



**EVERY CHILD: DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION'S DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN
(2023 – 2028)**

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS BOOKLET

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education is seeking views on its draft 2023-2028 Corporate Plan.

The Corporate Plan will set our strategic focus over the next five years and, working in partnership with stakeholders, it will help us make a difference and improve outcomes for children and young people.

In developing this Plan, we engaged with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders to get their views on how we could best improve these outcomes.

In addition to this, we also considered the wide range of commitments the Department has across strategies such as the Programme for Government draft Outcomes Framework, the Consolidated Covid-19 Recovery Plan, the Children and Young People Strategy, A Fair Start and The New Decade, New Approach.

This work has helped us develop a draft vision, supported by five Strategic Priorities which set out *what* we will aim to do. We also outline *how* we will take forward our work, under four Enabling Priorities. This consultation will ask you how you feel about the draft vision, priorities and strategic direction and give you the opportunity to comment on them.

Vision

Our proposed vision is one which aims to have an outward focus on children and young people, seek to develop skills – academic and otherwise – and also provide broader support for wellbeing and as a foundation for life.

Draft Vision:

Every child and young person is happy, learning and ready to succeed

Draft Strategic Priorities and Enablers:

We propose five Strategic Priorities that will help guide the Department towards achieving this Vision. These are:

- **CHAMPIONING** all our children and young people and the positive impact of education on all aspects of life
- **HELPING** all our children and young people where they need support for their learning and well-being
- **INSPIRING** all our children and young people to make a positive contribution to society.
- **Meeting the LEARNING** needs of our children and young people and developing their knowledge and skills, enabling them to fulfil their potential.
- **DELIVERING** an effective, child-focused, collaborative, high-quality education system.

Underpinning the Strategic Priorities are enablers that describe how the Department will achieve the desired outcomes. These are:

- **COLLABORATING** – Partnering with our stakeholders to support co-production and achievement of shared outcomes.
- **OPTIMISING** – Prioritising, modernising and making most efficient use of our resources to achieve the greatest impact, including stopping or changing activities that don't make the difference we want.
- **RESPONDING** – Addressing the long term impacts of the pandemic and other emerging challenges and needs faced by our children and young people and the education workforce.
- **ENGAGING** – Communicating and consulting with our stakeholders to help shape our future services.

Equality and Rural Screening

As set-out in the Department of Education's Equality Scheme, and in order to comply with the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, the draft Corporate Plan has been subject to an Equality Screening.

The documents indicate that there are no adverse impacts in relation to the policy proposals. As part of this consultation, we welcome any comments on the Equality Screening.

Your views matter:

We want to give everyone with an interest in education the opportunity to have a say and influence the final Corporate Plan. Your feedback will help us focus on what matters most in delivering outcomes for children and young people in Northern Ireland.

1. About You

The Department may make responses available on the website www.education-ni.gov.uk although contact names and addresses will be removed.

Please note that under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) (Annex A) your response may be made available, on request, to the public.

- If you would prefer your response to remain confidential, please tick this box.
- If you would like to be alerted when the results of the consultation are published, please tick this box.

Name

Belfast City Council

Email Address

policy@belfastcity.gov.uk

- I am responding as an individual
- I am responding on behalf of an organisation/school

If applicable, please provide the name of organisation/school you are responding on behalf of:

Belfast City Council

2. Please tick the box that best describes you as a respondent:

(Required)

- Board of Governors
- Member of the public
- Non-Teaching Staff
- Organisation

- Parent/Guardian
- Political Representative
- Pupil
- School Leader
- Teaching Staff
- Trade Union representative
- Voluntary & Community Sector
- Other (please specify in box below):

3. Please select the category which best represents your sectoral interest (tick all which are appropriate):

- Controlled
- Integrated
- Irish Medium
- Maintained
- Voluntary Sector
- Other/General Interest

4. Please select the category which best represents your interest:

- Nursery/Pre-school
- Post-Primary
- Primary
- Special
- Specialist provision primary
- Specialist provision post primary
- Youth Service
- General Interest/Other(please specify in box below):

Belfast City Council – Local Government

Timescales and Submission of Responses

This questionnaire can be completed online until 11.59pm on Tuesday 15 November 2022. If you prefer, you can email or post responses to:

DEcorporateplan@education-ni.gov.uk

or

Education Governance Team
Department of Education
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
BANGOR
BT19 7PR

Completing this Questionnaire

This consultation contains a number of statements and questions. You are asked to indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the statements. There are a series of comment boxes available to provide additional information.

It is advisable to read the accompanying draft Corporate Plan prior to completing this questionnaire.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN CONSULTATION

The next set of questions are directly related to the draft Corporate Plan and Vision for the Department of Education which can be accessed via the following link <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/consultations/department-educations-draft-2023-2028-corporate-plan>;

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the new Department of Education Vision best meets the needs of children and young people?

“Every child and young person is happy, learning and ready to succeed”

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments:

As a key partner within the Community Planning Partnership the council welcomes the fact that the proposed corporate vision and values align closely with community planning principles and values and with various workstreams of the Belfast Agenda and community planning priorities (Children & Young People, Educational Inequalities, Employability & Skills, Community & Neighbourhood Regeneration). It will be important to reflect the work that Department of Education does regionally with delivery at a Belfast level, ideally being considered and shaped via existing community planning structures/ infrastructure.

Some additional points to highlight:

- Historically, formal educational settings have focused on academic achievement. This is still the case in Northern Ireland. While the increase of skills and development of cognitive learning processes is fundamental for a child, the tendency is to focus on one type of intelligence (Intelligence Quotient). We believe that consideration should be given to other related elements that may contribute towards every child being happy, learning and ready to succeed. While happiness is a very subjective concept, there is broad agreement that a huge factor that contributes to it is positive mental health. The efforts to achieve this element of the vision should clearly focus on providing children within the education setting opportunities to develop positive mental health patterns especially when considering the impact that Covid-19 have had. By contributing towards stable mental health in pupils, it is likely that this will have a positive effect on academic achievement.
- In addition some consideration should be given to the fact that there may be a need, in order to achieve this vision, to recognise that for some children and young people there will be additional barriers to succeeding and that these must be taken into account and plans put in place to mitigate some of these barriers.
- Consideration should also be given to how the Department of Education will measure achievement of it's vision and strategic priorities and how learning will be captured. The term success can be very subjective and as laid out in the vision statement it appears to be interlinked with the concept of educational achievement. Perhaps consideration should be given to making more explicit somewhere within the corporate plan of what is meant here by succeeding - such as having an emotional stability in life (EQ), successful social interactions (SQ) and adversity resilience (AQ) etc.

Therefore, whilst we are in broad agreement with the vision statement we would welcome a more child centred, global and ambitious bold statement of intentions where mental health, emotional, social and adversity elements of development are also taken in consideration

6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following Strategic Priorities meet the needs of children and young people?

“CHAMPIONING all our children and young people and the positive impact of education on all aspects of life”

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments:

As stated earlier the Department of Education is a key member of the Community Planning Partnership. The council would welcome the opportunity to explore opportunities to connect the work being undertaken within this strategic priority with work being taken forward by the Belfast Agenda workstreams focusing on Children & Young People and Educational Inequalities.

The council welcomes the inclusion of a focus on improving engagement with children and young people and taking these views into account when co-designing policy and the commitment to work together closely with other partners to achieve its vision.

One of the strategic intents refers specifically to giving children a say in the decisions that affect them through the establishment of a participation network. While this is extremely important, we feel there is an opportunity to further draw out the fact that the bigger impact on the educational life of a child will be contained in the decisions made in his direct and close environment. In this particular case, schools and classroom settings. The effort made to ensure participation should recognise the participatory role in decision making of children in their schools, in addition to the participation in the broader educational system.

As mentioned in the section above as well as championing the role of education in the lives of children there should also be a focus within the corporate plan on using the education system /opportunity to encourage and support all young people to identify their strengths and provide them with the opportunities to develop as individuals and contributors to society.

“HELPING all our children and young people where they need support for their learning and well-being”

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments:

The aspiration of “We want to unite families, communities and educators around a shared vision to nurture healthy, confident children and young people...” resonates with our aspiration to develop a ‘whole community approach’ towards education as outlined in the educational inequalities action plan

The council is very supportive of the fact that this corporate plan has been designed in alignment with the strategic documents as outlined and that specific actions in relation to addressing special educational needs and early years are included.

Focussing on supporting children with special educational needs is something that has come out strongly in our initial citizen/partner engagement workshops as part of phase 2 engagement of the Belfast Agenda. While not in the current educational inequalities action plan it is likely that this will be added based on feedback received and it would be good to work in partnership with the Department of Education and other stakeholders to make sure children with identified needs are provided with all of the support they need to fulfil their potential.

As outlined in the opening comments above we agree with the need for this corporate plan to recognise the importance of using the education setting as a way to develop good emotional health and well-being and would encourage this element to be strongly reinforced in the final plan and subsequent programmes of work.

We welcome the focus on the promotion of active lifestyles and healthy eating and we would encourage the Department of Education to specifically consider incorporating a focus/actions on the following areas:

1) Develop a more Sustainable Food System throughout schools and the wider education system to encourage better diets and develop supply chains that reduce food waste. The Department of Education has an important part to play and there is guidance for schools specifically (<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/campaigns/>)

2) Adaptation of your physical estate to invest in more green space through our Belfast One Million Trees, Living with Water Programme, and implementation of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan for Belfast which would aid in reducing air pollution and improve Health and Well-Being.

3) Run programmes and make changes to your physical estate/infrastructure that enable/support the shift away from car use during the school run and encourage more active travel initiatives

We are committed to improving the education and social outcomes of all children and welcome the focus on providing additional support for families and children who need it. Putting in place measures to address this is vital to ensure those children who need it can still benefit from the education setting and develop and progress. This is made even more vital given the current cost of living crisis and we urge the Department of Education to reflect this in any budget allocation and planned programmes of work going forward.

We welcome the reference to the delivery of the Childcare Strategy and council officers are committed to engaging with Departments and inputting into this process and advocate the need to accelerate the finalisation and implementation of the regional strategy.

“INSPIRING all our children and young people to make a positive contribution to society”

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments:

As highlighted above the Department of Education is a partner in the Belfast Agenda, and the Resilience Strategy which sits under this, which has a focus on Children and Young People and better connectivity of the city and a focus on developing climate resilience. The Department has a key role to play in enabling a better quality environment in and around its estate, in developing more active travel, key connections, and a greener city. Specific levers for the Department of Education to consider that could be used to deliver sustainable behaviour change and build climate resilience in Belfast have already been highlighted in the response above.

In addition the BCC Climate team has been working with the Department for Education on learning from and replicating the OASIS schoolyards programme in Paris. It's part of our partnership with the Real Play Coalition and Paris under the Resilient Cities Network. See “Strengthening Urban Resilience through Play” report at <https://realplaycoalition.com/>

The Urban Childhoods Report which council developed (<https://my.landscapeinstitute.org/case-study/urban-childhoods-belfast-city-centre/bab68fe7-502e-eb11-bf6f-00224801c8ab>) highlights that education around active travel, placemaking and urban greening is important to the development of children. This should tie in with DfE's corporate objectives. Schools are central to this transition within our communities and elements of this could be considered when finalising the corporate objectives.

According to a recent Arup Report (<https://www.arup.com/-/media/arup/files/publications/a/active-school-travel-index-arup.pdf>) in NI, just 1% of primary and 0% of post primary students cycled to school in 2018/19 and 67% of primary school children, and 35% of post primary school children are driven to school every day. There is significant opportunity to increase these numbers given 79% of primary and 46% of post-primary students live within 3 miles of their schools. The Department of Education has a key role to play in enabling behaviour change and a modal shift to walking and cycling where it is possible.

Action (a) *Encourage more children and young people from different backgrounds to engage together, building societal cohesion and learning to understand, respect and celebrate difference,* has the potential to connect to work that is being taken forward by Belfast City Council's Good Relations Unit and action (b) *Provide all children and young people with the opportunity, knowledge, skills, experience and support to empower them to make a positive contribution to the economy and society* aligns closely with work being taken forward by the educational inequalities and employability and skills groups and is particularly welcome. As outlined in the first response

above it is vital that this work is shaped by our community planning partners and infrastructure to ensure the most efficient and effective use of resources.

As touched on in an earlier response above council welcome the focus on alternative pathways to employment and readiness for employment support and there may be an opportunity to add in a focus on ensuring that there is a greater need to address the barriers some children and young people may face to ensure that the opportunities for education provided are as equitably accessible as possible. Specific areas to consider could include:

1. Cognisance of various learning styles and creating/linking young people to environments when traditional education is not suited to them/their aspirations
2. Increased focus on apprenticeships as pathways rather than traditional academic routes
3. Increased relevance of Careers Service provision to meet learners needs and ensure they are aware of opportunities especially within key growth sectors
4. More opportunities/interventions for young people to develop their confidence and softer skills which are transferable skills to prepare them for the increasingly dynamic and precarious labour market.

All of the above considerations are very much in line with what we are looking at going forward in the refreshed Belfast Agenda and in our aspirations as a Community Planning Partnership to create an inclusive city, where no-one is left behind.

In addition council ran a pilot Belfast Summer Work Experience programme to 30 14-21 year olds. Participants completed employment specific tasks and met employers. All 30 completed the programme and achieved Level 1 City and Guilds in Personal Development and Employability. This pilot is currently being evaluated and it would be good once this is complete to work closely with partners to identify future opportunities to provide support to young people outside of the normal school day.

One specific initiative we are developing is the creation of an Inclusive Growth City Charter, which we are branding The Belfast Business Promise. This is a free accreditation scheme which all organisations will be encouraged to sign up to deliver more positive social impact as a local employer. There are 8 key Promise Pledges and 2 specifically focus on working with employers around pre-employment support and community engagement. As a key Anchor Institution within Belfast it would be fantastic to see the Department of Education become an Early Adopter as part of pilot due to commence March 2023. We believe the corporate plan would be an excellent opportunity to show the Departments intent by inserting a reference to this in the plan.

“Meeting the LEARNING needs of our children and young people and developing their knowledge and skills, enabling them to fulfil their potential”

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments:

Action (a) *Provide a fit-for-purpose curriculum that gives equal emphasis to skills and knowledge and empowers all children and young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives* “ aligns closely with our draft plans within the Children and Young People section of the refreshed Belfast Agenda and it would be good to connect this work to that being taken forward by the Belfast Area Outcomes Group.

Action (b) *Develop an Early Years partnership approach – educators, health providers, parents, families and communities, working together to ensure all children are supported in their early development so they are ready to learn when they reach school age* closely aligns with the work being taken forward by the educational inequalities group and it will be good to continue to work in partnership with Department of Education in relation to this over the coming months and years. With regards to action (c) there are opportunities to use the educational inequalities group to help shape the delivery of the Reducing Educational Disadvantage Programme at a local level. The council would be keen that this group is used to explore opportunities to add value, build collaborative gain and improve outcomes for the RED programme

Whilst elements of this may have been touched on in other areas of the document there may be an opportunity to include more of a focus on working on creating and developing alternative learning environments to support young people to engage in education and meet their individual learning needs.

As highlighted earlier this response welcomes the focus on supporting those children and families who face particular disadvantage and the focus on working with partners and the charitable, voluntary and community sectors. We would encourage the Department of Education to meet with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sectoral Advisory (VCSE) Panel, who are a key member of our wider Community Planning Partnership infrastructure, to discuss any proposed plans in this area. As already highlighted above resources are at a premium and we recognise how valuable a resource this sector can provide alongside a deep understanding of community issues.

“DELIVERING an effective, child-focused, collaborative, high-quality education system”

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments:

Within the Community & Neighbourhood Regeneration theme of the Belfast Agenda we are seeking to take a joined up approach towards physical investment and neighbourhood

regeneration supported by the development of 4 place-based community plans and seeking to explore opportunities for Community Wealth Building. Within this context there may be opportunities to work collaboratively as part of your proposed area planning process as outlined. This would enable us to take a joined up approach towards physical investment and asset transfer opportunities should they emerge.

There is evidence suggesting a decrease in size of schools grounds, despite evidence showing the importance of school grounds (<https://www.ltl.org.uk/school-grounds/>) and we encourage the Department to work with the Council in a partnership approach to review the use of these assets, along with the surrounding community assets, and ensure they are used to their full potential.

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Enabling Priorities **(Collaborating, Optimising, Responding and Engaging)** meet the needs of children and young people?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide additional comments:

The council are pleased that collaborating is a fundamental pillar to how the Department of Education will deliver their corporate plan – we would see the established community planning structures, which includes our Area Partnership Board and VCSE Panel, as the best vehicle for collaboration and partnership working in Belfast and look forward to continuing to work in partnership..

In addition council values the focus on engaging directly with children and young people and their support systems/partners and have a number of areas of work currently underway to facilitate this for use as a corporate body. We currently have a very active Youth Forum in place and are looking at a number of participative democracy initiatives.

The importance of ensuring that the development of the estate is done with the benefit of the environment and building climate resilience has been covered earlier in this response.

8. Do you feel there are key areas that are missing that you would like to see the Department working on? Please comment below:

N/A – highlighted throughout the document as applicable

9. Do you agree with the outcome of the Equality Screening and/or are there any considerations that should be reflected in future documents?

N/A – highlighted throughout the document as applicable

10. Are there any further comments that you would like to make in relation to the draft Corporate Plan? Please comment below:

N/A

ANNEX A – FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – CONFIDENTIALITY OF CONSULTATIONS

The Department will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.

The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity (personal data), should be made public or withheld from release under relevant exemption.

This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Freedom of Information Code of Practice and good practice established from the implementation of the FOI Act provides that:

- the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature; and
- acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office (or see website at: <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk/>).