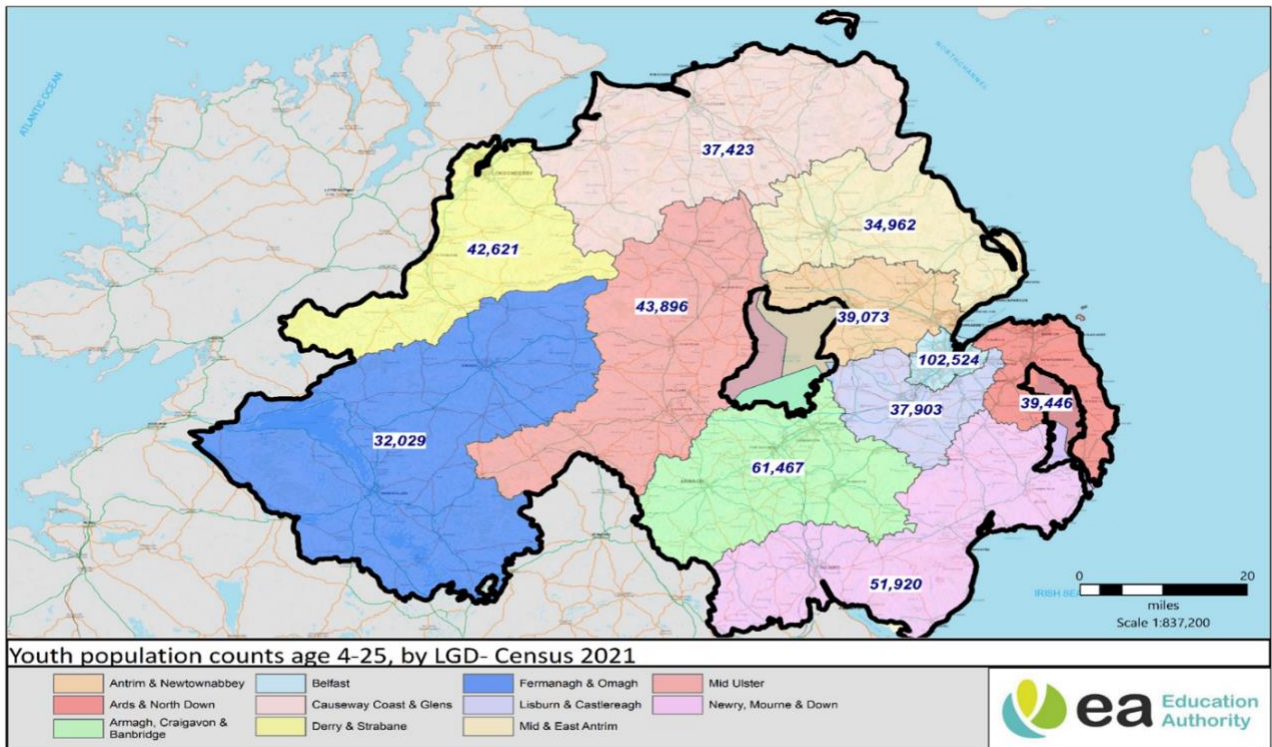
There were 2,267 cases relating to young people coming into formal contact with the criminal justice system in 2020-21. This is a decrease of 456 (16.7%) from 2019-20.



The Public Prosecution Service (PPS) assessed 49.4% (1,121) of cases suitable for resolution through the Youth Engagement process and 47.9% (1,085) as not suitable.

The median time for a case to be dealt with through the Youth Engagement process in 2020-21 was 78 days, an increase of 29 days from the median time recorded in 2019-20.

Youth Population by Council Area





Chapter 2 – Finding our Space in Education

*The main hope of a nation lies in the proper education of its youth.
(Erasmus).*



Total Number of Pupils in Primary Schools – 182,142 (51.6%)



Total Number of Pupils in Post Primary – 121,901 (34.5%)



Total Number of Pupils in Integrated Education Schools – 25,794 (7%)



Total Number of Pupils in Irish Medium Schools - 7,232 (2%)



Total Number of Pupils in Special Schools – 6,653 (1.9%)



Total Number of Pupils in Primary EOTAS – 35 (+15 on September 2021)



Total Number of Pupils in Post Primary EOTAS – 332 (+29 on September 2021)



Total number of Pupils supported by ETA – 171 (+6 on September 2021)

Educational attainment in Northern Ireland has increased over the last number of years, however, there remains a tail of underachievement which is prevalent among vulnerable groups, including those living in deprived areas, having a Special Educational Need or disability, being a young person looked after, being a newcomer, being a carer, coming from the Travelling community or another minority group and being from a Section 75 group. This list is not exhaustive, however, failure to address the gap in educational attainment from these groups will ensure that vulnerable young people will continue to face a future with limited opportunities and greater social and economic challenges.

Education is integral to the development of a person, it is the process where a child or young person acquires knowledge, develops essential skills, learns social norms, understands right from wrong and prepares them for adult life. A purposeful education will also instil confidence and resilience to help children and young people overcome challenges, achieve, and succeed.

A failure to address educational inequalities will result in vulnerable children and young people continuing to have greater social and economic challenges and have limited opportunities to participate in their communities.

The Bigger Picture

The structure of schooling in Northern Ireland remains disjointed, with considerable new growth in both Integrated and Irish Medium Education. The Independent Review of Education commenced in October 2021 and was a key commitment within New Decade, New Approach. An interim report was published in October 2022. The aim of the review is to offer a vision of what excellent education, at every level, might look like in the years leading up to the mid-century.

The review will focus on curriculum and assessment, tackling disadvantage among all age-groups, providing improved services for very young children and learners with special educational needs, and making sure that education is properly resourced.

Young people who drop out of education and learning at an early age are vulnerable to unemployment, poverty, and involvement in risk-taking behaviours. To understand why this happens, it is important to recognise why this is happening and consider how factors such as income poverty, gender, disability, family breakdowns and other social factors can be tackled.

Covid-19 and an extended period without school has ensured that many young people feel more anxious and less prepared for their exams and that they feel that they are falling behind. Young people also noted that too much emphasis was placed on exams and not enough of their social and personal development.

Education has been hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. School closures in response to the pandemic highlighted the issues affecting access to education. For many children and young people education is not simply about learning, it is also about social interaction with one's peers.

Having a View on Education

Feedback from young people revealed that there is a growing consensus that the curriculum should be more relevant and practical, addressing key concerns and issues that they face. Young people understand and accept the importance of learning English and Maths but challenge the focus on academic qualifications as an indicator of success. More emphasis should be placed on course work, with more apprenticeships and work experience opportunities being made available.

Children and young people want access to a more diverse and inclusive curriculum. They want opportunities to participate in educational activities that are inclusive and open to all and have access to vocational courses and life-skills training.

They recognised that those with additional needs may require specialist support and wanted more multi-agency work to develop inclusive strategies to meet their needs. They also highlighted that youth workers had a key role to play in supporting those with additional learning needs.

Young people also recognised that youth work offers a diverse range of programmes which are valued as they complement and enhance the learning provided through formal schooling. It was suggested that youth work can help young people overcome barriers to their learning by providing opportunities to gain qualifications, to volunteer and to develop a range of skills and attributes that will improve their life outcomes as individuals and as contributors to their local community and the wider economy.

Young people want to be part of societal and education reform, with them having a voice in decisions that are made at local and Government levels. They believe that education and learning should not be solely exam orientated and that their school experience should be meaningful and enjoyable, with a strong focus on mental health and wellbeing, essential life skills and vocational training.

Young people recognise the importance of education and learning and how their experiences at school and youth centres have developed their learning skills, helping them prepare for adult life and shaping their future career pathways.

Children and young people have noted that the formal education system does not always meet or is responsive to their needs and learning styles. They identified several barriers to their learning which include digital learning, a proscriptive curriculum and access to after-school provision.

Where Support is Required

Children and Young People's Transitional Journey Through Education

Good attendance at school is not just valuable it is essential. Going to school helps children and young people develop a sense of responsibility and enables them to form good habits that prepare them for the world of work.

Attendance rates in schools in Northern Ireland are:

- Primary schools – 95.6% (equivalent to 8.4 days of school lost each year)
- Post-Primary schools – 93.4% (equivalent to 12.5 school days lost each year)
- Special Schools – 89.7% (equivalent to 19.6 school days lost each year)

Key Stage 2 – Key Stage 3

The transition from primary to post primary school is a significant milestone in a child's education and can be characterised by the multiple challenges that they experience, specifically the move from childhood to adolescence, from one educational setting to another and from established social groups into new social relations.

Academic selection and the failure to obtain a place in one's nearest post-primary or school of choice present immediate challenges for some children at a young age. Moving from primary to secondary school involves a degree of anxiety for many pupils. They must adapt to a more challenging school environment with different structures and expectations.

Young people noted that a barrier to accessing education starts with the uncertainty of getting a place in the school of their choice. Many of the young people consulted, highlighted that, due to issues around academic selection, they were unable to gain entry to their post-primary school of choice. Much of this was attributed to the nature of academic selection which had a discriminating effect on the academically less able, or "late bloomers" to the extent that Grammar schools ought to lower grade boundaries to accommodate more pupils, whereas others were in favour of abolishing the grammar school system altogether.

Key Stage 3 – Key Stage 4

Feedback from young people revealed that there is a growing consensus that the curriculum should be more relevant and practical, addressing key concerns and issues that they face. Young people understand and accept the importance of learning English and Maths but challenge the focus on academic qualifications as an indicator of success. More emphasis should be placed on course work, with more apprenticeships and work experience opportunities and career advice being made available. Appropriate succession routes and clear pathways will ensure fewer young people will progress towards not being in employment, education or training (NEET).

Young people also reported that they do not get sufficient information, advice, and support for life beyond education and towards employment. They felt that generic responses are often given to them which results in poor selection of subjects and accredited pathways for their Key Stage 4 journey.

Key Stage 4 – Post-16

Young people moving from Key Stage 4 face significant challenges as they make the transition from Key Stage 4 to Post-16. These include exam pressures and future pathways into further education, training, or employment.

Achieving in School

The cancellation of GCSE and A-Level exams in 2019/20 and 2020/21 due to the pandemic forced schools to predict pupils' grades using the centre-assessed grading system, which has caused controversy and anxiety for some. Importantly, given the new method of awarding grades, caution should be taken when drawing any conclusions relating to changes in students' performance.

- 92.1% of young people were recorded as achieving at least five GCSEs at grades A*-C or equivalent, which has increased by 0.8 of a percentage point from 2019/20 (91.3%) and by 10.4 percentage points from five years ago (81.7% in 2015/16) to 92.1% in 2020/21
- 77.7% of young people were recorded as achieving at least five GCSEs at grades A*-C or equivalent including GCSE English and maths has increased by 1.5 percentage points from 2019/20 (76.2%) and has increased by 10.0 percentage points since 2015/16
- In 2020/21, 82.5% of female year 12 pupils achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C or equivalent including English and Maths compared to 73.1% of male year 12 pupils

Irish Medium

Irish medium education is education provided in an Irish speaking school or unit. The Department of Education has a duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish medium education.

- There are 83 Irish Medium school settings across Northern Ireland, including pre-schools, primary schools, and post-primary schools
- 7,232 pupils attend these schools

There are currently 24 Irish Medium youth centres operating across Northern Ireland. There is concern among the Irish Medium sector concerning Irish Language youth work provision and its associated funding. They have expressed concerns that without a statutory requirement for youth provision to support the immersive model of delivery the resulting competition for voluntary sector delivery could result in a reduction in funding that had previously been set aside in the legacy Irish Medium scheme. The promotion of paid staff positions over the development in volunteers which may not then be funded would have a negative impact on the centres.

When it Doesn't Go to Plan

A recent survey from Northern Ireland Kids Life and Times (2022) asked primary 7 school children if they had been bullied in school. Significantly, 32% of respondents had been bullied in school which equated for 29% of boys and 33% of girls.

Discrimination prejudiced based bullying and social isolation can impact a child or young person's educational outcomes and can also affect their overall health and wellbeing, loss of self-esteem, lack of motivation and depression and anxiety, leading them to withdraw from mainstream society.

Suspension and expulsion from school can have a range of unintended negative consequences for children and young people including poor educational outcomes and involvement in problem or risk-taking behaviours.

Often those suspended and excluded are those who can least afford to be absent from school. These children and young people already face significant challenges in their education and are at risk of poor educational outcomes. They are also more likely to disconnect from future learning opportunities.

- In 2020/21, 3,506 compulsory school age pupils were suspended from school an increase of 164 pupils compared to the 2019/20 academic year
- In 2020/21, 25 compulsory school age pupils were expelled from school an increase of 14 pupils compared to the 2019/20 academic year

Young people also reported that they were aware of peers being on reduced timetables or internal suspensions, mainly due to behavioural issues. It was stressed that this was because their peers failed to understand the curriculum or what they were being taught.

Key Next Steps

- 96.1% of School Leavers entered Education, Employment or Training

Remain in School and Progress towards Higher Education

Education is important for children and young people as it helps achieve academic growth, increases access to opportunities, develops positive attitudes about themselves and their learning and heightens aspirations and interests to support their career pathways.

Access Alternative Further Education

There are a range of alternative further education opportunities available to young people when they leave school. These vocational opportunities can be accessed at Regional or Catering colleges and generally involve a work placement.

Find Employment

Those leaving school with few qualifications tend to get employment in the retail or hospitality sector and will be on minimum wage with limited career progression pathways.

Hitting a Block

Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is a term employed for young people aged between 16 and 24 years who are no longer in the education system and who are not working or being trained for work.

- There are 15,000 young people (aged 16-24) in Northern Ireland who were not in education, employment, or training (NEET)
- This represents 7.5% of all young people aged 16-24
- 96.1% of school leavers were recorded as entering Education, Employment or Training

Where Support is Required

Special Schools

- 64,486 Pupils in Northern Ireland have a Special Educational Need (SEND Stage 1-3)
- 22,187 Pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs (Stage 3)

A Special school is one that caters specifically for children whose needs cannot be met within a mainstream setting. There are currently 39 Special Schools in Northern Ireland supporting 6,653 children and young people.

Education Other Than at School

EOTAS is educational provision for children with social, behavioural, emotional wellbeing issues who, without its provision, cannot sustain access to suitable education. There are currently 323 pupils accessing 26 EOTAS provisions in Northern Ireland.

The Online Space

Throughout Covid-19 and lockdowns schools and Youth Services supported children and young people through online learning. Digital learning ensured that children and young people could stay connected with their friends, teachers and youth workers and continue learning.

- 93% of Children and Young People (8-15) go online for approximately 13.5 hours per week

This form of learning still has value; however, it highlights the digital divide that exists between those who do not have access to equipment to access the learning or those from rural communities who had broadband issues.

The Informal Space

Youth Service

Youth Work offers young people safe spaces to explore their identity, experience decision-making, increase their confidence, develop inter-personal skills, and think through the consequences of their actions. This leads to better informed choices, changes in activity and improved outcomes for young people.

- 209,213 Children and Young People were engaged through Youth Programmes in 2021/22
- Approximately 1,600 registered youth services providers in NI
- 40% of Young People volunteer at least once a week
- 49% of Young People have volunteered in the past year
- 6,108 Young People gained accreditations through Youth Service Programmes

Outdoor Learning

Youth Service provides opportunities for our children and young people to engage in Outdoor Learning opportunities as part of either their school curriculum or through youth work programmes.

Recommendations

Young people find their place in education when:

- Effective partnerships and networks are created that value early intervention and prevention to support the educational needs of the most vulnerable
- Young people are consulted and heard alongside other community voices in the rollout of education interventions to support their learning
- Curriculum reform includes opportunities allowing them to explore inclusion, good relations, and cultural diversity. This will also include access to Relationship and Sexual Education and access to Environment and Climate Education
- There is increased capacity to collect, analyse and share information and data on the children and young people it works with, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised
- Provision is in place to address the diversity of educational needs across marginalised and vulnerable groups, including support for their families
- Access to relevant programmes and support, youth qualifications, essential life skills and CV Skills is available
- They are included in the consultations regarding curriculum reform.
- Planners are encouraged to engage with internal and external partners to provide creative and stimulating opportunities for young people

- The education system is inclusive and values everyone, regardless of their learning style, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality, or additional needs
- There are opportunities for young people to study vocational courses, which would require schools developing inclusive partnerships with regional colleges to make these courses more accessible
- There are sufficient transport links to support children and young people from rural communities who have missed out on after-school educational opportunities in both schools and youth clubs because of a lack of transport



Chapter 3 – Healthy Minds and Bodies

The more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely they will be to recover from trauma and thrive. Relationships are the agents of change and the most powerful therapy is human love. (Bruce Perry)

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is not just about being physically fit, it is also about being mentally and emotionally fit. Research has shown that enjoying a healthy lifestyle can improve one's physical appearance, increase one's lifespan, boost one's immunity against diseases as well as improving one's quality of life and mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

Common mental health issues affecting children and young people are severe and persistent behavioural problems and emotional and anxiety disorders. Children and young people from low-income families are four times more likely to experience mental health issues than those from higher income families.

Having poor mental health affects children and young people's educational attainment and their ability to form positive relationships which can lead to increased social isolation, diminished sense of happiness and self-worth and influence their future career opportunities.

Young people with mental health problems are more likely to engage in risk taking activity and alcohol and drug misuse. Among the determinants of poor mental health include socio-economic pressures, poor body image, social isolation, an unhealthy lifestyle, bullying and the risk of violence. Young people have themselves identified school, exams, and homework as the top three stress factors in determining their mental health.

Good health cannot be taken for granted. Health experts have highlighted that a balanced and nutritious diet, along with regular exercise and adequate rest and sleep are the key factors that contribute to one's general good health and mental and emotional wellbeing and ensure that good health is maintained.

Vulnerable and marginalised groups of children and young people and those from Section 75 groups, including children and young people looked after, those with special educational needs or a disability, those from ethnic minorities, young carers, young people identifying as LGBTQI+ or those who have experienced adverse childhood experiences are also more likely to have poorer health outcomes than their peers.

The Bigger Picture

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People supports and recommends the introduction of a Community Mental Health model across Northern Ireland, which bring GPs and Voluntary and Community sector organisations together to

develop local relationships and exchange local knowledge. This review also proposes the development of an action plan to strengthen advocacy, enhance peer support, and develop practice standards to evidence the involvement of young people in service development which would be key elements of a youth work approach.

World impacted by a global pandemic

Covid-19 and lockdowns had significant implications on the diet and nutritional health for many children and young people, with vulnerable groups such as homeless, those from low-income families or looked after groups being impacted most. This in turn had an adverse effect on their long-term physical health.

The pandemic was also a mental health risk for society. The uncertainty, the anxiety, the fear of becoming ill or seeing a loved one become ill, the loss of our normal routines, the difficulties of social connection, and in many cases the disruption to education had a profound impact on the nation's mental health.

- 23% of Young People in the UK have said they will never recover from the emotional impact of the pandemic
- 48% of Young People in the UK report experiencing a mental health problem since the start of the pandemic

Many experienced increased difficulties with their mental and emotional wellbeing during lockdown, including stress, loneliness, and worry. Others had trouble sleeping or had irregular sleep patterns which they believed was having negative effect on their schoolwork, family life and in some instances led to behavioural issues. These young people further recognised the mental health crisis engulfing society in Northern Ireland, which has been exacerbated by the recent Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns and as a result they understood the importance of good physical health and maintaining an active lifestyle in maintaining better mental health, particularly sport and exercise.

Development of the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework

The Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework was launched on 26 February 2021.

- 70% of People who die by suicide are not known to Mental Health Services

The main emphasis of the Framework is to support educational settings to promote emotional health and wellbeing at a universal level, through a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach, and providing early and enhanced support for those children and young people who may be at risk or showing signs of needing further help.

The Youth Service have embedded the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework into all aspects of its delivery.

Having a View on Health

As more children and young people than ever are experiencing mental issues which are impacting on their lives including, home, social, school and friendships they want access to support through multi-agency approaches. They also believed that more consistent training was required for teachers and youth workers working with those experiencing mental health challenges.

Young people advocated for more counselling services and that health programmes involving sport, anti-bullying, residentials, healthy eating and drugs and alcohol support be provided to support health and wellbeing in general. Young people also wanted significantly more access to mental health wellbeing and awareness programmes to support their coping skills and resilience.

The importance and value of positive mental health support has also been fully recognised by young people and stakeholders and a shortfall in capacity to deliver such programmes has also been acknowledged.

The Importance of a Healthy Body

Physical activity is a normal part of growing up for children and young people and plays a key part in their physical, social, and emotional development. A physically active lifestyle also has direct and indirect health benefits, especially for children and young people, by preventing obesity, reducing the risk of disease, promoting good mental health and resilience, and establishing healthy lifestyles that may be continued into adulthood.

Government guidelines recommend that young people should engage in at least one hour of physical activity every day and research has discovered that only small proportions of young people in Northern Ireland meet these guidelines. Physical activity is important for one's physical health but is also shown to improve the emotional wellbeing by reducing stress and anxiety. Keeping fit however was more difficult during lockdown and for many children and young people restricting physical activity and negatively affecting the health and wellbeing of significant numbers of children and young people. Indeed, many groups of marginalised and vulnerable groups of children and young people faced disproportionate impacts on their physical health throughout the pandemic.

Aspects of general and physical health are also subject to inequalities and detrimental outcomes, although these can co-occur with mental and emotional health issues. These can be characterised by poor dental health which is widely used as an indicative measure of a

child or young person's general health, and this affects significant proportions of children and young people.

An affordable healthy diet is essential for good health, however many families in Northern Ireland continue to struggle to buy and eat enough fruit, vegetables, or other healthy foods to meet official nutrition guidelines. Many of the poorest families are unable to meet the government's healthy food requirements and this situation has been made worse by the cost-of-living crisis.

Poor nutrition and diet lead to obesity and young people were least likely to meet the recommended 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day compared to other age groups. Young people who are overweight or obese are more likely to develop diabetes or heart disease in later life and be obese in adulthood. However, their physical health is not the only concern, overweight children and young people are more likely to encounter bullying, embarrassment when participating in games or sport and struggle to be active, which can lead to low self-esteem and poor mental health.

Vulnerable and marginalised groups and those from the most deprived communities are also more likely to engage in risk taking behaviours including experimenting with drugs, cigarettes and alcohol consumption from a young age which can lead to poorer health outcomes later. Some young people themselves reported that substance misuse was a form of self-medication, to cope with the symptoms of their mental health problems or as a means of escape. Indeed, many groups of marginalised and vulnerable groups of children and young people faced disproportionate impacts on their physical health throughout the pandemic.

- The proportion of Primary 1 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Northern Ireland is 23.2%. This represents 27.2% of girls and 19.5% of boys
- The proportion of Year 8 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Northern Ireland is 27.1%. This represents 27.1% of females and 27.2% of males
- 13% of school children in NI met the guidelines of 60 min of physical activity per day
- Sport and fitness programmes ranked as the most helpful programmes youth services can provide (44% of total)
- The teenage birth rate in Northern Ireland is 7 times higher in the most deprived areas compared to the most affluent areas
- By the age of 15 just under a fifth (19%) of children in Northern Ireland can be considered to have good oral health overall
- 31% of young people aged 11 to 16 years in 2016 reported having been drunk two or more times in their lives, a significant rise from 23% reported in 2013

The Importance of a Healthy Mind

Mental health and wellbeing are fundamental to a young person's basic happiness, affecting their self-esteem, confidence, quality of relationships, emotional wellbeing and motivation and is an indicator of mental health outcomes later in life. This issue is of urgency in Northern Ireland, where it is estimated that disproportionately high numbers of children and young people have an emotional disorder such as anxiety and depression and that rates of common mental health problems are considerably higher than in other parts of the UK.

- 1 in 8 children and young people in Northern Ireland have an emotional disorder
- Over 20% of young people in Northern Ireland are suffering significant mental health problems by the time they reach 18
- The rates of common mental health problems are 25% higher in Northern Ireland compared to other parts of the UK
- 50% of adult mental disorders have their onset before age 18
- A 24% increase in referrals to CAHMS from hospital emergency departments since 2019 have been noted

Children and young people were likely to be experiencing worry, anxiety, and fear. Stress of the unknown, such as exam results, university or college places or work placements, can have a detrimental effect on mental health.

Young people with mental health problems are more likely to engage in risk taking activity and alcohol and drug misuse. Among the determinants of poor mental health include socio-economic pressures, gender discrimination, social isolation, an unhealthy lifestyle, bullying and the risk of violence.

Where Support is Required

Adolescence and early adulthood have been identified as the peak time for the onset of mental health difficulties. Despite this, many children and young people do not get support at this critical time. It is clear from consultations that many young people do not access mental health services, preferring instead to talk about mental and emotional need to friends and family. A negative stigma around mental health resulting in a culture of silence around it, as well as an inability to identify the most appropriate source of support, are largely responsible for this.

Young people from the LGBTQI+ community are more likely to have suicidal thoughts and are three times more likely to have made a suicide attempt at some point. Other vulnerable groups such as young carers, children and young people looked after, young parents and NEET young people also display disproportionately higher levels of poor mental health.

Young people from rural areas noted that social isolation and limited opportunities to participate in Youth Services or other recreational activities had a detrimental impact on the mental health.

The Importance of Accessing Appropriate Services

The most helpful core elements of support identified by young people themselves has highlighted a trusted adult as vital and safe spaces where they can talk openly about their issues and for positive peer relationships.

For these reasons young people were in favour of a voluntary or community sector organisation for support, responding better to the more informal and less stigmatising environment which leaves youth services can provide the most appropriate type of mental health support. The challenge for youth services has been to provide targeted support through programmes promoting coping, resilience, and healthy relationships.

Young people who were also in favour of safe spaces where they could talk openly about their health concerns and access useful support and information. These safe spaces would ideally be within their own communities where they could relax and feel listened to by trusted adults.

The effects of not receiving support at an early stage will have consequences for escalating troubled behaviours. Self-harming has now emerged as a major public health issue, affecting at least one in 15 young people in the UK and particularly girls.

Mood and anxiety disorders also trigger patterns of disordered eating affecting substantial proportions of young people and often associated with problematic social media use. Suicide precipitated by suicidal ideation remain the worst outcome and Northern Ireland has a higher suicide prevalence than anywhere else in the UK.

Young people called for early intervention and preventative strategies to support those most in need.

The impact of not receiving effective support at an early stage will have consequences for escalating troubled behaviours emanating from poor mental health.

- In 2018, the suicide rate for young people aged 15-24 was 17.8 per 100,000 in Northern Ireland, compared to 8.1 per 100,000 in England, 9.7 per 100,000 in Wales and 15.1 per 100,000 in Scotland
- One study found that one fifth of teenagers with probable and possible emotional disorders had contemplated self-harm

- The Youth Wellbeing Survey found that 1 in 6 young people were involved in a pattern of disordered eating that might also require clinical assessment

Recommendations

Children and Young People are Healthier when:

- Children and young people continue to be consulted and heard alongside other community voices in the rollout of mental and general health interventions in response to local and regional need
- Responses to health concerns are tailored to specific geographical needs and contexts
- Services are developed to support resilience, especially in respect of children and young people's mental and emotional health and wellbeing
- Services develop effective partnerships and create a network of youth support services, including more early intervention and prevention support in terms of ongoing health concerns
- Clear health messages aimed at children and young people and their families, outlining what they can do to look after their physical and mental health and wellbeing are prioritised
- Resources and training are developed on dealing with uncertainty and coping strategies for children and young people
- Physical activities and sporting interests are nurtured alongside healthy lifestyle choices to combat concerning levels of childhood obesity



Chapter 4 – Safety to Thrive

We owe our children – the most vulnerable citizens in any society – a life free from violence and fear.
(Nelson Mandela)

Children and young people thrive in stable and nurturing homes and environments where they know what to expect and feel that their relationships, health, and safety are secure. To develop to their full potential, they require safe and secure housing, a balanced diet, access to medical care, secure relationships with parents and guardians, and quality learning opportunities at home and in school. Early life experiences shape who they will become and helps them develop physically and emotionally. However, if these experiences and relationships are unstable then this can have a negative effect on their physical and emotional health and development.

Children and young people who have encountered adverse childhood experiences are more likely to develop chronic health conditions and engage in risk-taking behaviours such as anti-social behaviour and drugs and alcohol misuse. This can often lead to negative outcomes later in life, such as reduced educational attainment, limited career opportunities, and poor physical and mental health.

All children and young people have the right to live their lives without the fear of discrimination or prejudice with their best interests prioritised in all decisions made that affect them. The need to feel safe and secure is important to everyone.

The Bigger Picture

The Impact of the Pandemic

The increase in domestic abuse cases has been exacerbated Covid-19 pandemic. Most children and young people felt safe at home, however, for some, the experience of lockdown magnified existing issues at home. In some cases, vulnerable children and young people had limited access to a youth worker, teacher or other trusted adult who had previously provided guidance and support.

The pressures of working from home led to an increase in domestic abuse incidents and crimes recorded by the PSNI along with the rise in the number of young carers and an increase in alcohol dependency and substance abuse. For many children and young people, the home they lived in was not a safe space.

The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns raised further concerns over the health and wellbeing of children and young people, as it has dramatically transformed their lives, created new stressors, and heightened pre-existing ones.

Many families that were already reliant on critical support services have suffered more during lockdown as these services were no longer available. This lack of support has meant that these families have become more vulnerable and isolated.

The Impact of Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences

Many children and young people in Northern Ireland do not have supportive family networks. Adverse Childhood Experiences, such as living in poverty, living with sexual or domestic abuse and neglect can have negative impact on a child or young person's mental health. Covid-19 and lockdowns meant that even more children and young people experienced some form of abuse or neglect.

The Impact of Conflict Legacy Issues

Many young people experience sectarianism, division and feeling unsafe in certain areas. The Troubles remains a contentious issue and continues to impact on health and wellbeing, family life, education, and opportunities in life. It is important that children and young people understand how and why the Troubles can impact them and their communities.

Some of the young people do not fully understand or appreciate the history of the Troubles, so an accurate factual account would help them understand it better. They spoke about how Shared Education could help break down barriers and support building relationships and cross community relationships.

Interface Areas

Northern Ireland currently has 16 interface clusters where inter-community tensions exist. These peace lines act as barriers between republican and nationalist areas.

Interface areas often have high levels of deprivation and poverty and those growing up in these areas are more likely to have lower educational attainment, poor career opportunities and engage in anti-social behaviour.

Many rural areas also demonstrate separate living patterns, although these are not formally recognised as interface areas.

Influence of Paramilitary and Organised Crime Groups

The influence and control of Paramilitary groups still exists in Northern Ireland and has a devastating impact on young people and local communities. These groups continue to recruit members, particularly younger males and have a strong connection to organised crime, including drug dealing, prostitution, extortion, and smuggling.

Vulnerable children and young people and especially those living in deprived areas are susceptible to paramilitary style control and abuse which infringes on their basic human rights, including their right to movement, the right to play and leisure and their feelings and rights to safety and security. However, some young people see paramilitaries as protectors even though they have experienced first hand verbal and physical abuse from them.

The explosion of social unrest and interface violence that occurred in April 2021 demonstrated that young people remain extremely vulnerable to the influence of paramilitary groups.

Having a View on Being Safe

The need to feel safe and secure in a welcoming environment where they can thrive and express themselves openly was recognised by young people. Most felt safe in their own school or youth centre, however some noted discrimination and prejudice began at an early age with many aware of somebody who had been bullied or harassed.

Young people understood the value of growing up in relationships that provide safe, stable, and nurturing environments, which will help them develop both physically and emotionally. They did however recognise that this was not the case for all children and young people and that some faced negative experiences which could impact on their personal and social development.

Youth Workers noted that having a safe place for to express their views on things that matter to them and the opportunity to discuss issues such as bullying and discrimination, were important reasons why young people engage with Youth Services.

Where Support is Required

Domestic Abuse

There has been a significant increase in the levels of domestic abuse incidents and crimes recorded in Northern Ireland since 2004. At present children and young people aged 0-24 years old make up 28% of overall victims of domestic abuse crime with 69% female and 31% male.

There is a correlation between high levels of poverty and domestic abuse. Poverty can increase an individual's vulnerability to domestic violence and poverty reduce one's chances of escaping from a violent relationship.

Young people recognised the importance of youth work in helping young people deal with traumatic incidences and provide support allowing them to reflect on sensitive issues concerning them, including child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, violence against young women and paramilitarism involvement.

Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation

During the Covid-19 pandemic it is believed that youth homelessness rose by around 500%, with the 18-25-year-olds being the most vulnerable group. There has been a significant increase in children and young people aged up to 17 years old who have presented as homeless this past year with 3,495 children and young aged up to 17 years old presenting between January and June 2022, which is an increase of 12.3% from the previous 6 months.

There are many contributing factors that can impact why a child or young person may become homeless. These include family breakdown, conflict and abuse, mental health issues, low educational attainment and unemployment, poverty, crime and paramilitary threat and alcohol and drug misuse.

The number of children and young people living in temporary accommodation has increased sharply by 47% since 2019 to 3,913. Currently in Northern Ireland 3,658 households live in temporary accommodation, the majority of which (57%) had been living there for less than 12 months. However, 5% of these had been living in temporary accommodation for 5 or more years.

Child Protection and Safeguarding

- There are currently 441,108 children and young people living in Northern Ireland. 24,545 of these were known to Social Services as a child in need. Some 34,969 children were referred to Social Services during 2021/22, the largest proportion of these children were referred by the Police (36.4%)

Children Looked After (in care)

- There are 3,624 children looked after in NI as of the 31 March 2022. This is the highest number recorded since the introduction of the Children NI Order 1995. This is an increase of 515 (16.6%) from the last RAON
- 256 of these children looked after are on the child protection register. This is an increase of 102 (66%) since the last RAON
- 22% of those in care have been looked after for less than a year, with 33% looked after for five years or longer

Child Protection

- There are currently 2,346 children listed on the Child Protection Register, as of 31 March 2022. This is an increase of 48 (2.2%) from 2020
- The most prevalent cohort on the register was those aged 5 to 11 (36%) followed by 1 to 4 years (26.5%)
- The main reasons for a child being on the Child Protection Register were physical abuse and neglect which accounted for 53% of all cases

Youth Justice Youth Justice

There were 2,267 cases relating to young people in formal contact with the Criminal Justice System in 2020-21. This is a decrease of 456 (16.7%) from 2019-20.

- The Public Prosecution Service (PPS) assessed 49.4% (1,121) of cases suitable for resolution through the Youth Engagement process and 47.9% (1,085) as not suitable
- The majority (75.5%, 1,712) of young people coming into formal contact with the justice system in 2020-21 were male
- Over half, (51.4%, 1,166) of cases in 2020-21 were in relation to those aged from 16 or 17 at the time of their offence. The remaining 48.6 % (1,101) were aged 10 to 15 at the time of their offence
- Three out of five young people in custody in 2020/21 were Catholic (59.3%) 17.6% were Protestant

Recommendations

Children and Young People will experience safety to thrive when:

- They have access to safe space and have at least one key adult that supports them unconditionally
- Their basic needs of shelter, food, drink, and love are met
- They are given opportunities to develop hopes and aspirations that are based on their individual strengths
- The rights and responsibilities of children and young people are respected to help them understand and challenge inequalities that exist within society
- Social inclusion and cohesion are promoted as mechanisms for conflict resolution and peacebuilding to contribute to a society that is shared, peaceful, stable, and fair; and in which there is no place for violence
- Young people are encouraged to develop positive relationships and choose not to bully or discriminate
- Programmes such as Operation Encompass and Helping Hands are used to ensure the welfare and safety of all children and young people it works with
- Strategies to support the most vulnerable are evident in all schools and youth centres
- Schools and Youth Services work collaboratively with key partners, including the police, the Fire Service and NHS staff, to inform children and young people on the risks and consequences associated with anti-social behaviour or risk-taking activities



Chapter 5 – Sharing Spaces and Minds

*When I see you through my eyes, I think that we are different. When I see you through my heart, I know we are the same.
(Doe Zantamata)*

Inclusive education respects the diversity of all learners and enables them to actively take part in learning and reach their full potential. It also ensures that different learning styles are met, regardless of their background, ability or needs and removes barriers that prevent learning.

Good Relations is the growth of relationships and structures for Northern Ireland that acknowledge the religious, political, and racial context of this society, and that seek to promote respect, equity, and trust, and embrace diversity in all its forms.

The New Decade, New Approach which represents the deal between the UK Government and Irish Government and the restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive. A key component of this strategy is ending the harm done by paramilitarism as a strategic priority in the revised Programme for Government outcomes. The new Programme is aimed at delivering lasting changes and improvements in key priority areas and will include measures aimed at removing paramilitarism and ending sectarianism.

The lack of a functioning Executive, Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol have led to political disarray and growing sectarian tensions which have involved young people and paramilitaries. This has led to inter-community tensions, involving young people, especially at contentious times of the year and particularly at interface areas.

The Bigger Picture

The need for good relations and inclusion and equality of opportunity is important in Northern Ireland where political, cultural, and religious identities have been based on a legacy of conflict and the current political impasse.

Generational poverty has limited the opportunity for progressive attitudes towards sustained good relations and this is reflected by the experiences of children and young people living in interface areas who have described being drawn into anti-social behaviour, sporadic violence, and civil unrest.

Young people wanted access to social inclusion programmes to explore issues relating to poverty and exclusion. This would provide them with opportunities to participate fully in social, cultural, and economic life with targeted programmes in place to support this.

The Northern Ireland Executive's strategy, Together Building United Communities (T:BUC) promotes good relations in Northern Ireland that challenges sectarianism and racism and

other forms of intolerance and celebrates cultural diversity and finds ways for everyone to live, study, work and socialise together without feeling threatened.

The new SEND Framework focuses on the early identification and assessment of children and young people who have, or may have, SEND and making special educational provision for those children with SEND, so that they get the support they need, when they need it in order to help them make progress and improve their educational and life outcomes.

This improved SEND Framework is underpinned by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the SEND Act). The SEND Act introduces new duties for Boards of Governors of grant-aided schools and the Education Authority, also facilitating greater co-operation with health and social care authorities and brings in new rights for parents and children. Many of these new duties and rights have not yet been introduced as they need to be supported by new SEND Regulations and the new SEND Code of Practice.

Shared Education occurs when schools from different sectors come together in local partnerships with the objective of providing enhanced educational outcomes for all young people through collaborative working.

For pupils this means participating in shared classes which have been jointly planned, delivered, and evaluated by teachers from across the partner schools. For parents it means having the chance to take part in shared events within partner schools and for the wider community it offers an opportunity for groups and individuals to engage with local schools in a vastly different way to that previously experienced.

PEACEPLUS is a new European Union funding programme designed to support peace and prosperity across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, building upon the work of the previous PEACE and INTERREG Programmes. The design reflects the importance of peace-building activity, but also the importance of actions that will contribute positively to the economy, building prosperity and adjusting to the new environment and challenges we face.

A recent Action for Children report focused on the impact of being a young carer in education. The report highlighted the need for flexibility in schools for young carers when it comes to attendance and completing homework. With the extra stress and caring duties faced by young carers, a more innovative approach with concessions would allow them to carry out their caring role and would improve their learning without facing the prospect of being penalised.

Young Carers can begin caring at an early age with many not realising that they are young carers as they are care givers to parents and siblings. The impact of a caring role can be

profound and long-lasting on a child or young person. This can affect them in many ways such as child development, education attainment, career progression, mental health, and anxiety.

Having a View on Sharing Spaces

Young people noted that they wanted Relationship and Sexual Education introduced in every school and want schools to demonstrate a commitment to all young people by taking part in diversity and inclusion programmes to promote acceptance and tolerance and demonstrate that young people can be themselves.

Young people want to see more appropriate educational services, including Youth Services, to meet the needs of children and young people who have additional learning needs. They also noted that future delivery of youth work with those with SEND requires additional funding and resourcing.

Young people recognised that the education system continues to divide young people along religious lines and wanted access to more cross-cultural programmes and interactions with those from other communities and backgrounds as a means of tackling sectarianism and understanding different cultures and respecting difference.

They also recognised the importance of youth work in helping young people deal with traumatic incidences and provide support allowing them to reflect on sensitive issues concerning them, including child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, violence against young women and paramilitarism involvement.

Where Support is Required

Special Educational Needs

A child or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if they have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than others of the same age.

Full and active participation for some SEND children and young people may be affected by negative attitudes and deficit thinking, physical barriers, poor access to communication and appropriate information in accessible formats or a lack of confidence or training in the skills necessary to take part.

- 64,486 pupils in Northern Ireland have a Special Educational Need or Disability (stage 1-3) (18%)
- 14,019 pupils in Northern Ireland have registered as ASD (4.7%)
- SEND school leavers who achieved at least five GCSEs at grades A*-C was 73.5% compared to 94.5% for those pupils without SEND

Young people recognised and welcomed the support that Youth Services can provide to SEND but believed that not enough specialised support was currently available.

Newcomer Children and Young People and Asylum Seekers and Refugees

It has been documented that newcomer children and young people face challenges in post-conflict Northern Ireland including fear of their new situation, language and communication barriers, friendship issues and may endure and bullying and child protection issues.

In the last number of years Northern Ireland has witnessed an influx of refugees and asylum seekers and this year the war in Ukraine ensured more families relocated here. Many of these families have experienced barriers to integration such as insecure legal status, poor housing conditions, a lack of access to education and employment opportunities and prejudice.

- 18,356 Newcomer pupils attend schools in Northern Ireland (5%)
- 5,003 Newcomer pupils are entitled to free school meals (28%)
- 150,000 Migrants, mostly from the EU are estimated to live in Northern Ireland

Many of the newcomer children and young people will have endured traumatic experiences to get here. As Northern Ireland has become more diverse, young people want access to more cross-cultural programmes and interactions with those from other communities and backgrounds as a means of tackling racism and understanding different cultures and respecting difference.

Newcomer young people face the challenges of assimilation, with the average newcomer pupil taking between 5 and 7 years to become competent in a new language. Given the likelihood that these young people have also faced trauma or violence, their migration can result in isolation, a situation in which having good peer relations and inclusion will be the key predictors of wellbeing.

LGBTQI+

The LGBTQI+ community note that they have been subjected to political and social intolerance, where their rights have been denied and not respected. For many within this community, this discrimination and prejudice begins in school and many young people have complained of bullying and harassment.

- 82% of LGBTQI+ young people (11-18) have experienced negative attitudes in school around their sexual orientation and/or gender identity compared to 23% of their non-LGBTQI+ peers

It is difficult to determine how many young people identify as LGBTQI+ and it has been estimated as many as 14%. Many of these young people do not feel accepted or tolerated in their communities and disproportionately suffer most with mental health issues.

Sectarianism

Following years of conflict, Northern Ireland has made great strides towards maintaining a normal, peaceful society. Despite this, there are still several factors which ensure that community tensions, polarisation and segregation still exist. Politics in Northern Ireland are polarised and many people in Northern Ireland experience some form of residential, educational, environmental, and social segregation.

There continue to be some of single identity areas, mainly working class, that continue to have legacy and sectarian issues. These areas are characterised by social housing and communities affected by division which often suffer generational poverty and deprivation, lack political and community leadership, have limited aspirations and opportunities. Young people from these areas have few opportunities to mix with young people from other backgrounds.

- 54% of Young People have participated in Shared Education Projects
- 44% of Young People think that relations between Catholics and Protestants are better now than they were five years ago

Other Section 75 and minority groups have highlighted barriers they face in terms of inclusion and acceptance. This has resulted in them not being accepted discriminated against and failing to fully participate or engage in their communities or society. Irish Travellers and Roma young people continue to endure bullying and have poor attendance at school and limited access to other services.

- 1,106 Traveller children and young people attend schools in Northern Ireland
- 779 Roma children and young people attend schools in Northern Ireland

Young Carers

Caring at an early age can have a detrimental effect on a young person's life. Young carers who put their education and wellbeing at risk to care for family or friends need the extra support available to them from the education and healthcare systems as well as from their local communities.

According to the latest data there are 8,480 young carers in Northern Ireland aged 0-17. This increases to 22,000 young carers up to the age of 24 years old of which 56% are female with 44% male.

With the change in population growth and demographics within Northern Ireland the provision of unpaid care in society has grown significantly. The 2001 census showed that 185,006 people provided unpaid care to family members, friends, neighbours, or others, which increased to 214,000 in the 2011 census, representing a 12% increase in the provision for unpaid carers in a decade.

Recommendations

Children and young people share space and minds when:

- They can play a full and active role in building good relations and improve and change attitudes
- Education promotes mindsets that challenges misconceptions, preconceptions, stereotypical assumptions, and prejudices against people perceived as outsiders or different
- There are safe and shared spaces in towns, cities and rural areas that can be accessed and used by all sections of all communities
- Schools and youth clubs promote positive attitudes whilst tackling prejudicial behaviours specifically around homophobia, racism, and sectarianism
- Society supports, protects, and respects all children and young people from minority ethnic groups



INSTAGRAM
Affects a lot on your mood

Advantages

- You can see what your friends are doing
- You can see what your friends are thinking
- You can see what your friends are feeling
- You can see what your friends are doing
- You can see what your friends are thinking
- You can see what your friends are feeling

Disadvantages

- You can see what your friends are doing
- You can see what your friends are thinking
- You can see what your friends are feeling
- You can see what your friends are doing
- You can see what your friends are thinking
- You can see what your friends are feeling

How relaxation affects your Respiration Rate

- Relaxation affects your breathing rate
- Relaxation affects your breathing rate
- Relaxation affects your breathing rate
- Relaxation affects your breathing rate
- Relaxation affects your breathing rate
- Relaxation affects your breathing rate

BODY

- You can see what your friends are doing
- You can see what your friends are thinking
- You can see what your friends are feeling
- You can see what your friends are doing
- You can see what your friends are thinking
- You can see what your friends are feeling

Chapter 6 – The Costs to Live

If poverty is a disease that infects the entire community in the form of unemployment and violence, failing schools and broken homes, then we can't just treat those symptoms in isolation. We must heal that entire community. (Barack Obama)

According to the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) the cost-of-living crisis is having a detrimental effect on the lives of children and young people. Many are not having their basic needs met and the chance of a safe and happy childhood are being taken away.

Child poverty rates in the UK were already increasing and the current cost-of-living crisis will only make problems worse for many families. Vulnerable children and young people will be further disadvantaged.

The rising cost of food, heating, fuel, and consumer goods has seen a significant increase over the past six months in the number of disadvantaged families experiencing financial distress and more children and young people living in poverty.

Organisations working with families have warned of the devastating consequences the cost-of-living crisis is having on children and young people's health, education, wellbeing, and social and personal development.

The Bigger Picture

The war in Ukraine continues to have an impact on the global supply chain, impeding the flow of goods, fuel, dramatic cost increases and product shortages, and creating catastrophic food shortages around the world. Low-income households are more vulnerable to these price shifts, as they spend a higher proportion of their total consumption expenditure on essentials such as food, electricity, gas, and heating and tend to save less.

The NI Executive's Child Poverty Strategy, published in March 2016, sets out the vision to eradicate child poverty. The aims of the strategy are to reduce the number of children in poverty and reduce the impact on children of living in poverty and improve their lives and life chances. The Strategy sets out goals to ensure programmes and policies provide extra support for children in poverty, improve outcomes for children in low-income families and take children out of poverty.

The Executive agreed to extend the 2016 -2019 Child Poverty Strategy to May 2022. The Anti-Poverty Strategy Expert Advisory Panel's report is being used to inform the development of the Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy and the recommendations relating to child poverty are being considered in this context.

The freeze on working age benefits and tax credits has led to vital support falling further behind the rising cost of living. The incomes of many families are being squeezed pulling them into poverty.

Having a View on the Cost of Living

Young people highlighted that those living in poverty were more likely to engage in anti-social and risk-taking behaviours involving drugs and alcohol as a means of escape. Young people were aware of the harm this was having on their health and future and were also aware of its relationship to poverty and social exclusion.

Many young people report being worried about their financial, housing and employment situations, their physical and mental health, and their future.

They also recognised that in future they were more likely to take on debt, less likely to have savings and less likely to be able to access support from family as they get older.

Unsurprisingly, many of the children and young people we engaged with expressed an interest in learning about healthy financial decision making and knowing their rights as young workers.

Young people expressed worries over their long-term prospects and wanted access to financial programmes to support them as they progress to university, college, and adulthood in the face of uncertainty over financial support.

Young people recognised that those living in poverty from rural areas are further disadvantaged as they may not be able to access support services as these can be too far away to travel to and may cost money to access. They stated that more support services were needed locally to help support these young people.

Young people believed that they were restricted and disadvantaged due to consequences of transport poverty, particularly in rural areas. This was relevant when it came for them to access their FE or university of choice. They felt that they could not attend the educational services they needed to further their future careers due to the lack of public transport, cost of commuting and no access to a vehicle.

Where Support is Required

Poverty

Northern Ireland child poverty levels are higher than other parts of the UK with the latest data showing that 241,000 (13%) are living in absolute poverty and 75,000 (17%) children living in absolute poverty

Free School Meal Eligibility

The Free School Meals entitlement has been used as a proxy for deprivation and poverty. Young people eligible for free school meals tend to achieve worse than their peers.

- 98,804 pupils (29%) in Northern Ireland are eligible for free school meals
- In 2020/2021, 83.8 percent of young people not entitled to free school meals achieved at least 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C or equivalent including English and Maths. However, 59.8% of pupils entitled to free school meals achieved this indicator

Deprivation

Living in deprivation has a detrimental impact on the outcomes for children and young people and is linked to inequalities in terms of their health, education, and social outcomes.

- 154,418 children and young people (25.2%) aged 0-25years live in areas of deprivation in Northern Ireland

Food Poverty

The squeeze on household income is resulting in some of the most disadvantaged families going without basics like food and heat. As many as one in four households with children experienced food insecurity in the past year.

Children and young people are going to school hungry and cold. One teaching union noted that the cost-of-living crisis is harming pupils' education, learning and development. Teachers are also reporting that children are coming to school cold and hungry and lacking the energy to concentrate on their schoolwork.

Impact on Health and Mental Wellbeing

Increased stress and tension around family finances has significant consequences for children and young people, who are facing more mental health challenges as a result. As the cost-of-living crisis continues, there is a risk that more children and young people will spend longer going without the daily essentials of food, heat, and electricity.

Unfortunately, the economising of daily essentials inevitably has an impact on the wellbeing of children and young people particularly those living in some of the least well-off households as they are forced to live in cold, damp housing for extended periods. Many families are reliant on fuel for transport, particularly families living in rural areas and the rising cost of fuel also impacts on family finances.

Impact on Educational Outcomes

Each pupil in Northern Ireland has about 3% less spent on them now than was the case a decade ago, and we compare less favourably in relation to educational investment compared to the rest of the UK in 2021-22. Northern Ireland has seen an 11% cut in real-terms school spending per pupil since 2009,

- Spending per pupil in Scotland is £7,600 and £6,400 in Northern Ireland

Stagnant funding will have a negative impact on the ability of Northern Ireland's schools to provide the education and support their pupils deserve. It has already been noted that those eligible for free school meals continue to achieve worse than their peers.

Inequalities in education ensure that marginalised groups are more likely to be suspended or excluded from school, less likely to continue into further or higher education or training, have lower average earnings, poorer health, and greater chance of becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

A failure to address educational inequalities will ensure that vulnerable children and young people will continue to have greater social and economic challenges and have limited opportunities to participate in their communities.

Rural Poverty

Whilst poverty and social isolation exist in both urban areas and rural areas it is widely recognised that those living in rural areas often experience poverty and social isolation differently due to issues relating to geographical isolation, lower population density, reduced public services and the dispersed nature of many rural settlements.

For youth organisations, the cost-of-living crisis means that core costs for their premises, including bills have significantly increased. The surging petrol price is adding an extra burden for youth workers who are required to travel to young people as a fundamental part of delivering their service. It also means their volunteer numbers are likely to go down income does not keep pace with rising costs.

Youth Homelessness

Homelessness can impact on a young person's physical and mental health, education, employment opportunities and connection to society. Northern Ireland has a population of 'hidden homeless' young people who manage by staying with friends, sofa surfing or occasionally sleeping rough.

Relationship breakdown, often between a young person and their parent or stepparent is one of the biggest causes of youth homelessness. Often this relationship breakdown has developed over many years and young people are left without the support networks that so many of us rely on. The recent cost-of-living crisis has seen an increase in the issues that lead young people to homelessness.

The Scottish Commissioner for Children noted that the cost-of-living crisis: can affect their development, it has a negative impact on their mental and physical health, their education, family relationships, standard of living, aspirations, and life chances.

Recommendations

We can mitigate against the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on children and young people when:

- Strategies are in place that will ensure rural youth work is equitably staffed, funded, and resourced
- There is the development of relationships and capacity building with key stakeholders, including young people, schools, local councils, the voluntary and community sector, and local businesses to invest in and deliver better youth provision and positive leisure activities for young people in rural communities
- Awareness is promoted in schools and youth settings about the challenges children and young people growing up in poverty may face
- There is an increase in the promotion of accessible training, vocational and employment opportunities

- A provision of greater investment in disadvantaged communities related to Youth Services
- Practical solutions such as inclusive breakfast, homework and After School support clubs for all schools



Chapter 7 – The Biggest Picture

We can no longer let the people in power decide what is politically possible. We can no longer let the people in power decide what hope is. Hope is not passive. Hope is telling the truth. Hope is taking action. And hope always comes from the people.
(Greta Thunberg)

There are 1.8 billion young people aged 10 to 24 years, accounting for almost 20 per cent of the global population. This is the largest youth population the world has ever seen, and they are growing up at a time when the world is at a critical crossroad.

As young people are increasingly demanding more just, equitable, and progressive opportunities and solutions in their communities and society, the need to address the diverse challenges faced by young people, including access to education, health, employment, gender equality, and climate change have become more pressing than ever.

Young people can be a positive force for development when provided with the knowledge and opportunities they need to thrive. Young people should acquire the education and skills needed to contribute to a productive economy and they need access to opportunities to advance them in the labour market. Young people are becoming more politicised and demanding change that is equitable for all.

Key Drivers

The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the basis of all of UNICEF's work. It is the most complete statement of children's rights ever produced and is the most widely ratified international human rights treaty in history.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.

At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries, developed and developing, in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go together with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth, all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

The One Young World summit is an annual event bringing together global young leaders to harness their knowledge and skills, to accelerate social and political change and develop influential change-makers.

Delegates engage with political, philanthropic, and business leaders in speeches, panels, networking, and workshops, with figures from the media industry in attendance. Young leaders attend the summit from over 190 different countries to network together and

collaborate to promote social impact and develop their knowledge and skills to become influential change makers.

Critical Themes

Environment and Climate

Environment and climate change has resulted in increased levels of uncertainty about children and young people's future, both in terms of the impact of climate change, sustainable development and the costs and lifestyle implications of governments' commitment to *net zero* by 2050.

- The earth's temperature has risen by 0.14° Fahrenheit (0.08° Celsius) per decade since 1880
- Since 1981 it is more than twice that: 0.32° F (0.18° C) per decade
- 2021 was the sixth-warmest year on record

A recent global survey of young people found that the most critical issues for them were climate change, tackling inequality and poverty, zero hunger, reduced inequalities, sustainability as well as quality education and good health and wellbeing. The report suggested that

Young people felt that tackling climate change and protecting the environment is important to them personally, most of whom stated that they did not learn enough about climate change from their mainstream education. Climate change impacts everyone but the future belongs to young people.

As the impacts of climate change intensify every year, more young people are joining the movement for positive change. By leading the discussion around climate change, they are also spreading awareness and motivating others to act.

Poverty

Globally, children and young people are more likely to live in poverty than adults. They are also more vulnerable to its effects. Across the world, about 1 billion children live in absolute poverty, meaning they lack necessities such as basic as nutrition or clean water.

The consequences for many of them are grave. Worldwide, the poorest children and young people are twice as likely to die in childhood than their wealthier peers. For those growing up in humanitarian crises, the risks of deprivation and exclusion surge. Even in the world's richest countries, one in seven children still live in poverty. Today, one in four children in the European Union are at risk of falling into poverty.

- Internationally, 356 million children and young people are living in extreme poverty, forced to survive on less than \$1.90 per day

No matter where they grow up, those who grow up impoverished, suffer from poor living standards, develop fewer skills for the workforce and earn lower wages as adults.

Health

Children and young people growing up in poverty face constant daily hardships and harsh living conditions. The unrelenting stress of poverty can hinder a child's brain development with long-term consequences on physical and mental well-being, leading to lifelong effects that follow them into adulthood.

Children living in poverty often have greater health problems and are more likely to suffer from disease because of a lack of proper treatment. Poor health can keep them from school holding them further back in a system that was already inadequate.

- Each year 2 million children and young people die from preventable diseases because families cannot afford treatment
- For every 1,000 children born, 39 will die before their 5th birthday. Most under-5 deaths are preventable
- Nearly 500,000 children die from malaria each year. That is equivalent to one child every minute

Illness and disease plunges people further into poverty and leaves children and young people falling behind in school or failing to attend altogether.

Education and Employment

Basic literacy and numeracy skills for young people in low-income countries could lift 171 million people out of poverty, resulting in a 12% cut in global poverty.

When we reduce barriers to education, we allow children and young people to achieve and thrive. Education reduces a young person's involvement in gangs and drugs, lowers the number of social issues and heightens political awareness. Education leads to healthier childhoods, and ultimately, to greater economic prospects as adults.

- More than 500 million young people aged 15-24 live on less than \$2 a day.
- About one-tenth of the total child population are out of school and engaged in child labour
- In developing countries, an estimated two-thirds of the young people are not fulfilling their economic potential
- If all students in low-income countries gained basic reading skills, 171 million people could escape poverty
- Of the nearly 2 billion youth in the world, one-third are not employed, not in school, and not in formal training for work

Gender Inequality

Access to early childhood education has increased over the last two decades, with global enrolment rates showing gender parity in access among boys and girls. Despite this gender parity in access, the pre-primary education system does not always deliver on its potential

to tackle gender inequities and address harmful gender stereotypes while they are being absorbed by the youngest learners.

The impact of gender inequality is more pronounced in the world's poorest countries, where many women and girls still do not have access to or control over even the most basic resources and services. They live in fear of gender-based violence, are denied education and have no say over decisions in their homes.

- In 21 of 41 countries with data collected in a UNICEF report, more than one-third of girls aged 15-19 are anaemic
- In 17 conflict affected countries, 9 out of 10 of the poorest young women have not completed primary school
- 12 million girls under 18 are married each year
- 130 million girls remain out of school worldwide

Many young people throughout the world are involved in initiatives to improve education and eradicate poverty, hunger, gender inequality, ensure everyone has access to clean water and various other humanitarian programmes.

Young people were keen to get involved in innovative strategies, including social action and social enterprise projects, to contribute to the global agenda to end poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change.

Young people also wanted curriculum reform that addressed the global, societal, and environmental concerns of children and young people. They also argued that through positive young activists can inspire hope.

It was suggested that when young people work together with supportive resources and opportunities to interact with others, they can make positive contributions to their communities. They can connect with diverse groups of people in their communities through volunteering and outreach.

In recent years young people have created powerfully disruptive strategies that promote international social change. Their creativity and energy combined with knowledge, ability and determination can shift organisational cultures and social norms.

Recommendations

Global issues can be addressed when:

- Young people are given opportunities to participate in programmes that are responsive to global concerns
- Global issues to be formally incorporated into the school and youth work curriculum
- Young people can examine global issues through social action and social enterprise ventures