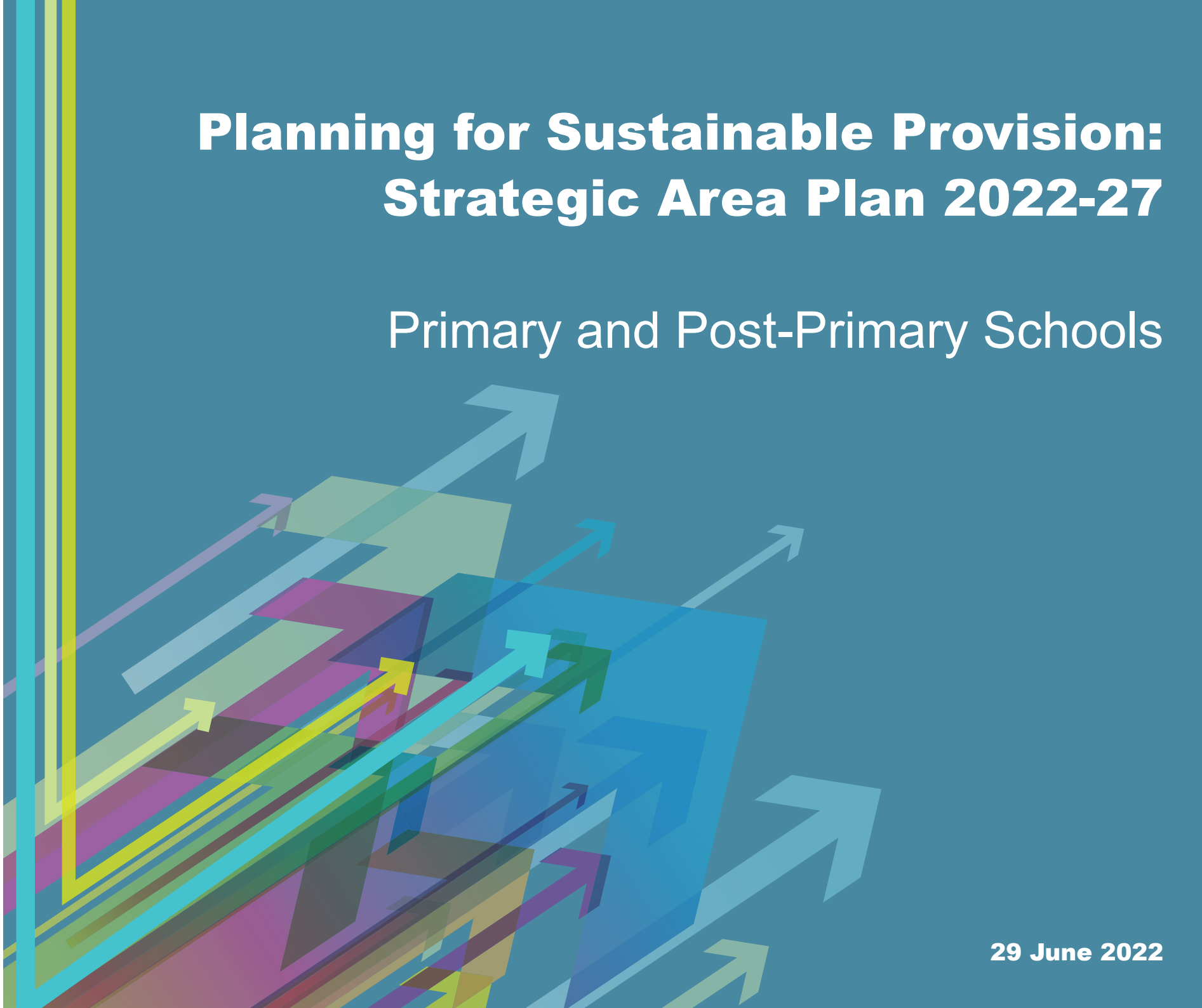




Planning for Sustainable Provision: Strategic Area Plan 2022-27

Primary and Post-Primary Schools



29 June 2022

‘Plan on a Page’

Aim

The aim of Area Planning is to ensure that all primary and post-primary pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their educational needs in a school that is educationally and financially viable and sustainable.

Vision

All children will have access to a high quality educational experience, through a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs, in educationally and financially viable schools, within a diverse system of education.

Mission

Focus on improving the quality of educational provision for all pupils. To do this Area Planning will:

- address school provision which is not educationally and/or financially sustainable;
- explore realistic, innovative, shared and collaborative solutions with a view to ensuring there is a viable and sustainable level of quality educational provision;
- aim to find solutions which deliver sustainable education provision in rural areas;
- address issues and challenges specific to local areas, by ensuring there are sufficient places which may result in increasing places in some areas while reducing places in others.

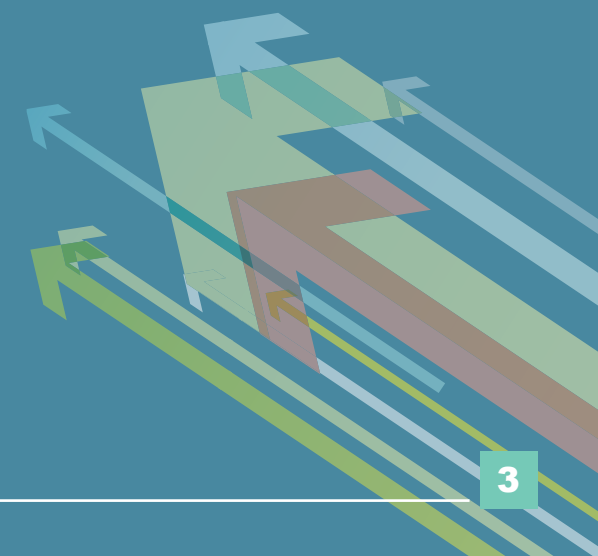
Providing a network of viable and sustainable schools that are of the right type, the right size, located in the right place at the right time with a focus on raising standards.

Key Themes

- Increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways
- Promote cooperation, collaboration and sharing across all sectors
- Maximise resources and sustainability
- Inform strategic infrastructure planning and investment

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Foreword

On behalf of the Education Authority and all Area Planning partners, I am delighted to present 'Planning for Sustainable Provision', Northern Ireland's second regional Strategic Area Plan for the period 2022–2027. This plan has been developed by the Education Authority working in partnership with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and collaborating with the Catholic Schools' Trustee Service, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, Controlled Schools' Support Council, Governing Bodies Association, Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education and Transferor Representatives' Council. It sets out the strategic direction for how the future educational needs of children and young people will be addressed through area solutions, consistent with relevant policies and Ministerial priorities. It will shape proposed changes to education provision for the next 5 years.



The education of our children and young people in educationally and financially viable and sustainable schools is of paramount importance and I do not under-estimate the challenges that lie ahead. However by working collaboratively and placing the needs of our children and young people at the heart of the planning process we will be able to achieve the aim of Area Planning to ensure that all children and young people have access to pathways through a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs, and leads to improved outcomes.

The success of the plan lies in co-operative and collaborative solution focused planning across managing authorities and sectoral support bodies; focused on the educational needs of pupils and not on the needs of individual institutions or sectors. Community participation in, and engagement with the planning process is equally important.

The Minister has stated publicly that pupils should not be denied opportunities due to the sustainability of their school and we therefore must work together to provide equity of opportunity and to find creative and innovative solutions for sustainable education provision, particularly in rural areas.

In the development of this plan, we have engaged with a number of stakeholders across the system and I would like to thank each and every one of you for your contribution and engagement. The plan is without doubt much more comprehensive and meaningful as a result of your efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara Long'.

Sara Long
Chief Executive, Education Authority



Section 1

Introduction, Vision and Mission Statement

1 Introduction

This is the second regional Strategic Area Plan for Northern Ireland (Area Plan). The first Strategic Area Plan ‘Providing Pathways - Strategic Area Plan for Schools 2017-2020’ (Providing Pathways) completes on 31 August 2022 with the achievements of this Plan and previous Area Planning activity since 2010/11 outlined in the Department of Education’s Sustainability Baseline Report - <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/sustainability-baseline-report>. On completion of Providing Pathways, the Education Authority, working with area planning partners, will undertake a full evaluation of its achievements.

This Area Plan sets the strategic direction of Area Planning for the next five years and spans the academic years 2022-2027. The plan is developed in accordance with the Department of Education’s Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools (Sustainable Schools Policy) and will address Ministerial priorities for Area Planning.

The Department of Education has published Area Planning Guidance and a Sustainability Baseline Report which inform the Strategic Area Plan 2022-27. The Area Plan will reflect and reference the policy and Ministerial priorities to create a vision, mission and key themes for the next five years for primary and post-primary schools of all management types.

A separate Special Education Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 will be published for special schools and specialist provision in mainstream schools. Both plans will dovetail to meet the needs of pupils in specialist provision in primary and post-primary schools.

The Area Plan aims to ensure that all pupils can access a broad and balanced curriculum in sustainable schools. The best educational interests of children and young people is the focus of the Area Plan, in particular the need to raise standards through a network of sustainable schools. The Area Plan sets out the objectives and key themes through which this aim can be realised.

In preparing this Area Plan, the Education Authority collaborated with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools as the planning authority for Catholic maintained schools, and engaged with sectoral support bodies representative of the Integrated (Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education), Irish Medium (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta) and controlled sector (Controlled Schools' Support Council). In addition the Education Authority engaged with Voluntary Grammar Schools and their Trustees, through the Governing Bodies Association and Catholic Schools' Trustee Service and other maintained schools (ie church schools) through the Transferor Representatives' Council, all of whom are represented on each of the Area Planning Group structures. Account is also taken of the contribution that FE Colleges make to the delivery of the 14-19 Curriculum offer. Within this Area Plan the term 'Area Planning' refers to the collective work of all Area Planning partners.

What is Area Planning?:

Area Planning is the process of strategic planning of primary and post-primary education provision to support the implementation of the Sustainable Schools Policy.

Aim of Area Planning:

To ensure that all primary and post-primary pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their educational needs in a school that is educationally and financially viable and sustainable.

Sustainable Schools Policy:

The Sustainable Schools Policy provides the framework (for schools and managing authorities) to consider the educational experiences of children and young people and make the best use of resources. It sets out six sustainability criteria and associated indicators which are the key reference for assessing existing and future education provision to ensure it meets the needs of pupils.

The six criteria are:

Quality Educational Experience;

Stable Enrolment Trends;

Sound Financial Position;

Strong Leadership & management by Board of Governors & Principals;

Accessibility; and

Strong Links with the community

The Sustainable Schools Policy also provides guidance as to **minimum enrolment thresholds** by which sustainable schools should be assessed.

| | Minimum Threshold |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Rural Primary School | 105 pupils |
| Urban Primary School | 140 pupils |
| Post Primary School - Years 8-12 | 500 pupils |
| Post 16 | 100 pupils |

A copy of the Sustainable Schools Policy can be accessed on the Department's website at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/schools-future-policy-sustainable-schools>

Ministerial Priorities:

The Minister of Education in her statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly on 9 August 2021 set out three over-arching Area Planning priorities which must be the core focus of the Strategic Area Plan over the next five years. The issues to be addressed are:

- Primary pupils being taught in composite classes of more than two year groups.
- Post-primary schools that are failing to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils in years 8-12.
- Sixth forms with fewer than 100 pupils that cannot offer a full range of courses. **[This priority will be actioned in the first operational plan.]**

1.2 The Vision

Minister of Education, Michele McIlveen, has set out the key priorities for Area Planning for 2022-27 which are supported through this vision, citing the importance of educating all of our children and young people in educationally and financially viable and sustainable schools. The Area Plan will also support the Department of Education's commitment to the New Decade, New Approach suite of actions to contribute to addressing pressures in the Education system in terms of improved efficiency and effectiveness.

All children will have access to a high quality educational experience, through a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs, in educationally and financially viable schools, within a diverse system of education.

1.3 Mission Statement

Across the next five years the Area Plan seeks to benefit pupils, teachers, schools, parents, communities, wider society and the economy by having a network of viable and sustainable schools meeting the educational needs of all pupils.

The Area Plan will focus on improving educational provision for all pupils. To do this Area Planning will:

- address school provision which is not educationally and/or financially sustainable;
- explore realistic, innovative, shared and collaborative solutions with a view to ensuring there is a viable and sustainable level of quality educational provision;
- aim to find solutions which deliver sustainable education provision in rural areas; and
- address issues and challenges specific to local areas, by ensuring there are sufficient places which may result in increasing places in some areas while reducing places in others.

Thus providing a network of viable and sustainable schools that are of the right type, the right size, located in the right place at the right time with a focus on raising standards.

This can only be achieved through co-operative and collaborative solution based planning across managing authorities and sectoral bodies; which remains focused on the educational needs of pupils and not on the needs of individual institutions or sectors. Maximising community involvement and participation is also key to the success of the Area Plan.



Section 2

The Area Planning Environment

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of Area Planning are set out in the Department of Education's Area Planning Guidance:

For Pupils

- identify and meet the needs of all primary/post-primary aged pupils in an area;
- ensure that pupils are taught in an education system that comprises a network of sustainable schools; are within a reasonable travelling time for pupils (as defined in the SSP) and capable of delivering effectively the statutory curriculum and, in post-primary schools, the Entitlement Framework; and
- enhance the quality of provision and raise standards.

For the System

- maximise effective engagement with all stakeholders through the Area Planning Support Structures (eg Area Planning Steering; Working and Local Groups);
- support effective strategic planning for delivery of the curriculum through the use of robust and verifiable information;
- identify deliverable, innovative and creative solutions to address educational need, including opportunities for collaborative, shared and cross-sectoral models, particularly to retain a sustainable educational presence in rural communities;
- maximise the use and sharing of the existing schools' estate including potential for collaborative models of shared and/or co-located facilities (including colocation of mainstream and special schools);
- maximise the impact of available resources by reducing duplication of provision and the number of available places; and take full account of appropriate and relevant Further Education (FE) Sector provision for 14-19 year olds to avoid unnecessary duplication.

In meeting the objectives of Area Planning, four key themes and associated actions have been developed in order to drive forward the changes required in order to realise the vision.

Key Themes

Increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways

Promote cooperation, collaboration and sharing across all Sectors

Maximise resources and sustainability

Inform strategic infrastructure planning and investment



Section 3

The Drivers for Change

The Department of Education’s vision for education in Northern Ireland is ‘*a system that is recognised internationally for the quality of its teaching and learning, for the achievements of its young people and for a holistic approach to education*’. The Department of Education’s Area Planning Guidance also states:

‘All Departmental policies contribute to the delivery of that vision and all have, as a central tenet, the educational well-being of the children and young people for whom the education system is designed. It is essential that schooling reflects the educational needs of the pupils and addresses these needs in the most efficient and effective way possible. This can best be achieved through a network of viable and sustainable schools that are of the right type, the right size, located in the right place at the right time and have a focus on raising standards.’

It is only through putting the needs of children and young people at the core of education and above the interests of institutions and sectors that this can be achieved. The needs of children and young people is the driver for Area Planning and the focus of all partners in Area Planning, Department of Education, managing authorities, sectoral support bodies, schools and their communities and other stakeholders.

In order to realise the Department of Education’s vision and to achieve the aim, mission and objectives of Area Planning change will be required. Some changes may be minor, but in many cases a major change requiring co-operation and collaboration across all stakeholders will be needed. Change can bring uncertainty and challenges but also opportunity, anticipation and enthusiasm.

3.1 Creating Opportunities for Change

3.1.1 Collaborative Working

In the Minister's statement on 9 August 2021, Setting the Priorities for the Next Regional Area Plan for the Education Sector in Northern Ireland, building on the priorities, outlined specifically that 'Collaboration and Partnership' needs to be built into Area Planning 'recognising no sectoral boundaries' and 'children and young people at the heart of decisions' and 'it is unacceptable that the interests of individual school or sectors should prevail in planning considerations'. The Minister stated:



It is therefore incumbent upon all Area Planning stakeholders and schools to engage positively with the Education Authority and other sectors and collaborate and partner in the co-design of Development Proposals; to bring forward innovative, creative and shared solutions for sustainable provision and to continue to encourage and facilitate Integrated and Irish Medium Education.



It will only be by working collaboratively that the vision, mission and key themes of this Area Plan can be achieved – together we can achieve more.

Within the lifespan of this Area Plan, managing authorities and sectoral bodies will work together to consider:

- Partnership working
- Collaboration, particularly at Post 16
- Federations within the primary phase
- Jointly Managed Church Schools
- Amalgamations
- Discontinuance

Only after all options have been explored will discontinuance be considered as an option to strengthen future education provision in an area.

Annex B details models of collaboration for Area Planning.

Partnership Working
 Collaboration, Particularly at Post 16
 Federations Within the Primary Phase
 Jointly Managed Church Schools
 Amalgamations

3.1.2 Supporting Integrated and Irish Medium Education

The managing authorities and sectoral bodies in their statutory duty will seek to identify, explore and bring forward proposals to encourage and facilitate both Irish Medium and Integrated education to provide sustainable education for an area. Both Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education will provide guidance on innovative sustainable provision, working with all education partners in achieving Area Planning solutions, including the option for individual schools to transform to integrated status.

3.1.3 Supporting Schools and Communities

The collaborative working models above provide an overview of the commitment of Area Planning to consider sustainable options to ensure educational provision within an area. In addition to the above Area Planning continues to strive to explore all possibilities to ensure sustainable provision in an area. Area Planning is working with other partners to support schools and communities with regard to sustainable primary school provision to make everyone more aware of, and proactively engaged in, the Area Planning process, particularly in relation to the Sustainable Schools Policy.

Area Planning partners will continue to undertake research on innovative Area Planning options and support for schools involved in an Area Planning solution.

3.1.4 Engaging with Governors, Staff, Parents and Pupils

Governors, Principals, Staff and Parents/Guardians have an important role in realising the vision and aims of Area Planning.

It is acknowledged that Area Planning discussions are often difficult for governors, particularly as many are from the local community and often have historical connection with the school. However it is imperative that the educational needs of all pupils in an area are considered as opposed to individual institutions. The challenge, therefore, is for governors to consider

whole area solutions rather than focusing on their own school and in all engagements with school governors the focus will be on the needs of an area, rather than single institutions. A programme of Governor Training on Area Planning will be delivered throughout the lifespan of this strategy to enable governors to increase their awareness and understanding of Area Planning in order to play a fuller role in the process.

School leaders, staff and parents/guardians also have important role to play in Area Planning as those most directly impacted by any change. In any change, the managing authorities and sectoral bodies will consult on any proposed change with the responsibility of staff and parents/guardians to engage in the consultation process. In order to ensure more active parental participation, Area Planning will continue to engage with key parent representative organisations.

Effective engagement with children and young people is also imperative. In meeting the requirements of Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 and Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Area Planning will actively listen to the views of Children and Young People. To ensure the participation of children and young people, Area Planning will continue to work collaboratively with the Education Authority's Youth Service, and/or other Youth Organisations, to create engagement programmes for Area Planning activity.

3.1.5 Additional Drivers for Change

i) Clearly Defined Aim, Policy and Statutory Process

The publication of Area Planning guidance provides clear policy and process from the Department of Education to be implemented by the Education Authority as the lead planning authority, working in partnership with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and collaborating with sectoral support bodies. Clearly defined process and governance provides clarity of purpose and direction for Area Planning to meet the aim, vision and Key Themes for the Area Plan.

ii) Established Partnership Working

Since 2017, following the publication of 'Providing Pathways 2017-22' Area Planning is well embedded within all educational partners with significant progress made during the life span of that strategy. This is detailed in the Sustainability Baseline Report. Area Planning has clearly defined structures and processes which support the implementation of the Sustainable School Policy. The defined structures provide for engagement and robust discussion on work streams. While the ideal is to achieve consensus from all partners, where this cannot be reached, the established processes provide for understanding and information sharing.

Collaborative practices and partnership working will be a priority throughout this Area Plan to take forward innovative and cross sectoral working to ensure sustainable provision in all areas, in the best interests of pupils, urban and rural.

iii) Community Planning

The Education Authority and Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, as statutory partners for Community Planning, will engage and inform Local Community Planning partners on the Strategic Area Plan. Whilst working within the Local Government District context, the Area Plan seeks to ensure that administrative boundaries do not prevent the development of natural and logical solutions for effective and efficient delivery of education provision. It also takes account of the natural flow of pupils across administrative boundaries.

iv) Education Authority's School Improvement Strategy

The Education Authority's School Improvement Strategy is in the final stages of drafting and it expected to be consulted on in early 2022. The priorities and actions from the Strategy will dovetail with the Area Plan.

The opportunities the Strategy provides are:

- to support schools to improve; and
- to support schools through and after the implementation phase of an Area Planning activity.

To achieve this the Education Authority will:

- develop high-quality aspirational learner-centred provision to increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways;
- develop a culture of collaborative enquiry-based learning and innovation to promote cooperation, collaboration and sharing across all sectors;
- develop contextualised and empowering intelligence for school improvement to maximise resources and sustainability; and
- develop self-evaluation and planning for improvement to further maximise resources and sustainability.

v) School Development Planning and Self-Evaluation

In seeking to enable sustainable education provision within an area, the key to early identification of challenges and opportunities for individual schools comes from self-evaluation. It is important that all schools undertake an annual self-evaluation against the criteria and indicators of the Sustainable Schools Policy. This should not be considered as additional to what schools already do but rather provide a structure and context as to where the school sits within the Sustainable Schools Policy. In developing the School Development Plan, schools should address and consider many of the criteria and indicators within the Sustainable Schools Policy. Looking at this process through the Area Planning lens will bring challenges and opportunities for schools through self-evaluation.



Section 4

The Challenges to Change

4.1 Rural Provision

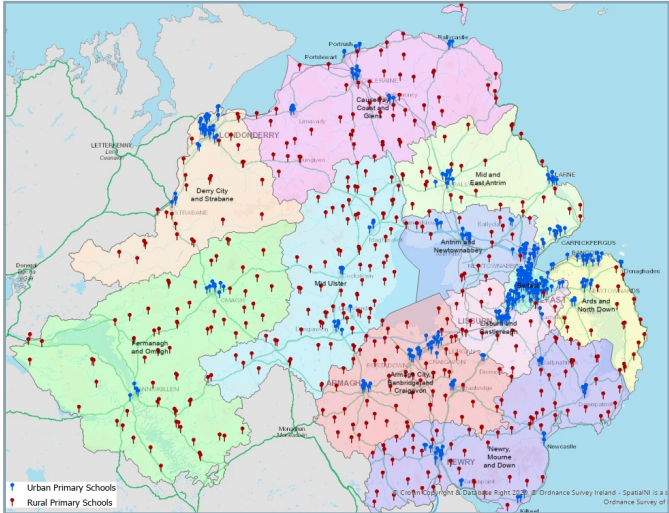
The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 places a duty to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services. Area Planning activity will give due regard to the requirements of the Act.

Within the Northern Ireland context, 472 schools are identified as rural with 504 schools identified as urban. However, when the Sustainable Schools Policy minimum threshold is applied, the statistics show a large percentage of rural schools fall below the 105 pupils in a primary school and 500 pupils in a post-primary school (Years 8-12).

Primary Schools

| Sustainable Schools Policy Minimum Threshold | Below the minimum threshold | Above the minimum threshold | Total |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| Rural (105 pupils) | 185 | 250 | 435 |
| Urban (140 pupils) | 35 | 314 | 349 |
| Totals | 220 | 564 | 784 |

Map 1: Primary Schools



Post Primary Schools

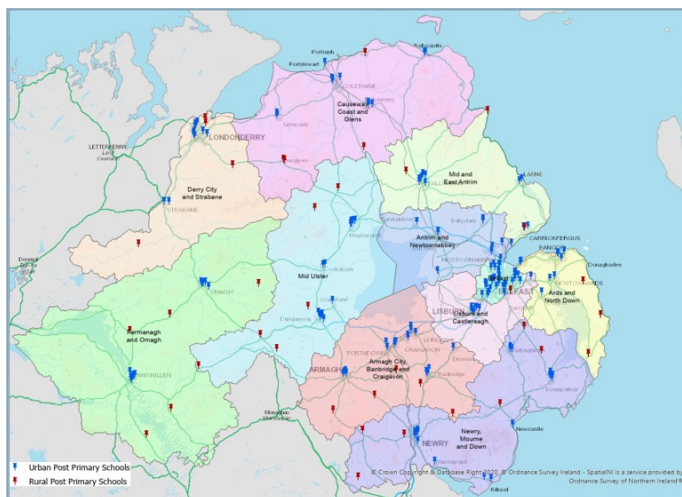
| Sustainable Schools Policy Minimum Threshold | Below the minimum threshold | Above the minimum threshold | No post 16 | Total |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|------------|
| Rural Years 8 – 12 (500 pupils) | 18 | 19 | | 37 |
| Urban Years 8 – 12 (500 pupils) | 32 | 123 | | 155 |
| Totals | 50 | 142 | | 192 |
| Rural Post 16 (100 pupils) | 9 | 15 | 13 | |
| Urban Post 16 (100 pupils) | 28 | 108 | 19 | |

default urban/ rural population threshold of 5,000. The classification also included a consideration of service provision for each settlement. This was introduced by calculating estimated travel times to the location of a major service provider, operationalised as the town centre of a settlement containing at least 10,000 usual residents. Accordingly, areas have been classified by whether they are within a 20 or 30 minute drive-time of the centre of a settlement containing at least 10,000 usual residents.

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/review-of-the-statistical-classification-and-delineation-of-settlements-march-2015.pdf>

Map 1 has been sourced from NISRA and shows the relevant classification across Northern Ireland.

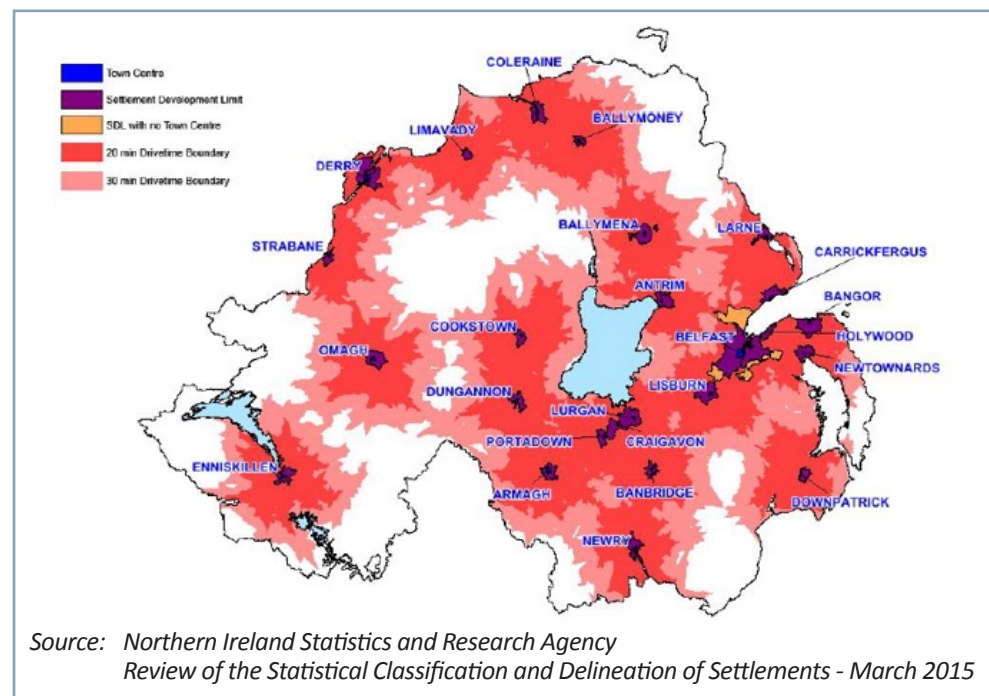
Map 2: Post Primary Schools



While aiming to support sustainable rural provision, there are still too many small/unsustainable schools. There may be some local circumstances, where provision will be necessary but the determination of this will be subject to consultation, assessment and rationale for provision.

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) classification which is within the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 proposed a

Map 3: Comparison of the 20 and 30 minute drive-time boundary



Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements - March 2015

4.2 Legislative Barriers to Innovative Solutions

A challenge in implementing shared or innovative solutions is the limitations of current legislation or where no legislation exists. For example, in considering a Federation (where two or more schools agree to share a single Board of Governors managing each individual school), revised legislation required to allow for cross sectoral federations in primary schools. For post-primary schools no legislation exists.

For Jointly Managed Church Schools (grant-aided school, providing cross sector education with a Christian ethos) the current Department of Education Circular 2015/15 outlines the process to be followed, however, the Trustee and Transferor representative have some legal issues in relation to ownership which they are considering further.

Finally, the Department of Education may develop new legislation and updated guidance as a result of the Independent Review of Education.

4.3 Alignment of Strategic Capital Development and Area Planning

The Department of Education's strategy for capital investment in the coming years will continue to be focused on supporting the development and delivery of a network of viable and sustainable schools, in the context of the Sustainable Schools Policy. In some instances, the accommodation within the current schools' estate limits Area Planning solutions. The challenge is that there needs to be greater alignment between the Capital Programme and the outworking of the Area Planning and Development Proposal process to ensure that Area Planning informs strategic infrastructure planning and investment.

To build on the opportunities and address the challenges, the managing authorities will continue to work with the Department of Education to seek early commitment to capital investment.

Section 5

Achieving the Vision – Planning for Sustainable Provision

5.1 Key Themes: Actions

The four key themes and associated actions have been developed to drive forward the changes required in order to realise the vision and meet the objectives of Area Planning.

Within the life span of this Area Plan, the actions associated with the key themes are outlined below.

Increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways

Increase the number of pupils taught in educationally and financially sustainable schools

Decrease the number of pupils taught in composite classes of more than two year groups in primary schools

Increase the number of pupils who can access the Entitlement Framework at Key Stage 4 and Post 16 either in their own school or through collaboration/ Area Learning Community in post-primary schools

Endeavour in all Area Planning proposals that reasonable travelling time for pupils is in accordance with the Sustainable Schools Policy

Ensure provision is appropriate to meet the needs of the area

Promote cooperation, collaboration and sharing across all Sectors

Increase the number of pupils in educationally and financially sustainable schools as a result of successful collaboration/sharing in an area

Inform policy and legislative changes required to implement innovative and creative solutions

Identify realistic, sustainable, innovative and creative solutions through cross sectoral engagement with schools

Encourage and facilitate the development of sustainable Irish Medium and Integrated Education

Work within the Area Planning governance structures to advance Area Planning

Increase awareness of Area Planning through:

- Engaging with parents and children and young people's representative group/forum
- Working collaboratively with the youth sector including EA's Youth Service to create engagement programmes for Area Planning activity
- Increasing the number of governors participating in Area Planning governor training
- Encouraging schools to self-evaluate against the Sustainable Schools Policy

Maximise resources and sustainability

Increase the number of pupils taught in educationally and financially sustainable schools

Increase the number of pupils who can access a Entitlement Framework at Key Stage 4 and Post 16 either in their own school or through an Area Learning Community

Increase sustainable Post 16 provision

Ensure provision is appropriate to meet the needs of the area

Reduce the number of schools in the lower range of school average costs (tables 1 and 2 below) showing the highest average cost per pupil

Publish quarterly reports on Area Planning activity against Operational Plans

Inform strategic infrastructure planning and investment

Identify, for an Area Planning activity, the capital requirement essential to the activity's implementation

Engage with the Department of Education to strengthen links between capital investment and Development Proposal implementation

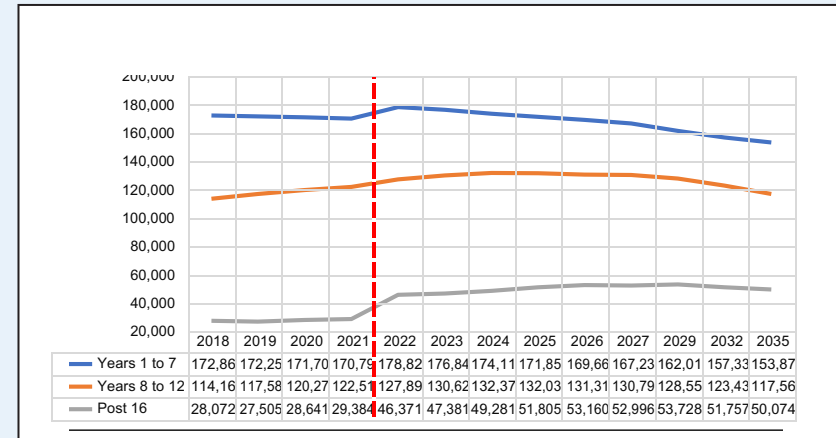
Seek approval to commence the business case for major capital investment in conjunction with Development Proposal approval

Prioritise approved Development Proposals for capital investment

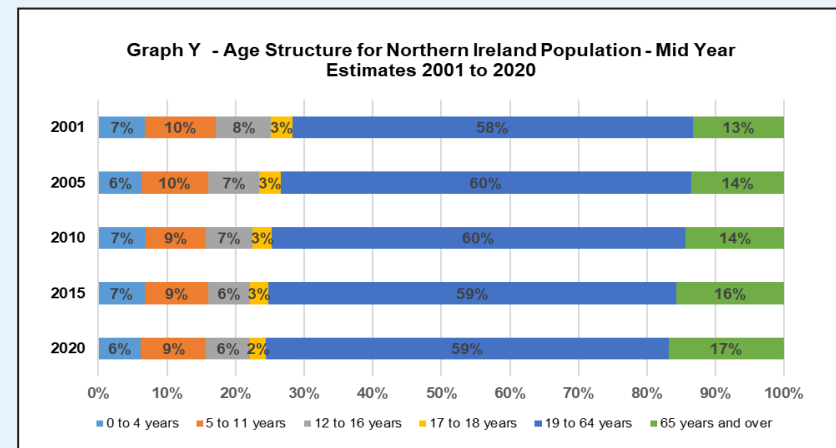
Section 6

Northern Ireland Summary Data

Graph X: details the past, current and projected school age pupils in attendance at primary and post primary schools in Northern Ireland (source: NISRA)



Graph Y: details the changing age structure of the population- projected data (source: NISRA)



Tables 1 and 2 provide average expenditure and teaching costs per pupil as well as the average pupil teacher ratio against the pupil number ranges.

Table 1: Primary Averages - Northern Ireland Summary Data

| Pupil Number Range | Number of Schools | Total Pupils | Average Number of Pupils | Expenditure Per Pupil (£) | Average Teaching Costs Per Pupil (£) | Average Pupil Teacher Ratio Per School |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 0-60 | 75 | 2,805 | 37 | 5,605 | 4,094 | 13.50 |
| 61-105 | 167 | 13,812 | 83 | 4,022 | 3,036 | 19.21 |
| 106-210 | 251 | 40,153 | 160 | 3,533 | 2,681 | 21.83 |
| 211-300 | 88 | 21,569 | 245 | 3,454 | 2,584 | 23.30 |
| 301-420 | 119 | 43,938 | 369 | 3,206 | 2,435 | 24.02 |
| 421-500 | 24 | 10,813 | 451 | 3,237 | 2,449 | 23.91 |
| 501-630 | 39 | 22,036 | 565 | 3,104 | 2,391 | 24.10 |
| 631+ | 16 | 11,725 | 733 | 3,176 | 2,459 | 23.78 |
| Total | 779 | 166,851 | 214 | 3,411 | 2,588 | 21.18 |

Table 2: Post Primary Averages - Northern Ireland Summary Data

| Pupil Number Range | Number of Schools | Total Pupils Year 8-12 (Inc Special Units) | Total Pupils Year 13-15 | Total Pupils Year 8-15 | Average Number of Pupils | Expenditure Per Pupil (£) | Average Teaching Costs Per Pupil (£) | Average Pupil Teacher Ratio Per School |
|--------------------|-------------------|--|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 0-250 | 19 | 3,042 | 401 | 3,443 | 181 | 6,233 | 4,586 | 12.32 |
| 251-500 | 7 | 8,124 | 1,921 | 10,045 | 1,435 | 4,715 | 3,667 | 16.27 |
| 501-700 | 44 | 16,926 | 2,556 | 19,482 | 443 | 5,048 | 3,813 | 15.38 |
| 701-900 | 39 | 23,134 | 4,353 | 27,487 | 705 | 4,793 | 3,641 | 16.22 |
| 901-1000 | 18 | 13,928 | 3,142 | 17,070 | 948 | 4,725 | 3,664 | 15.82 |
| 1000+ | 5 | 4,761 | 1,349 | 6,110 | 1,222 | 4,528 | 3,661 | 15.49 |
| Total | 132 | 69,915 | 13,722 | 83,637 | 634 | 4,869 | 3,729 | 15.30 |

Primary Schools

784
Primary
Schools

353 Controlled
354 Catholic Maintained
25 Irish Medium
23 Grant Maintained Integrated
24 Controlled Integrated
2 Controlled Irish Medium
2 Other Maintained
1 Catholic Maintained Irish Medium

435
Rural
Schools

229 Catholic Maintained
185 Controlled
10 Controlled Integrated
6 Irish Medium
4 Grant Maintained Integrated
1 Controlled Irish Medium

349
Urban
Schools

168 Controlled
125 Catholic Maintained
19 Irish Medium
14 Controlled Integrated
19 Grant Maintained Integrated
2 Other Maintained
1 Controlled Irish Medium
1 Catholic Maintained Irish Medium

220
Schools Enrolment
Below Enrolment
Threshold

103 Catholic Maintained
94 Controlled
12 Irish Medium
8 Controlled Integrated
1 Other Maintained
1 Controlled Irish Medium
1 Catholic Maintained Irish Medium

xx
Schools with fewer than
4 FTE Teachers (2021/22)

Waiting on data from DE -
not available until June 2022

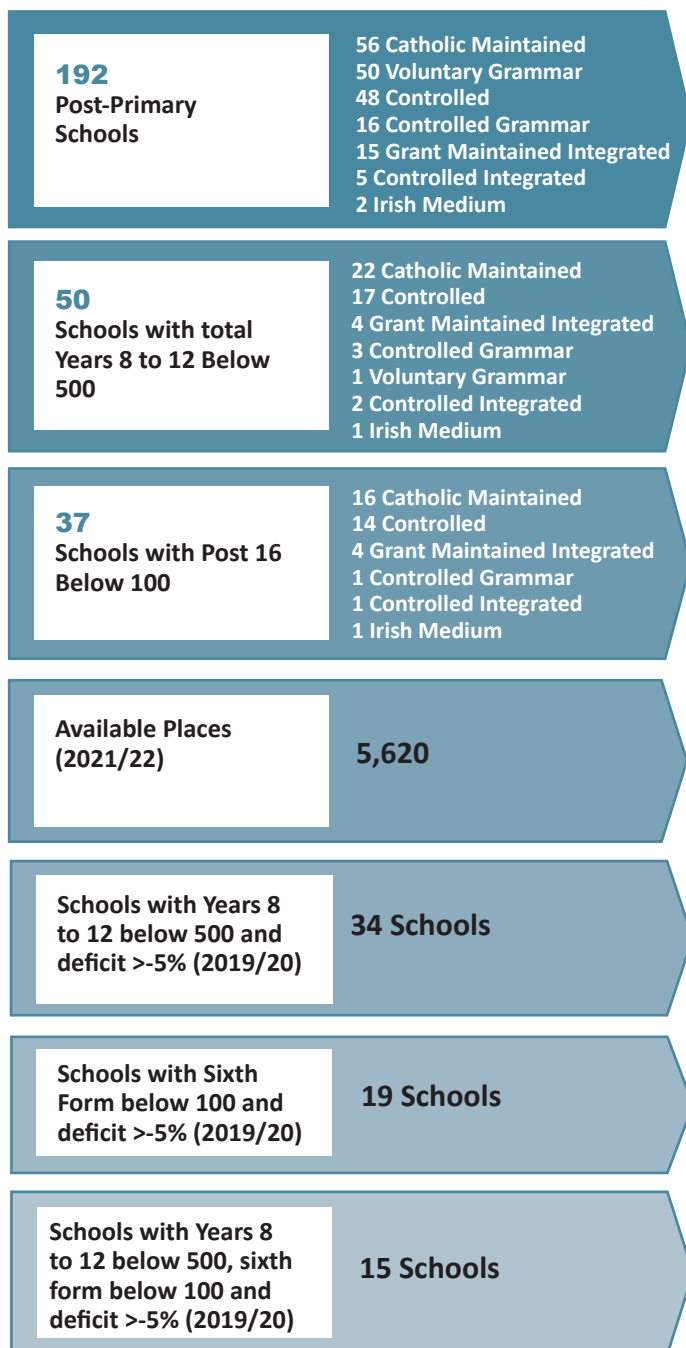
Available Places
(2021/22)

31,214

Schools below
threshold with deficit
>-5% (2019/20)

86 Schools

Post-Primary Schools



The Northern Ireland wide issues to be taken forward within the four Key Themes will be to:

Primary Schools

- Develop solutions for small schools with composite classes with three year groups or more (Ministerial Priority)
- Develop solutions for schools with sustainability issues
- Reduce or increase the number of available places in schools according to population trends
- Encourage and facilitate the development of sustainable provision in the Integrated Sector
- Encourage and facilitate the development of sustainable provision in the Irish Medium Sector
- Encourage, facilitate and promote the development of sustainable provision in Shared Education

Post-Primary Schools

- Develop solutions for schools that are failing to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils in Years 8-12. (Ministerial Priority)
- Develop solutions for schools with sixth forms of fewer than 100 that cannot offer a full range of courses (Ministerial Priority)
- Develop solutions for schools with sustainability issues
- Reduce or increase the number of available places in schools according to population trends
- Encourage and facilitate the development of sustainable provision in the Integrated Sector
- Encourage and facilitate the development of sustainable provision in the Irish Medium Sector
- Encourage, facilitate and promote the development of sustainable provision in Shared Education.

To achieve the vision of the Plans, Operational Plans will translate the vision into the practical workings of Area Planning and enact changes to the current school provision.

The Operational Plans will focus and deliver on the:

- Ministerial Priorities including opportunities for innovative and creative working
- Sustainable Schools Policy
- Special Schools Area Planning Framework
- A Framework for Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools
- Delivery of the Strategic Area Plan 2022-27: Providing for Sustainable Provision
- Delivery of the Special Education Strategic Area Plan 2022-27: Providing for Special Education Provision.

The Operational Plan 1: 2022-24 can be accessed on: [LINK](#)

Section 7

Operational Plans

Section 8

How will we know we have been successful?

Area planning activity will be monitored and evaluated through the operational plans, and measurements below:

Increase parity of access for all to appropriate pathways

Number of pupils in sustainable schools

Number of pupils in schools with enrolments below SSP thresholds

Number of primary schools with fewer than four Full-Time Equivalent Teachers

Promote cooperation, collaboration and sharing across all Sectors

Number of pupils involved in each collaborative and cross sectoral action

Number of pupils in more sustainable schools as a result of successful collaboration/sharing in an area

Number of cross sectoral options developed

Number of engagement programmes developed with stakeholders

Quarterly reports on Area Planning activity

Maximise resources and sustainability

Number of pupils in sustainable Post 16

Available places to match demographic trends

Comparison from base year – 2019/20 – LMS average costs

Inform strategic infrastructure planning

Number of pupils/schools benefitted from capital investment

Level of capital investment linked directly to Area Planning activity

The Education Authority, working in partnership with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and collaborating with sectoral support bodies will report to the Department of Education on the achievements against the Key Themes on the completion of each Operational Plan. In addition, an annual engagement programme will be undertaken with schools and other stakeholders to get feedback on what is working well and what changes are required to continually improve the Area Planning process.

The Department of Education, managing authorities and sectoral support bodies acknowledge that change is difficult and all education partners are available to provide support to schools throughout all stages of the Area Planning Process as detailed in the Area Planning Guidance 2022-27.

9.1 Implementation Plans

In taking forward change, an implementation plan, tailored to the specific needs of the change, will be prepared. In ensuring an implementation plan and support is available to schools, the proposer will work with the school as the main link providing support, guidance and direction throughout the process and will also engage with and support staff, parents/guardians and pupils through the implementation plan.

It is only by **all** working together that the aim of Area Planning can be achieved:

To ensure that all primary and post-primary pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their educational needs in a school that is educationally and financially viable and sustainable.

Section 9

Supporting Schools Through Change

ANNEX A: Legislative and Policy Landscape

1. Legislative Landscape

The Area Plan is being taken forward within a suite of Government and Department of Education Policies and Guidance.

Existing legislation provides the landscape in which Area Planning activity operates, the extracts of the relevant legislation is outlined in the Area Planning Guidance 2022-27 – Annex A.

Education Authority

The Education Authority has overall operational responsibility for planning of provision within the policy, strategic framework and timeframe set by the Department. In particular it has:

- statutory duties to ensure (inter alia);
 - that efficient primary and secondary education provision is available to meet the needs of all pupils; and
 - that schools sufficient in number, character and equipment are available in its areas;
- responsibility for the co-ordination of the production and publication of:
 - the Area Plan in line with the agreed Area Planning cycle;
 - Annual Area Profiles; and
 - responsibility (insofar as its powers as the managing authority extends) for the implementation of Operational Plans.

While the Education Authority is the chief planning authority, there is a need for all sectors to have the opportunity to present evidence based proposals that reflect the interests of their sectors in the Area Planning process.

In preparing this Area Plan, the Education Authority collaborated with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools as the planning authority for Catholic

maintained schools, and engaged with sectoral support bodies representative of the Integrated (Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education), Irish Medium (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta) and controlled sector (Controlled Schools' Support Council). In addition the Education Authority engaged with Voluntary Grammar Schools and their Trustees, through the Governing Bodies Association and Catholic Schools' Trustee Service and other maintained schools (ie church schools) through the Transferor Representatives' Council, all of whom are represented on each of the Area Planning Group structures.

Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools has a statutory duty to promote and co-ordinate, in consultation with the Trustees, the planning of the effective provision of Catholic maintained schools.

2 Statutory Duty

The Department has a duty to ensure that its Arm's Length Bodies effectively deliver the full suite of education policies. The managing authorities and sectoral bodies in their statutory duty to plan education provision are expected to assist the Department, through their planning activities, to exercise these duties.

Integrated Education

Under Article 64 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 there is a duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Integrated Education.

In March 2022 the Northern Ireland Assembly approved the Integrated Education Bill which gained Royal Assent in April 2022. The Integrated Education Act (NI) 2022 comes into effect on 26 October 2022. The Bill adds to the duty to encourage and facilitate by placing a statutory duty on the Department of Education and Education Authority to support Integrated Education.

Area Planning will seek to identify, explore and bring forward proposals to encourage and facilitate Integrated education to provide sustainable

education for an area. The Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education will provide guidance and direction on innovative sustainable integrated provision, working with all education partners in achieving Area Planning solutions.

Irish Medium Education

Under Article 89 of the Education (NI) Order 1998 there is a duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish Medium Education.

Area Planning will seek to identify, explore and bring forward proposals to encourage and facilitate Irish Medium Education to provide sustainable education for an area. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta will provide guidance and direction on innovative sustainable Irish Medium provision, working with all education partners in achieving Area Planning solutions.

Shared Education Act

Under the Shared Education Act (NI) 2016 there is a duty to encourage, facilitate and promote shared education. All education partners will encourage, facilitate and promote shared education to seek to bring forward Area Planning solutions which are built upon the foundation of Shared Education.

Rural Needs Act

The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 places a duty to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services. Area Planning activity will give due regard to the requirements of the Act.

Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015

In addition to the above, Area Planning reaffirms its commitment to deliver on its obligations under the Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015, namely, that the ultimate goal in the delivery of key children's services such as education, should be to improve the wellbeing of children

and young people in a manner which ensures the realisation of their rights as required by the Act.

3 Policy

In addition to the Sustainable Schools Policy, Ministerial priorities and Area Planning objectives, the Department of Education's Area Planning Guidance (page 2) stipulates that Area Planning will be taken forward in the context of the:

- The new draft Programme for Government
- New Decade, New Approach
- Current education policies

The Department of Education Area Planning Guidance (August 2021)

The Department of Education has developed Area Planning Guidance for the five year Area Planning period – 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2027. The guidance document provides information on:

- The aim and objectives of Area Planning
- Roles and responsibilities of DE, EA, CCMS and the sectoral support bodies
- Governance and support structures
- The Area Planning process
- The legislative context for Area Planning
- The Area Planning timetable

Department of Education - Sustainability Baseline Report (SBR) August 2021

The Sustainability Baseline Report (SBR), has been developed by the Department of Education to inform and support Area Planning priorities for the five-year period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2027. It sets the context within which the Area Plan will be delivered and aims to encourage schools to self-assess their sustainability with a view to planning ahead for address future challenges.

The SBR sets out the rationale and purpose of Area Planning and presents a detailed baseline analysis of Area Planning activity since 2010/11. This analysis is presented primarily at Northern Ireland and Local Government District (LGD) levels, but also examines aspects of the planning process by education sector.

The key themes emerging from the Sustainability Baseline Report have informed the Ministerial priorities over the 2022-2027 planning period.

Analysis presented in the report focuses substantially on the quantifiable criteria of “stable enrolment trends” and “sound financial position”. Options for accessing system wide reliable and up-to-date data covering the other four SSP criteria are being investigated under a Data Development Agenda (DDA).

This analysis is presented in Section 5 of the Area Plan and will be used to develop the operational plans that will be brought forward to give effect to the Ministerial priorities. The SBR can be found on DE’s website at the following link:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/sustainability-baseline-report>.

Developing Schools

Area Planning is the process of strategic planning of primary and post-primary education provision to support the implementation of the Sustainable Schools Policy. A developing school is defined by DE as a new school established as a result of an identified need for additional provision, which is not a result of two or more schools amalgamating. It is acknowledged that a new school needs a reasonable timeframe to develop and become established. DE anticipates that new schools should be established, viable and sustainable within ten years of opening, as outlined in the Department of Education’s Sustainable Schools Policy User Guide: [DE Sustainable Schools Policy User Guide](#).

ANNEX B: Area Planning Collaborative Models

Collaborative Options for Area Planning

Positive working has been ongoing over the past number of years to progress collaborative working and to identify a suite of collaborative options to support sustainability.

Partnership:

Partnership working is well embedded in schools through Shared Education and Area Planning working closely through Shared Education in the anticipation that some partnership working will result in collaborative approaches to ensure and improve sustainability in the future.

Collaboration:

In working in collaboration, mainly and particularly in Post 16, sustainability can be achieved through jointly working and in putting the needs of pupils to the fore. Schools looking outwardly rather than inwardly are continually seeking to ensure access to a broad and balanced curriculum. For Post 16, the work of the Area Learning Community is central to achieving the Entitlement Framework for schools below the Sustainable Schools threshold of 100 pupils in Post 16.

Federation:

A federation is where two or more schools agree to share a principal/ senior management/staff with a single Board of Governors managing each individual school. Schools in a federation continue to be individual schools and keep their existing category and character and, in particular, do not gain, lose or change their religious character, foundation or Trust status through membership of a federation.

Within the Northern Ireland context legislation only exists for primary schools and limited to same sector. Currently no federations operate within Northern Ireland. During the lifespan of the Plan, the Education Authority, working

with educational partners, will continue to undertake research into how a Federation would operate in Northern Ireland. Research in England and Wales has shown that federations have shown that:

- Achievements and behaviour had improved in all federations visited especially where a weaker school had federated with a stronger one;
- Aided staff retention and development, providing more opportunities for staff to gain experiences in different types of schools with increased staff progression opportunities;
- In a weak/strong federation, governance improved across the federation as governors are able to share best practice and experience; and
- Federating also had a positive effect on pupils' outcomes.

Federations will provide a positive step forward to providing sustainable area solutions and create strong primary school clusters.

Jointly Managed:

A jointly managed school, is defined in the Department of Education Circular 2015/15 as: 'A jointly managed church school is a grant-aided school, providing shared education with a Christian ethos, with Trustee representation agreed by the Transferor churches and the Catholic Church and managed by a Board of Governors with balanced representation from both the main communities here.'

For Jointly Managed Church Schools (grant-aided school, providing cross sector education with a Christian ethos) the current Circular 2015/15 outlines the process to be followed, however, the Trustee and Transferor representative bodies still need to finalise the legal process to establish a Jointly Managed Church School.

Within Northern Ireland there are currently no jointly managed schools.

Amalgamation:

A shared option already well established within Area Planning is amalgamation and details in the Department of Education Circular 2018/15 - Guidance on Implementation of Approved Development Proposals for School Amalgamations.

Discontinuance:

Where all Area Planning collaborative models have been explored and future sustainability cannot be achieved, discontinuance is the last option considered. While this will be a loss to the individual school and local area, it should be seen as positive as an area solution as it will strengthen the sustainability of other local schools.