

Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy



Mainstreaming:

- the process of becoming accepted as normal by most people;
- the process of making something start to be considered normal.



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ABBREVIATIONS

ALB	Arm's Length Bodies	DfC	Department for Communities
AP	Atlantic Philanthropies	DfE	Department for the Economy
BoGs	Board of Governors	DOJ	Department of Justice
C2K	Classroom 2000	DSC	Delivering Social Change
CASE	Collaboration through Sharing in Education	EA	Education Authority
CCEA	The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment	EOTAS	Education Other Than At School
CCMS	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	EPD	Early Professional Development
CnaG	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta	ESaGS	Every School a Good School
CRED	Community Relations, Equality and Diversity	ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
CRIS	Community Relations in Schools	EU	European Union
CSSC	Controlled Schools Support Council	EYO	Early Years Organisation
CSTS	Catholic Schools' Trustee Service	EYS	Early Years Specialists
CYPS	Children and Young People's Strategy	GBA	Governing Bodies Association
DE	Department of Education	GIFT	GRACE Impact Framework Tracker
		GRACE	Good Relations and Collaborative Education



ABBREVIATIONS

(continued)

HEI	Higher Education Institutions	NICIE	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology	NSSI	Network of Shared School Improvement
IFI	International Fund for Ireland	OBA	Outcome Based Accountability
ISEF	Inspection and Self Evaluation Framework	OFMdFM	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
IT	Information Technology	PDMU	Personal Development and Mutual Understanding
ITE	Initial Teacher Education	PFG	Programme for Government
JPD	Joint Practice Development	PHA	Public Health Agency
KLT	Kids' Life and Times	PIEE	Primary Integrating/Enriching Education Project
LLW	Learning for Life and Work	PSED	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
MAG	Ministerial Advisory Group	QUB	Queen's University Belfast
MFT	Moving Forward Together	ROI	Republic of Ireland
MSEPB	Mainstreaming Shared Education Project Board	SDPs	School Development Plans
NI	Northern Ireland	SE	Shared Education
NICCY	Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People	SEC	Shared Education Campuses



ABBREVIATIONS

(continued)

SECRT Shared Education and Community Relations Team

SELF Shared Education Learning Forum

SEN Special Educational Needs

SEP Shared Education Programme

SESP Shared Education Signature Programme

SEUPB Special European Union Programmes Body

SfS Sharing from the Start

SiEP Sharing in Education Programme

SRG Stakeholder Reference Group

SSEC Strule Shared Education Campus

SSUNI Secondary Students' Union Northern Ireland

T:BUC Together: Building a United Community

TEO The Executive Office

TPL Teacher Professional Learning

TRC Transferor Representatives' Council

UNCRC United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

YCNI Youth Council Northern Ireland

YLT Young Life and Times



GLOSSARY

A Pupil Pathway:
A Resource for Teachers to Support Shared Education

The Pupil Pathway identifies what Shared Education could look like for learners as they progress through school. It outlines the educational outcomes that contribute to reconciliation through the curriculum at all Key Stages and through the development of children’s skills and capabilities, attitudes and dispositions.

Developing Shared Education –
A Framework for School Partnerships

Commonly referred to as the “ETI Framework”, it provides Shared Education partnerships with the means of self-evaluating the extent and quality of their Shared Education provision and setting targets for development. There are three versions available – for Early Years, Schools and Youth settings.

Education Bodies

As listed in the Shared Education Act (NI) 2016, education bodies are

- (a) the Department of Education
- (b) the Education Authority
- (c) the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
- (d) the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
- (e) the Youth Council for Northern Ireland.



GLOSSARY

(continued)

Education Provider

Education provider means a person providing education at a grant aided school or services of any kind (including youth services) which provide educational benefit to children and young persons.

Educational organisations

For the purposes of this strategy, the term “educational organisations” encapsulates all of the bodies involved in supporting the education providers in Northern Ireland. Educational organisations include, but are not limited to, education bodies, sectoral bodies, HEIs, etc.

Joint Practice Development (JPD)

A distinctive strand of Continuous Professional Development in which education settings learn new ways of working through mutual engagement and academic research that leads to action research, development of practice and sharing with others through collaboration. Importantly, JPD is a development of practice and not simply a transfer of practice from one person to another.

Leadership

All those with leadership responsibilities in pre-school, primary, post-primary, special schools and Youth Work settings, to include members of senior leadership teams, Boards of Governors in schools and Management Committees or Owners of pre-school and Youth Work settings.



GLOSSARY

(continued)

Network of Shared School Improvement (NSSI)

The NSSI is a self-supporting network of Shared Education partnerships established to further develop collaboration and sharing of best practice within and between schools. The NSSI was funded through the SESP project from 2018 to 2022.

Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA)

OBA is an approach to structured planning, providing a framework for better planning and delivery of public services. Adopted widely by NI government departments and used in the development of the NI Executive's Programme for Government, OBA is designed to focus attention on the desired results and outcomes by monitoring a small number of headline indicators and performance measures.

School phases

Each stage of education including pre-school, primary and post-primary.

Sectoral Bodies

As defined in the Shared Education Act (NI) 2016, sectoral bodies means a body

- (a) which is recognised by the Department of Education as representing the interests of grant-aided schools of a particular description; and
- (b) to which grants are paid under section 4 of the Education Act (NI) 2014.



GLOSSARY

(continued)

Shared Education

Shared Education means the education together of -

- (a) those of different religious belief, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons; and
- (b) those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not,

which is secured by the working together and co-operation of two or more relevant providers.

Shared Education partnership

Two or more education providers working in partnership to educate children and young people of different religious beliefs and different socio-economic backgrounds.

Sharing Works

The Department's Policy for Shared Education, introduced in 2015, which outlines how Shared Education is expected to work in practice and includes key commitments for the further development of Shared Education.



GLOSSARY

(continued)

Together: Building a United Community

The 'Together: Building a United Community' (T:BUC) Strategy, published on 23 May 2013, reflects the NI's Executive's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society. The strategy outlines how government, community and individuals will work together to build a united community and achieve change against the following key priorities:

- our children and young people
- our shared community
- our safe community
- our cultural expression



FOREWORD

Through a range of related policy interventions, we have made great strides towards enhanced community relations over the past three decades.

Whilst schools across various sectors are open and welcoming to all, and many can rightly lay claim to a significantly mixed pupil intake, the work must continue to promote wider and deeper Shared Education.

Dealing with the legacy of separation is a challenge which Shared Education has sought to address over the past number of years, with much success. Great strides have been taken since the publication of the *Sharing Works* policy (2015) and the introduction of the Shared Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. A range of evaluative evidence and research points to the positive impact that Shared Education is having, and I am grateful to all those involved thus far for their invaluable contribution.

Collaborative working which takes account of difference, that acknowledges and celebrates the wide range of

identities and diversity that exist and promotes equality of opportunity, can help to create a society where all of our children and young people can flourish regardless of who they are or where they come from, and one which can help us leave behind the issues and divisions of the past.

Such collaboration and partnership between schools and other educational settings, particularly where it might involve varying ownership or management types, is key to moving forward towards a truly progressive, tolerant and shared society.

Shared Education has been identified in successive Programmes for Government. The *New Decade, New Approach* agreement clearly articulates a joint commitment to the further advancement of Shared Education and ensuring that children and young people



from different backgrounds have the opportunity to learn with and about each other.

To date, approximately 63% of our primary, post-primary and special schools are involved in formal funded Shared Education programmes, bringing children and young people together through regular and sustained curriculum based contact. This co-operation not only helps to improve relations and reconciliation outcomes between communities, but also delivers a range of educational benefits. Whilst school participation rates are impressive, we know that there is still more to do to enable all schools, as well as pre-school, youth and alternative education settings, to realise those benefits and more fully embed the concept, not only across the education system but also beyond, into wider society.

I am delighted to be able to launch the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy* which provides a vision and approach to the delivery of Shared Education over the coming years. The Strategy is the product of a co-design process involving other key educational stakeholders and is informed by the expertise of relevant practitioners.

Shared Education is not without its challenges, but it is clear that it can contribute to changing attitudes, and over time, as part of a wider co-ordinated approach, it can help to create a more peaceful, prosperous and harmonious society for us and for future generations.

We all have a collective responsibility to ensure that Shared Education can achieve its aims and bring all of our communities closer together. Our educational settings and supporting bodies cannot do this alone, nor can government seek to impose Shared Education. That defeats the purpose.

The only way it will truly make a lasting difference is that every one of us believe in the principle of Shared Education and do all we can to support it, whether that be as individuals, as parents, family members, or members of the wider community. The same applies to political parties and representatives, and organisations across the statutory, voluntary, community and business sectors. We all have a role to play.

It won't be easy. It will take concerted effort to ensure that we have the society that we want to see, one which



is open minded and forward looking, free from all forms of hate and prejudice, and where we all work together towards shared goals. We owe it to ourselves but, most importantly, we owe it to our children and young people so that they can have the future they deserve.

I wholeheartedly endorse the attached *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*. I am confident that this Strategy, alongside a range of complementary policies and programmes including the Executive's overarching policy for good relations *Together: Building a United Community*, provides a strong and sustainable foundation for the years ahead, in further developing the concept of Shared Education and ensuring that it becomes the 'norm'.

My Department will produce more detailed delivery plans which will support implementation of the Strategy and further promote understanding and acceptance of Shared Education more generally.

For my own part, I will do whatever I can to help build upon the success of Shared Education to date. I hope that you will join me.

Michelle McIlveen

MICHELLE MCILVEEN MLA
Minister of Education



Part A

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The origins of Shared Education in Northern Ireland lie in bringing Protestant and Roman Catholic children and young people together to help erode longstanding community divisions and enable us to move forward within a post conflict society. It builds on our existing education structures, providing an overarching approach in which education providers are encouraged and facilitated, on a cross sectoral basis, to support the education together of children and young people across both religious and socio-economic divides as defined in legislation.

It provides opportunities for children and young people, who may not otherwise or ordinarily have the chance to do so, to mix, interact, socialise and, fundamentally, to learn with (and about) peers from different backgrounds, through regular and purposeful curriculum based contact.

Shared Education involves the sustained provision of opportunities for children and young people from different community, as well as social and economic, backgrounds to learn together.
Sharing Works (2015)

It also enables children, young people and teachers/practitioners to make long lasting relationships and friendships which often transcend traditional boundaries and the building of strong, supportive and interdependent connections between the schools or other educational settings taking part, as well as with the families and communities they serve.

Crucially, such co-operation and collaboration not only helps to improve relations and reconciliation outcomes between communities, but also delivers educational benefits to children and young people and contributes to the raising of standards which, of course, is at the core of education.

Shared Education, as a concept, is not new. Partnership arrangements between individual schools drawn from different sectors have a long history locally, with many schools engaging in shared activities independently. This is alongside a range of Department of Education (DE) policies and programmes which have sought to support



collaboration, including those specifically designed to improve community relations, dating back to the 1980s.

Significant investment from external funders such as the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) and Atlantic Philanthropies (AP) followed, in support of the Sharing in Education Programme (SiEP), commencing in the late 2000s. Managed by the DE, the SiEP comprised of 22 education related projects, including the Queen's University Belfast (QUB) Sharing Education Programme (SEP), the Fermanagh Trust Shared Education programme, and the Primary Integrating/Enriching Education Project (PIEE) in the former North Eastern Education and Library Board. This is considered to represent an important first step towards the subsequent development of Shared Education that we see today.

The DE introduced the *Community Relations, Equality & Diversity in Education* (CRED) policy¹ in 2011, the outcome of a policy development process undertaken with key stakeholders which pre-dated the above SiEP programme. The CRED policy has close links to Shared Education, aiming to enhance relations by educating young people and equipping them with the skills to value difference

¹ [Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy \(2011\) and further addendum published 2016](#)

and to develop self-respect and respect for others, applicable to all groups identified in Section 75 of the 1998 Northern Ireland Act² (the legislative basis underpinning the Good Friday Agreement).

In 2012, an independent Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) on Advancing Shared Education was appointed. Reflecting widespread political and public support for Shared Education, highlighted by findings from the associated consultation, the MAG published its report in March 2013 which made a series of recommendations on how best to advance Shared Education, drawing on lessons learned from earlier programmes.

With additional assistance from the Northern Ireland Executive, partners including AP and The Executive Office (previously Office of the First and deputy First Minister), and subsequently through European Union 'PEACE' programme funding, the concept of Shared Education has evolved further.

These recent initiatives, namely the Delivering Social Change Shared Education Signature Project (DSC SESP), PEACE IV supported projects entitled Collaboration through Sharing in Education (CASE) and Sharing from

² [Section 75 Northern Ireland Act 1998](#)



the Start (SfS), alongside the Strule and Shared Education Campuses (SEC) capital funding programmes, each accompanied by large scale investment, have helped shape the development of Shared Education to this point and have led to greatly enhanced levels of sharing.

A critical achievement, and one which has provided the bedrock for where we now find ourselves, was the development and publication of *Sharing Works – A Policy for Shared Education*. Introduced in 2015, the policy outlines how Shared Education is expected to work in practice and sets out the key commitments made at that time to further develop Shared Education. In 2016, the Shared Education Act (Northern Ireland) (“the Act”), which was one of the *Sharing Works* policy commitments, was brought in, representing a step change in embedding sharing within our education system.

Currently, we have a legislative, policy, and funding framework which supports the advancement of Shared Education, explored further in subsequent sections of this introductory chapter.

It should be noted that the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy* does not seek to replace *Sharing Works*; rather it refreshes the vision and key guiding

principles underpinning Shared Education, bringing it in line with the Act, and sets out further progress that we wish to see from this point forward.

Benefits and Impact of Shared Education

A range of evidence highlights the educational, societal and economic benefits of working and learning together through Shared Education, including:

- Enhanced learning and skills development opportunities in a shared environment (e.g. shared classes, projects etc);
- Access to wider range of activities, subjects and enriched curriculum experience;
- Promotion of equality of opportunity;
- Increased confidence and social skills, developing friendships and improved attitudes towards others;
- Greater mutual understanding and respect for identity and diversity;
- Greater synergies and relationships between schools and other educational settings (e.g. joint planning days, training etc);

- 
- Embedding of a shared and inclusive ethos and culture;
 - Ongoing development and updating of enhanced curriculum content and related supporting resources;
 - More effective and efficient use of resources including physical infrastructure, equipment and a range of teaching materials;
 - Improved pastoral and educational outcomes for children and young people;
 - Sharing of ideas and good practice between education providers;
 - Collaboration, innovation and creativity;
 - Enhanced leadership and teacher/practitioner professional development opportunities such as training, mentoring and peer support networks;
 - Opportunities to involve, and strengthen links with and between, parents, families and the wider community;
 - Enhanced parental engagement, particularly evident within pre-school and primary settings; and

- Building positive relations, aiding community cohesion and contributing to peace and reconciliation across wider society.

The positive impact that Shared Education is having has been recognised by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), external research partners, schools, teachers/practitioners, pre-school and youth work settings, parents, and children and young people themselves.

“[SESP] contributed to improving the learning experiences provided for, and the outcomes attained by, pupils across the phases. The pupils highlighted the contribution that their shared learning experiences has made to their personal, social and academic development. Through the SESP, the pupils accessed a range of creative, vibrant and stimulating learning opportunities that would not have been otherwise possible.”

The Shared Education Signature Project Evaluation Report
(Education & Training Inspectorate; published 2018)



“Teachers and principals identify a wide range of positive outcomes arising from collaboration through school partnerships supported by SESP...collaboration has enhanced opportunities and outcomes for pupils, improved pupil learning and broadened curriculum choice. Furthermore, teachers and principals report that collaboration has improved their capacity in many significant ways as well, whether this is through the formal or informal sharing of experience, access to resources and expertise, or opportunities for professional development and learning. There is also evidence that the experience of collaboration, after an average of less than five years, is already leading to the re-engineering of some school systems and processes in ways which is enhancing the learning environment.”

“..consensus is that collaboration is having a very positive impact: it is leading to enhanced opportunities, outcomes and practices, for pupils and teachers, and that it is helping schools not only meet their core educational goals, but to promote positive innovations. Perhaps most striking of all is the almost unanimous view that pupil and teacher confidence has been enhanced by participation in shared education”.

School improvement in the Shared Education Signature Project: the views of teachers and principals – Queen’s University Belfast (qub.ac.uk)

The importance of bringing together children and young people from different backgrounds cannot therefore be overstated; it can make a real and lasting difference not just for those children and young people as individuals, but to society in general.

1.2 Context

It is important to have an understanding of how and where Shared Education and the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy* sit within a broader political, social, policy, and economic context.

Political/Social Context

A commitment to Shared Education has been outlined by the Executive in successive Programmes for Government. **The New Decade, New Approach** agreement restated this commitment to Shared Education amongst political parties, affirming that ***“to help build a shared and integrated society The Executive will support educating children and young people of different backgrounds together in the classroom”***.

Through the peace process and a range of related policy interventions, we have made great strides towards enhanced community relations over the past



three decades, however Northern Ireland continues to experience segregation, sectarianism and periods of heightened community tensions and/or violence. The presence of paramilitary groups also continues to pose a threat. Those impacts often disproportionately fall on those communities which experience greater levels of socio-economic deprivation.

Evidently, there are still a range of barriers faced by our children and young people in terms of helping them to reach their full potential. Disturbances during 2021 highlight the continuing need to support shared solutions and to support our children and young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in the path towards peace and reconciliation. Education, and Shared Education in particular, is an integral part of that journey.

We know that connecting to the local community can be a challenge for many of our Shared Education partnerships and this is something we will seek to address as part of the Communications Strategy aligned to the implementation of Mainstreaming.

We must also recognise that the social context in Northern Ireland has changed considerably over recent years in terms of population and demography, including, for example, increased numbers of newcomer families. In

light of increasing diversity and greater multi-culturalism, Shared Education has a crucial role to play in supporting broader community cohesion through promoting inclusivity and respect for others, which includes, but also reaches far beyond, the two main community identities into a much wider demographic. This includes helping to combat sectarianism, racism and all other forms of prejudice. In this way, Shared Education aligns closely with both the CRED policy and the Department's duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to have due regard to the promotion of equality of opportunity and the desirability of promoting good relations.

It is also prudent to touch upon the COVID-19 pandemic which has had a significant impact on the delivery of education, not least on Shared Education. Despite the obvious challenges, providers and learners involved in Shared Education provision have adapted admirably through the enhanced use of online technologies and platforms.

At the time of writing, the plans outlined in the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy* are based on a working assumption that face to face pupil contact will have safely resumed by September 2022 and without any further disruption.



Policy Context

At an international level, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out a range of rights for children. Articles of the UNCRC include the right to education, protection from discrimination, the right to freedom of expression and to have their opinions taken into account, whilst also placing a requirement on Governments to take all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures to implement children's rights.

Early in 2021, the NI Executive consulted on a draft Programme for Government (PfG), which it stated was "*based on a shared and strategic vision for the future which aims to improve wellbeing for all*", built around a framework comprised of strategic outcomes. Shared Education links to a number of outcomes in the draft PfG, primarily **"Our children and young people have the best start in life"** and **"We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect"**.

The DE Business Plan 2021/22 recognised the key importance of Shared Education, both in terms of meeting commitments outlined within *New Decade, New Approach*

and in terms of delivering upon the Department's own strategic priorities, excerpts below:

Under *DE's contribution to **New Decade, New Approach***,

"The Department will continue to encourage, facilitate and promote shared education. Sustaining the work on shared education beyond the lifetime of funded projects is a key consideration for the Department. The Minister has agreed to the development of a *Mainstreaming Shared Education strategy*, on a co-design basis with key stakeholders. The Department will also be focusing on the development of Shared Education programmes as part of EU Peace Plus programme, with the potential for additional schools to engage in shared education in the future". (p14)

Under the eight strategic priorities identified,

Strategic Priority 5: Improve the learning environment

"We promote equality of opportunity, respect for others, good relations and inclusivity and we provide modern, sustainable educational settings which are fit-for-purpose and facilitate shared learning" (p10)

And includes a specific commitment to the

“development of a strategy for sustainable mainstreaming of Shared Education by March 2022.”
(p38)

DE Business Plan 2021/22

Shared Education policy sits within a wider education policy framework designed to improve educational outcomes for children and young people and tackle the significant tail of educational underachievement that has characterised our education system.

A range of DE policies and strategies therefore have key connections to the aims and objectives of Shared Education. These include:

- **Every School a Good School (ESaGS)** - the overarching policy for school improvement includes a focus on the benefits of schools working in partnership. The four pillars identified within ESaGS are aligned with those outlined in the ETI’s *Developing Shared Education: A Framework for School Partnerships* (and equivalent for pre-school

and youth settings) which underpins and guides Shared Education delivery through the different phases i.e. Learner Centred, High Quality Learning & Teaching, Leadership and Community Connections.

- **Children and Young People’s Strategy (CYPS)**
- rooted in the UNCRC, the CYPS is designed to deliver improved well-being for children and young people in NI. Commitments in respect of Shared Education are included in the accompanying CYPS Three Year Delivery Plan 2021-24, particularly in support of outcomes 3 and 8, namely: “*Children and young people learn and achieve*” and “*Children and young people live in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted*”.
- **Community Relations, Equality and Diversity**
- outlines a guiding approach that all schools and other educational settings are expected to undertake throughout their work to promote fairness, respect and mutual understanding between different Section 75 groups and identities. The formal collaboration supported by Shared Education, and its broadening nature in response to a changing societal make up, means that there is significant crossover with CRED in terms of policy intent.

- **Schools for the Future – A Policy for Sustainable Schools** – applies to primary and post-primary sectors and is the driver for Area Planning. The primary objective of the policy is to ensure that all children have access to a quality education in a financially viable school regardless of background or where they live.
- **Learning Leaders – A Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning**
- **“A Fair Start”** – report published by the Expert Panel on educational underachievement on 1 June 2021. Covering 8 key areas and 47 actions for change, this report reflects the combination of factors needed to positively influence and support children and young people from every community in their educational journey.
- **Community Use of Schools** – schools are enabled and encouraged via relevant legislation (Article 140 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989), a range of DE policies, programmes such as Extended Schools, and operational guidance, to make their premises available for wider use when not otherwise required for education purposes. This is of

particular benefit in terms of promoting parental and community engagement.

- **Priorities for Youth policy** – improving young people’s lives through youth work.

Other Forms of Collaboration

Schools and other educational settings can also be engaged in a range of other forms of collaboration, such as Area Learning Communities, delivering the Entitlement Framework, and Extended Schools. Relationships built through Shared Education can facilitate, complement and enhance these other forms of collaboration and vice versa. However, there are clear distinctions between the different forms of collaboration in their purpose, target audience and benefits, and it is important that when it comes to funding, governance and monitoring and evaluation there is clear demarcation between the collaborations.

Wider Government Policy

There are also linkages with policies outside of the DE, in particular with The Executive Office (TEO) whose policy responsibility includes good relations generally, and also with the Department for the Economy (DfE) via its PEACE4 Youth project, and the Department of Communities (DfC)



in terms of its support for the community and voluntary sector.

Through the Executive's ***Together: Building a United Community*** (T:buc) Strategy, a series of headline actions are being taken forward which seek to deliver a transformed, reconciled and shared society. As well as support for SEC facilities (explored further in this chapter), this incorporates T:buc summer camps, United Youth, and the Urban Villages programme which includes support for schools and early years settings through the 'Schools of Sanctuary', 'Creative Schools' and 'Buddy Up' projects.

Shared Education also contributes to the Executive's programme for ***Tackling Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime***, taken forward through the Department of Justice, in terms of enhancing community relations, improving understanding and attitudes to others, improving educational outcomes, and keeping young people engaged in education.

Economic Context

The *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy* is being introduced against a backdrop of significant financial constraint and we must acknowledge the challenging

budgetary outlook which is anticipated to continue over future years.

Increased sharing and collaboration between schools and other educational settings fits into that context through its encouragement and promotion of greater efficiencies and more effective use of limited resources, thereby helping to ensure value for money.

With that in mind, the design and delivery of this Strategy therefore promotes use of existing resources and sustainable solutions in support of Shared Education provision.

1.3 *Sharing Works: A Policy for Shared Education – Progress Update*

Sharing Works, published in 2015, makes the case for Shared Education and sets out a vision to create a vibrant, self-improving education system that delivers educational benefits to learners while promoting equality and good relations. It is comprised of four broad areas for development and 14 key actions, emanating from the earlier MAG report on advancing Shared Education.

Substantial progress has been made to date in taking these forward. A table outlining the detail of each of the associated 14 key actions contained within *Sharing*



Works, along with an update on the current position and an assessment of progress, is attached at Appendix A.

The main developments are summarised below:

Area 1: Defining, Encouraging and Facilitating Shared Education

We have seen supporting legislation brought forward through the Shared Education (NI) Act 2016 which provides a consistent definition and outlines the purpose of Shared Education, as well as conferring relevant duties on a range of public bodies. This is outlined in more detail in section 1.4.

Co-ordinated support and advice for teachers/practitioners in planning and delivering Shared Education is well established within the Education Authority (EA). Work is ongoing to establish what those EA support structures for Shared Education partnerships may look like in the longer term, which will need to align with the requirements of the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*.

The other education and sectoral bodies impacted by Shared Education legislation have also utilised the powers granted by the Act to encourage and facilitate Shared Education. Through implementation of the *Mainstreaming*

Shared Education Strategy, there will be a further focus on improving the coordination and collaboration of all stakeholders in terms of delivering Shared Education.

The ETI has published *Developing Shared Education Frameworks* for schools, early years and youth settings to support the embedding of Shared Education. More detail on this is provided in the accompanying Appendix A.

The school Framework, informed by the views of principals, lead practitioners and learners, is currently in the process of being updated.

Area 2: Future funding of Shared Education

Funding commitments to support Shared Education over the period 2014 -18 were realised. Significant funding (approximately £25m) to support schools already engaged in sharing was made available through the DSC SESP with contributions from TEO, the DE and AP.

PEACE IV Shared Education programme (2014 - 2020) funding (€35m was initially awarded) has also been effectively utilised to further develop Shared Education provision, extending opportunities for new partnerships to be created on a North-North, North-South and

South-South basis for schools and pre-school settings with little or no prior history of sharing.

Further detail on funding streams to advance Shared Education is provided at section 1.5.

One of the most significant commitments under this area is to the development of sustainable long-term delivery arrangements for Shared Education (key action 5), specifically:-

“...DE will use the learning from [funded programmes], as well as other long standing practices of collaborative, inclusive and citizenship education, to determine how best to support educational establishments in offering Shared Education in the longer term ...”

Sharing Works (2015)

This *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy* reflects the outcome of that work, both in terms of assessing progress made to this point, and taking Shared Education forward over the coming years in a progressive and sustainable way.

Area 3: Structures for Shared Education

The *Together: Building a United Community Strategy* includes a target to commence new Shared Education Campuses. The DE is responsible for delivering this programme. It is aimed at providing capital assistance to schools to facilitate Shared Education (on a cross community basis) by either providing new shared educational facilities, enhancing existing shared facilities or through SECs. Capital funding for four SECs has been secured under the Fresh Start agreement announced in March 2016. An update on this work is provided at section 1.5.

A range of resources are available to help facilitate sharing between schools in a structural sense, these include a promotional leaflet issued by the DE in 2018 entitled [Options for Sharing and Integrating: A Short Guide for Schools](#); and [DE Circular 2015/15](#)





which provides advice and guidance on establishing Jointly Managed Schools. Further related guidance on Jointly Managed Schools has also been developed by the Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC) and the Catholic Schools' Trustee Service (CSTS).

An EA led Area Planning Working Group with representation from the DE, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), and other representatives of the key education and sectoral bodies has developed a paper on 'shared solutions', alongside a draft action plan to highlight the potential options for sharing which are open to schools in the context of the Area Planning process.

In a written statement made to the Assembly on 9 August 2021 which set out Area Planning priorities for 2022-2027, the Minister of Education outlined her expectation that ***"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"***.

Area 4: Embedding Sharing Throughout the Education System

A range of activity has furthered this aim over recent years.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective monitoring and evaluation arrangements for Shared Education have been put in place, according to the specific requirements of funded projects.

Partnerships engaged in Shared Education programmes have been encouraged to outline specific plans and goals for Shared Education in their School Development Plans (SDPs) (or equivalent) and annual action plans, including how they intend to engage with parents, carers and the wider community. Regular monitoring and evaluation of action plans was carried out.

The ETI has also played a key role to date in the evaluation of Shared Education across the education system to promote the sharing and development of effective practice. More detail on related activities to date is provided at Appendix A.



A comprehensive range of formal evaluations and research have been completed on funded Shared Education programmes and related strands of provision, including notably the final evaluation report on the progress and impact of the DSC SESP published by the ETI in 2018. The DE has also commissioned research to analyse the impact of Shared Education through a number of periodic and ad-hoc surveys including, the Young Life and Times and Kids' Life and Times surveys and the School Omnibus survey. In addition the DE 2019/20 Shared Education Pilot school survey, was conducted to seek views to inform the development of the long-term arrangements for Shared Education.

It is recognised that to support partnerships to fully embed Shared Education, further work is required in making sure that those participating are aware of the requirement that Shared Education must be identified as a key feature within all SDPs, or their equivalent, and is reflected accordingly in those plans.

Robust and effective monitoring and evaluation arrangements which can adequately support the implementation and delivery of the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*, both at partnership and system level, are being considered by the Department

in consultation with stakeholders, drawing on prior experience from funded Shared Education programmes. Further information relating to this is captured in Chapter 3, Area 5: '*Monitoring and Evaluation*' and Area 6: '*Governance and Accountability*'.

Developing the Workforce

There is a collective responsibility on all those involved in education to help re-inforce Shared Education, and relevant support needs to be in place for leaders and teachers/practitioners to enable them to do so.

The DE's Strategy for teacher professional development, *Learning Leaders*, published in 2016, reflects the ethos and principles of Shared Education. Key objectives of this Strategy include the promotion of collaborative working and sharing of effective practice and strengthening of leadership capacity in schools.

Capacity building and professional development to support Shared Education has been a key element of the funded programmes to date and has provided opportunities for education professionals in pre-school settings and schools to build capacity in Shared Education delivery which aids longer term sustainability.



This is further explored in Chapter 3, Area 2: '*Capacity Building*' and Area 3: '*Support and Resources*'.

A significant area of work taken forward through the DSC SESP was the development and funding of a self-supporting Network of Shared School Improvement (NSSI) which involves Shared Education partnerships clustering together on a geographical basis, with co-ordination provided by a central or "Hub" partnership. This has facilitated the dissemination of good practice and has furthered collaboration, allowing clusters to address local needs through development of teacher-led Joint Practice Development (JPD) programmes. See Chapter 3, Area 2: '*Capacity Building*' for more information.

EA engagement with the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) responsible for teacher training has led to some involvement in the delivery of capacity building elements of the funded projects. Further engagement is required to explore how learning around Shared Education can become further embedded in the initial teacher education experience and in the institutions' own approaches to partnership working to reflect the aims and objectives of Shared Education. This will include consideration of the development needs of the wider workforce including

early years and youth practitioners. Chapter 3, Area 2: '*Capacity Building*' has further information.

Alignment with educational policies

All DE policy teams must consider Shared Education in the development/ implementation of new policies/programmes or revision of existing ones. Specified Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs), covered by the Act, must take account of same and demonstrate how they are fulfilling their statutory duties in respect of Shared Education.

While progress has been made in some areas, there is still more work to be done to align relevant educational policies, both in terms of policy making and policy implementation, with Shared Education. In Chapter 3, '*Participation and Collaboration*' (Area 1) and '*Support and Resources*' (Area 3) outline how Shared Education will be embedded further within education policy.

The ETI carried out an evaluation of the impact of the CRED policy on schools and youth organisations in 2015, which drew on inspection findings for Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) learning in pre-school settings, Personal Development and Mutual Understanding



(PDMU) in primary schools and Learning for Life and Work (LLW) education in post-primary schools.

The Chief Inspector's Report (2016-18) highlighted the vital opportunities, provided by involvement in Shared Education partnerships, to extend children's work and to enhance children's learning in a range of ways. However, the Report also cautioned that Shared Education must be regarded as an integral part of learning and teaching rather than an 'add-on' and cited, as examples, PSED in the pre-school curriculum, PDMU in primary schools, and history education and Learning for Life and Work in post-primary schools, as curricular areas which should all reinforce Shared Education.

In 2018, an ETI Inspector was seconded to the DE for two years to support work on Shared Education. In November 2019, *A Pupil Pathway: A Resource for Teachers to Support Shared Education* ("the *Pupil Pathway*") was published. It was developed collaboratively by the EA, the DE, the ETI, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and provided lines of progression for pupils in the form of specific curricular outcomes. Further detail on work undertaken by the ETI is set out in Appendix A.

The production of a range of other supporting curriculum materials and resources by the CCEA has also been a positive development. It is recognised that further opportunities also exist through key subject areas such as Religious Studies or the Arts to help support Shared Education.

Special Schools/Learning Support Classes

Encouraging and securing participation of special schools in Shared Education is specifically identified as a key action in *Sharing Works*. Encouragingly, over half of all special schools (22 schools; 56%) are participating through funded Shared Education activity. This includes, for many, the opportunity to work in partnership and enable children attending those special schools to learn and socialise with peers attending mainstream schools.

At November 2021, there were a total of 319 specialist provision classes, often referred to as 'learning support classes', across 136 mainstream schools, 56 of which are involved in Shared Education partnerships.

Schools and other educational settings will continue to be encouraged and supported to give pupils, who have or may have Special Educational Needs (SEN), opportunities to engage in Shared Education learning



experiences, where possible. The EA are also consulting with practitioners in terms of identifying any barriers to participation for children who have or may have SEN, to help ensure the necessary support is available to enhance engagement levels in Shared Education.

The design of the supporting mainstreamed funding model will seek to take account of the additional support required for children who have SEN attending both special and mainstream schools. Further detail on this is provided in Chapter 3, Area 3: '*Support and Resources*'.

Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) settings have yet to be formally involved through the funded Shared Education programmes to date, which is recognised as a key area requiring further exploration moving forward.

Engagement with Parents, Carers and the Wider Community

Engagement with parents, carers and the wider community is recognised as an important aspect of any Shared Education partnership and individual settings generally. This aligns both with ESaGS and the pillars identified in the ETI *Developing Shared Education Frameworks* i.e. 'Community Connections'.

Whilst a degree of wider involvement has been possible at partnership level (for instance parental attendance at

partnership events), levels and forms of engagement vary amongst partnerships.

Higher levels of parental engagement have been a key positive identified for the Sharing from the Start project with parents of pre-school age children having been invited to participate in activities, therefore extending the benefits of the programme outside of the traditional pupil to pupil process.

Broadly speaking, securing parental engagement can prove more challenging as children get older. It is also acknowledged, as highlighted in previous ETI evaluation findings of DSC SESP, that community connections is an area for development in future Shared Education provision. Practical steps for how best to support effective wider engagement will be explored as we seek to implement this Strategy. The PEACE PLUS programme for instance may provide opportunities to develop this area further in terms of a more strategic approach to engaging with families and communities.

Engagement with Children and Young People

The importance of involving those who directly benefit from shared learning experiences is recognised and there are many examples of good practice of this being implemented by Shared Education partnerships. A range

of resources are available to assist educational settings in effectively enabling the student/pupil voice, including the ETI *Developing Shared Education Frameworks*. This crucial aspect of provision will continue to be encouraged through the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*.

1.4 Shared Education Act

In the year following the publication of *Sharing Works*, the [Shared Education Act \(NI\) 2016](#) was introduced.

The Act places a duty on both the DE and the EA to "*encourage, facilitate and promote shared education*" and to consider Shared Education in both policy and operational work. The Act also confers the duty to consider Shared Education and the power to "*encourage and facilitate*" Shared Education on named education and sectoral bodies³.

The Act provides a consistent definition of Shared Education, setting out the core components that are regarded as the minimum essential for the delivery of Shared Education as:-

³ Includes CCMS, YCNI, CCEA, and any sectoral body (one recognised by the DE as representing the interests of grant-aided schools of a particular description and to which grants are paid under Section 4 of the Education Act (NI) 2014.

Shared education means the education together of -

- (a) those of different religious belief, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons; **and***
- (b) those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not,*

which is secured by the working together and co-operation of two or more relevant providers.

"Relevant providers" may be pre-school settings, schools, or youth work settings. A single educational establishment that can demonstrate a mix of religious belief and socio-economic status **would not** satisfy the definition of Shared Education.

The Act states that the purpose of Shared Education is:

- a) To deliver educational benefits to children and young persons;*
- b) To promote the efficient and effective use of resources;*
- c) To promote equality of opportunity;*
- d) To promote good relations; and*
- e) To promote respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion.*



The Act also specifies the detail to be included in a report on the operation of the Act which it requires the DE to lay before the Assembly no more than two years following Royal Assent (May 2016) and on a biennial basis thereafter. The most recent reports are available on the Department of Education's Shared Education web pages⁴.

1.5 Funding

In keeping with the commitment previously outlined in *Sharing Works*, the DE has provided a range of funding streams to advance Shared Education to date:-

- **£25m through the Shared Education Signature Project**, delivered as part of the Delivering Social Change framework, which included contributions from TEO and AP.

The aim of the DSC SESP was to further develop and embed Shared Education in schools that were already engaged in, and could demonstrate experience of, delivering Shared Education activities.

Funding for pupil to pupil engagement under DSC SESP commenced in the 2015/16 academic year and ended

4 [Shared Education | Department of Education \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk)

in June 2019 for around 370 schools including nursery schools and nursery units, representing 159 partnerships. Subsequently, funding towards capacity building in former DSC SESP supported schools was extended until June 2022, to complete activities suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over its life-cycle, the DSC SESP project has been operated via the EA with support, advice and guidance provided to schools through their team of Shared Education Development Officers.

- **£3.2m 2019/20 Shared Education pilot programme** - following cessation of pupil activity in June 2019, the DE funded delivery of a pilot funding model over the course of the 2019/20 academic year for partnerships previously supported through the DSC SESP.

The pilot programme represented an important first step towards mainstreaming, providing an opportunity to trial funding arrangements designed to support the implementation of Shared Education in schools in the longer term.

- **£3.8m Shared Education 'Transition Phase'** funding provided by the DE over the 2020/21 and



2021/22 academic years to support partnerships, formerly involved in the DSC SESP, to maintain partnership relationships and further build capacity, in the period leading up to the introduction of mainstreaming anticipated for September 2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on Shared Education in terms of pupil participation, with the majority of face to face contact suspended. In view of the disruption caused, the then Minister agreed that the 2020/21 academic year would be a 'Transition Year' for former DSC SESP schools. While funding for pupil engagement was suspended during this time, the former DSC SESP partnerships continued to receive allowances to support teacher professional learning and effective leadership aimed at building capacity in those settings, to aid education recovery and plan for the resumption of pupil contact when deemed safe to do so.

In March 2021, due to the continuing impact of COVID-19, the Minister agreed to extend the transition period for a second academic year until June 2022.

- **€35.3m (initially awarded) PEACE IV Shared Education programme (2014–2020), a**

co-funded co-operation programme aimed at promoting peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the six border counties of Ireland, with funding from the European Union (EU), UK government, and match funding contributions made available through the DE and the Department of Education (Republic of Ireland). The funding supports Shared Education partnerships within Northern Ireland, within the border counties of Ireland, and cross border.

The PEACE IV Shared Education programme consists of two distinct projects which have enabled pre-school settings and schools with limited or no prior experience of sharing to participate, and has therefore greatly expanded the reach of Shared Education across Northern Ireland. The two projects are:-

- **Sharing from the Start (SfS)**, led by the Early Years Organisation working with the Fermanagh Trust, and National Childhood Network in the South; and
- **Collaboration through Sharing in Education (CASE)**, led by the EA in partnership with the international co-operation body, Léargas.



PEACE IV CASE has an allocation of €28.9m which supports the operation of Shared Education partnerships in almost 290 NI schools currently, including those involved in partnerships with schools in the Republic of Ireland (RoI), based on 30 hours pupil contact over each academic year.

PEACE IV SfS was awarded €4.3m to deliver Shared Education in pre-school settings. The project has supported 73 NI settings, at its highest point, including those involved in partnerships with settings in RoI, made up of statutory nursery schools, nursery units attached to primary schools, or voluntary/private (non-statutory) pre-school education providers with DE funded places.

In light of limited pupil engagement in 2020/21 as a result of COVID-19, extensions have been sought from SEUPB by both projects. Formal approval has been given to extend pupil activity until March 2023 for CASE partnerships for an additional 2 terms in the 2022/23 academic year. The PEACE IV SfS project was extended for a further year, running until June 2022, to allow all existing PEACE IV SfS partnerships to have the opportunity to engage in at least three years of shared classes.

Capital Investment

The resources made available through the above mentioned programmes have been complemented by significant capital investment aimed at enhancing a shared physical infrastructure. Those major capital programmes include:

- **Strule Shared Education Campus Programme** (total cost £230m including the cost of construction and client overheads); and
- **Shared Education Campuses Programme** (£76.5m).

The Strule Shared Education Campus (SSEC) programme, which is intended to deliver a range of educational, societal and community benefits, is a long standing Executive commitment and one of the Department's top priorities. It involves support for post-primary and special education sectors on a collaborative basis, facilitating the construction of six new build schools and associated Shared Education facilities, co-located on the site of a former military barracks in Omagh, provisionally planned for construction to complete in 2026.



The Programme is well underway with significant investment with spend at March 2022 of £47m. Work continues at pace across many of the individual projects. Phase 1 has been completed and Arvalee School and Resource Centre opened in 2016. The programme is supported with monies made available from the Fresh Start Agreement.

The separate SEC programme is a headline action contained in the T:buc Strategy and initially funded with Fresh Start resources. Funding is provided to create Shared Education facilities for schools already embedded in a strong sharing partnership.

At March 2022, three SEC projects were proceeding with approved Business Cases (St Mary's, Limavady and Limavady High School; Ballycastle High School and Cross & Passion College, Ballycastle; and Moy Regional Primary School and St John's Primary School, Moy). A Business Case for a fourth SEC project, involving Brookeborough Primary School and St Mary's Primary School, Brookeborough, was being finalised. The forerunner, Limavady SEC, was already in construction phase with a completion date of March 2023. At this time, alternative funding options for the third call SEC projects were being explored.

PEACE PLUS programme (2021-2027)

The successor to the previous PEACE and INTERREG programmes will provide some £1.14bn in total across 22 Investment Areas to promote peace and prosperity in NI and the border region.

PEACE PLUS Theme 3 'Empowering and Investing in Young People' includes the *Shared Learning Together* programme (allocation of €51.2m) which will seek to expand, amplify and build upon the success of the existing PEACE IV Shared Education programme.

The *Shared Learning Together* programme retains a primary focus on Shared Education and will support increased participation across early years settings, primary schools, post-primary schools and special schools including those in the integrated sector whilst also further extending Shared Education across Youth settings.

It is also expected to provide opportunities to address other complementary or enabling policy areas such as tackling educational underachievement and disadvantage, digital approaches which will contribute to the development and sustainability of Shared Education partnerships, youth work capacity building, cross border school and youth civic exchanges, as well as awareness



raising programmes outlining the benefits of shared and integrated education and collaborative initiatives which enable stakeholders from all education sectors to further develop approaches to shared learning.

1.6 Building the Strategy

With the gradual implementation of the various funding streams highlighted above and the advent of the Act which clearly defines its nature and purpose, we have seen participation in Shared Education grow significantly over recent years. It is anticipated that, with the commencement of the forthcoming PEACE PLUS programme, further educational settings will be able to avail of project funding aimed at supporting Shared Education.

According to the last published official figures which reflect the position at June 2021, a total of 640 primary, post-primary and special schools (approximately 63% overall) and 60 statutory and non-statutory pre-school settings were supported through either the DSC SESP or PEACE IV Shared Education programmes. As a result of COVID-19 there has been an 80% reduction in the overall number of children and young people involved;

falling from 87,385 participating at June 2019 to 17,476 at June 2021. Whilst there has been a reduction in the overall number of settings and children and young people taking part since 2019, these are expected to return to, and in time, exceed pre-COVID levels, and the number of primary, post primary and special schools involved in the funded Shared Education programmes has in fact remained steady at 640.

The third Report to the Assembly laid in March 2022 outlined the impact that the pandemic has had on Shared Education participation using data available at the end of the last full academic year (June 2021).

For many schools therefore, Shared Education has become embedded in school life, and it is a central component of curriculum delivery, aligned with SDP priorities. Similar progress has been made in participating pre-schools supported via the DSC SESP and PEACE IV SfS project.

Shared Education partnerships are helping to realise a range of benefits for children and young people, teachers/practitioners, families and schools/pre-schools alike. We have also seen great strides in the support available for partnerships to deliver Shared Education through professional capacity building opportunities.



Whilst all of this, coupled with levels of participation, are very encouraging and, of course, there is much to be celebrated, there is still much more to be done in bringing communities together.

There is a need to maintain the momentum built to date so that the gains made thus far are not lost. Alongside these efforts, it is recognised that there is room for continued growth and development of Shared Education, particularly for those education providers which have not yet had the opportunity to be involved, and also as a concept more generally. This will ensure that Shared Education is embedded still further within the culture and ethos of individual schools/settings and our education system as a whole. This is drawn out further in Chapter 2 'Vision and Guiding Principles' and Chapter 3, Area 1: 'Participation and Collaboration'.

With an eye on the future, we must also plan for how Shared Education partnerships can be supported beyond the lifespan of the current (and upcoming) PEACE funded projects so that this good work can continue when those resources are no longer available.

Ultimately, we wish to reach a point where we provide an opportunity for all schools and other educational settings to be involved in Shared Education.

The development of a Mainstreaming Strategy was considered the next logical step to ensure that we can:

- maximise opportunities for children and young people to participate in meaningful, quality shared learning;
- create the conditions whereby Shared Education becomes accepted and standard practice;
- fulfil the commitments made in *Sharing Works*; and
- ensure compliance with the legislative duties placed on both the DE and the EA to 'encourage, facilitate and promote' Shared Education, as outlined in the Act.

In 2020, the Department established a Mainstreaming Shared Education Project Board (MSEPB) to consider the evidence emerging from funded programmes and to develop recommendations for the Minister on how best to support the long term delivery arrangements for Shared Education. The Project Board includes representation from the DE, the EA, the CCMS, the ETI and TEO.

The Board also has access to a Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG), membership of which is drawn from a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in, and knowledge of, Shared Education. This includes representatives from



education and sectoral bodies, universities, further and higher education institutions, teaching unions, government departments, community relations organisations and experienced practitioners from Shared Education partnerships.

A proposed funding model designed to support pupil to pupil activity in school Shared Education partnerships entering mainstreamed Shared Education was drafted in late 2020. This model was informed from the findings of the earlier 2019/20 mainstreaming pilot programme. Consultation on the proposed funding model took place in January 2021 with the SRG and relevant policy areas in the DE and has since been amended to take account of the feedback received. Work continues on finalising the funding model which will be put in place to accompany the implementation of mainstreaming.

Following the consultation, the then Minister agreed that priority should be given to the development of a *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*, which would seek to address all the elements required to successfully implement mainstreaming across the NI education system, in addition to the supporting funding model.

Development of that Strategy has been taken forward by a Working Group made up of departmental officials and

officers from the EA with particular expertise in this area, and in consultation with the ETI and the SRG. Oversight of this work has been provided by the formal MSEPB.

The initial stages of the development process were also assisted by a 'Strategic Insights Programme' for Mainstreaming Shared Education, facilitated by the Department of Finance's Innovation Lab, with tailored events held between March-May 2021. This provided a new and exciting opportunity to gather thoughts and ideas from across a number of stakeholder bodies and organisations, including schools and student representatives, on how we can address the challenge of moving from funded programmes to mainstreamed Shared Education, and what should be contained as part of the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*. A significant number of suggestions put forward as part of the Insights Programme already dovetail with current or planned activity; a range of others have been incorporated within the Strategy where practicable.

Further targeted consultation was carried out with the SRG members who considered a draft version of this Strategy document in late 2021, again with any necessary amendments made following the Group's feedback.



The *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy* therefore has not been produced in isolation. Its content and design reflects significant consultation with a range of other key stakeholders, draws upon a wealth of evidence and research on Shared Education, including independently commissioned reports and evaluation findings from specific projects.

For instance, the learning from both the DSC SESP and NSSI has helped inform and contribute to the future policy direction for Shared Education as set out in this Strategy. The 2019/20 mainstreaming pilot and accompanying evaluation has also been fundamental in helping to shape development of the Strategy, in particular the ongoing development of a supporting funding model.

Fundamentally, we have listened to and acted upon a broad range of views put forward, following an evidenced based approach to designing a Strategy which is both aspirational and can meet the needs of education providers and children and young people.

It is anticipated, at this stage, that mainstreaming will be introduced on a phased basis commencing in September 2022. Implementation of the Strategy is recognised as a significant undertaking over the longer-term, and

a process which will inevitably bring with it a range of challenges to overcome and layers of complexity given its scale. A proposed timeline of actions to be taken forward will make up part of the accompanying 'Delivery Plans' for mainstreaming which is explained later in this document (see Chapter 4 '*Conclusion and Implementation*').

1.7 Way Forward

In light of the benefits and impact of Shared Education, we wish to embed the concept further and expand its reach so that many more of our schools, and other educational settings, are supported and enabled to help our children and young people realise those benefits through the different stages of their education and development.

The *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*, set out in detail over the following Chapters, seeks to build on the success of collaboration and sharing to date, facilitated through participation in time-bound funded Shared Education programmes, and the lessons learned from those projects.

Through implementation of this Strategy and subsequent Delivery Plans, our ultimate goal is to ensure that Shared Education becomes standard practice and the 'norm' for all.



Chapter 2: VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2.1 Shaping the Strategy

This Strategy has been guided and shaped by many informed contributions, including several evaluations of the funded Shared Education programmes, seeking views from practitioners, children and young people, and academic research. The DE also commissioned the NI Innovation Lab, with the aim of seeking consensus on a strategic direction, gathering a range of ideas and suggestions to help inform the Strategy.

2.2 Vision

Our vision for Mainstreaming Shared Education is:

An education system where Shared Education is embedded in partnership working across religious and socio-economic divides, that delivers educational benefits, and promotes a culture of inclusivity, respect and mutual understanding, contributing to community cohesion and good relations.

The vision for Shared Education reflects the DE's wider vision –

"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."

It is recognised that this is a long term Strategy and will take time to deliver. Strategic priorities/goals will be set for the short term (1-2 years); medium term (3-5 years) and long term (6-10 years).

2.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of the Strategy is:

To establish Shared Education as a core feature of educational provision in Northern Ireland, that is affordable, sustainable and accessible to all.



The objectives of the Strategy are:

Participation and Collaboration: To provide the opportunity for all children and young people to participate in quality Shared Education, on a continued and progressive basis.

Capacity Building: To develop the education workforce, so it is equipped to deliver and support quality Shared Education.

Support and Resources: To provide the infrastructure and resources to support Shared Education partnerships to deliver quality Shared Education.

Communication: To promote a common and widespread understanding of the definition of Shared Education, its purpose, benefits, how to get involved, and its relationship to other policy areas.

Monitoring and Evaluation: To measure the impacts of Shared Education, including the evaluation of attitudinal change, at both a partnership and system level.

Governance and Accountability: To implement delivery arrangements for Shared Education over the longer term that are sustainable, and provide value for money, accountability and governance of public funds.

2.4 Intended Outcomes

The intended outcomes of this Strategy are:

- Children and young people have quality Shared Education learning experiences on a continued and progressive basis.
- A competent and well trained education workforce delivering and supporting quality Shared Education.
- The necessary infrastructure and resources are in place to assist partnerships to deliver quality Shared Education, and to promote the efficient and effective use of resources.
- The purpose, benefits and impact of Shared Education are understood across the education system and by practitioners, parents, stakeholders and the wider community.
- An agreed process is in place to measure the impact of Shared Education and to evaluate attitudinal change.
- Robust arrangements are in place to support the efficient and effective delivery of Shared Education.



2.5 Guiding Principles

The definition and purpose of Shared Education are clearly set out in the Act. Sharing between schools or other education settings must meet the definition in the Act and fulfil the purpose of the Act to be truly described as Shared Education.

Based on the Act and the co-design process, the development of this Strategy has been guided by the key principles set out below:

- **Learner centred:** Help children and young people to become valuable contributors to a shared, peaceful and prosperous society.
 - **Collaboration:** Working together to embed Shared Education into existing educational policies and practice.
 - **Good Relations:** Promote equality of opportunity, good relations and respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion.
-
- **Educational Benefits:** Contribute to improved learning experiences provided for, and outcomes attained by, pupils.
 - **Evidence Informed:** Reflect on evaluation and research undertaken to inform the development of the Strategy.
 - **Efficient and effective:** Ensure the efficient and effective use of limited resources, to improve value for money, in the delivery of Shared Education.
 - **Statutory Duties:** Comply with Departmental statutory duties including, but not limited to: encouraging and facilitating Irish Medium and Integrated education; having due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations; and having due regard to rural needs.



Part B



Chapter 3: KEY AREAS TO SUPPORT DELIVERY OF MAINSTREAMED SHARED EDUCATION

The following sections in Chapter 3 outline the current position, the evidence base and high level statements of intent on how we plan to mainstream Shared Education. The work is divided into six key areas which align with the findings of the Insight Lab and the identified outcomes for the Strategy.

3.1 Area 1: Participation and Collaboration

Objective: To provide the opportunity for all children and young people to participate in quality Shared Education, on a continued and progressive basis.

What do we mean by “Participation and Collaboration”?

The participation and collaboration of Shared Education partnerships and wider education system contributing to the advancement and embedding of Shared Education.

The mainstreaming of Shared Education seeks to provide opportunities for all children and young people to participate in high quality Shared Education, delivered through educational settings including pre-schools, primary schools, post-primary schools, special schools, Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) and youth settings.

To achieve this, all those with a role in education in Northern Ireland will need to play a part.

In educational settings, teachers and practitioners, support staff, leaders and pupils themselves will be involved in making Shared Education a normal and accepted part of their organisation’s culture and operation. To facilitate this, organisations with a role in developing or implementing education policy, in supporting or representing educational settings, in developing the workforce or in providing inspection or other services to the education system, must also embed Shared Education into all that they do.



Beyond the school gate and outside of the education system, there are others who will have a role to play – other government departments who share or align with the goals of Shared Education, local authorities with an interest in good relations, parents, community and voluntary organisations who can help to deliver shared learning experiences, and others with a vested interest in Shared Education.

Crucially, the NI Executive and Assembly, who in recognition of the benefits of Shared Education have enacted legislation placing duties and providing powers on a number of organisations to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education, are key to the successful mainstreaming of Shared Education. The NI Assembly's role, in empowering and enabling those organisations to deliver on those duties and powers, will be critical to the successful implementation of this Strategy.

Where are we, what have we achieved?

Children and Young People

Increases in participation since the introduction of the Act in 2016 have been largely driven by the funded Shared Education programmes i.e. DSC SESP and PEACE IV. At June 2019, the last complete academic year before the

outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were 87,385 pupils in 716 pre-school, primary, post-primary and special school settings funded through these Shared Education programmes. In terms of pupil numbers, uptake is both higher and has increased at a greater rate in the primary school phase than in the post-primary school phase.

Appendix B provides the breakdown of participating schools, by Shared Education funding programme across school phases, together with changes in levels of participation between June 2019 and June 2021.

Schools/Partnerships

The number of teachers and practitioners involved in Shared Education has also grown as the funded programmes have engaged more settings and more pupils. Teachers' involvement has been focused on planning, delivery and evaluation of Shared Education in collaboration with their peers from partner settings, and on participation in capacity building activities.

At June 2020, 7,468 early years' practitioners and teachers had completed training funded through DSC SESP and PEACE IV, which has helped to build capacity in the teaching workforce to deliver Shared Education. The evaluations from the participants were used to inform



and improve future Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) provision.

The involvement and support of governors is crucial for successful Shared Education. Since the development of the EA-delivered Shared Education Board of Governor programme in 2018, there have been over 300 participants up to October 2021. Through the SfS project 495 governors or equivalent have been engaged in training/capacity building in the period September 2017 to June 2021. There have also been examples of other education organisations providing Board of Governor training on Shared Education.

Youth Service

Shared Education delivered via youth service work builds upon and complements the opportunities created through shared pupil activity in the formal education sector. The Youth Service enhances, deepens knowledge and develops values that support the Shared Education learning experiences in schools to have a greater impact on learners' attitudes and dispositions.

The non-operation of the Youth Council Northern Ireland (YCNI) since April 2019 has meant that the duty placed on YCNI through the Act, has not been actioned since

that time. The Minister is considering options on the future of the YCNI, taking into account the views of youth sector organisations alongside with the New Decade, New Approach commitment to review Arms-Length Bodies with a view to their rationalisation.

The EA Youth Service has reflected Shared Education in its work plans and, where possible, has sought to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education despite the absence of dedicated funding. Shared Education has been a feature in planning youth services, resulting in specific actions within the Regional Youth Development Plan 2020-2023 to develop and pilot curriculum resources. The EU's PEACE PLUS programme will seek to further develop and embed Shared Education within youth work settings through programmes which are co-designed by young people and youth workers.

Parents

Parental engagement in Shared Education, mirroring the experience in education generally, is most prevalent in pre-school and primary age groups. In some partnerships, parents are engaged in the planning, delivery and shared learning experiences. In 2018/19, there were 8,649 parents involved in programmes within the DSC SESP and,



over the period September 2017 to June 2021, 15,675 parents were engaged in the SfS project.

Community

Shared Education partnerships work with a range of external organisations, including community relations bodies, Further Education (FE) Colleges, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), environmental groups and local community groups to enhance the shared learning for pupils. However, a small number of partnerships have reported that they have faced and overcome challenges from the community in relation to Shared Education.

System Level

The Shared Education Act places a legal duty upon the DE and the EA to 'encourage, facilitate, and promote' Shared Education. In addition, the DE, the EA, CCMS, CCEA and YCNI have a responsibility to consider Shared Education when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans; and when designing and delivering public services.

Those ALBs, in line with the provisions set out in the Act, have all taken an active role in advancing Shared

Education and promoting its benefits to the groups and sectors they represent. Education and sectoral bodies refer to Shared Education in their annual business plans and are involved in areas such as the development of resources to support Shared Education, participation in capacity building activities, the oversight and delivery of funded programmes, and are involved in Shared Education celebration and promotional events.

Other government and non-government agencies who, through their involvement in education and/or good relations, have participated in the advancement of Shared Education, include:

- TEO, through the Delivering Social Change programme and the Together: Building a United Community funding streams, has helped partnerships enhance their shared learning experiences outside school boundaries.
- HEIs have contributed to the gathering of evidence, ideas and knowledge for the progression of Shared Education. Their expertise has been used to develop resources, for research purposes and for the professional development of teachers.

- Local councils have helped partnerships connect with their local community organisations to broaden the shared experiences for children and young people.
- There are examples of businesses and other organisations working collaboratively with DE and the EA supporting partnerships and the development of Shared Education.

What have we learned?

Pupil Level

- Many pupils spoke very positively about Shared Education programmes, in particular about the opportunities they provided to **develop new friendships** and **enriched learning experiences**.
- Pupils often commented that all schools should be engaged in Shared Education and pupils should all have the opportunity to be involved. Pupils at both primary and post-primary level agreed that they would like to have Shared Education experiences **more often**.
- Pupils valued the opportunity to enjoy **social down time**, such as shared lunch or playtime, with their peers across the partnership.

- Many pupils agreed that Shared Education should continue and at post-primary level, pupils emphasised that Shared Education is **effectively continuing to break down barriers**. While being proud of their own school's ethos, pupils identified with, and felt a sense of belonging to, their Shared Education partnership.
- It was clear from the reports that, as all pupils and settings are unique, Shared Education programmes should be enjoyable and provide valuable learning experiences **relevant to the particular context and circumstances** of the partnership.
- In the effective practice, **joint school councils** played an important role in shaping the development of the partnerships and the views of the pupils were listened to, valued and acted upon.
- Feedback from some post-primary pupils indicated that if they had to select **key times in their schooling experience**, they would highlight primary level (with a focus on interface areas), year 8 and 6th form/post 16.
- It is **not practical for every child in every setting to be involved in Shared Education each year**



- for instance, around 50% of pupils across current Shared Education partnerships are participating in shared activity, with primary schools currently having higher participation rates than post-primary schools. The need for detailed planning and other priorities within schools means that Shared Education is not possible across all post-primary classes and/or year groups.

- That **engagement from an early age** at pre-school level can help embed Shared Education as the norm in a pupil's learning experience. Research has recognised that children are not born with prejudice but they are influenced by family, society and their environment. Therefore, early intervention is crucial in shaping mind-sets. The PEACE IV supported SfS and CASE projects have shown that being involved in Shared Education gave the children opportunities to meet other adults, with evidence that they were comfortable and at ease. The children adapted well to meeting new people in different environments, recognising that it pushed their boundaries and enhanced their learning experiences. Importantly, involving children in their early/formative years in Shared Education will contribute to them developing positive attitudes and dispositions towards others.

- The **range of learning experiences** can be enhanced at each stage of learning, helping a child better adapt to transitions between stages of their formal education and through informal education, such as in involvement in youth activities. For older children, involvement in Shared Education has helped to reinforce the importance of accepting differences to help positively influence attitudes and behaviours, thereby contributing towards a shared society.
- **Regular sustained contact** is required for Shared Education to deliver the desired outcomes. Feedback from focus groups emphasised that setting minimum levels of contact is important as it is considered that children and young people meeting together is the key element to successful Shared Education. It is also recognised that there are challenges to meeting face to face in certain circumstances e.g. for very young children moving between settings, or if there are issues with transport links. Feedback from some primary schools suggested that increased online collaboration via video calls should be considered where physical face-to-face contact is not possible or practical. This has the added advantage of helping children prepare for a society ever more reliant on



digital technology and, if included, could enable some engagement for all year groups.

- The early years shared sessions have **nurtured equality and diversity**, allowing all children the opportunity to participate and learn from one another.
- Feedback from early years practitioners and feeder schools identified an **increase in children's confidence when transitioning between pre-school settings and school**.
- Evidence from PEACE IV programme evaluations indicated that involvement of children in Shared Education as part of their overall education has contributed **to positive behaviours and attitudes towards different communities**, and many close relationships emerging over the duration of the projects, with **friendships extended into home/community life**.
- Feedback from a CASE partnership, where pupils in the **Learning Support Classes** participate in Shared Education activities, highlights the **broadening of the pupils' educational experience**, allowing them to see other schools and

meet other children and staff. Likewise, the children in the other schools have had the opportunity to mix with children with a variety of needs, some for the first time, and they have gained an **understanding of diversity** in this regard.

Teacher/Practitioner Level

- **Teachers/practitioners have a critical role** in the delivery of Shared Education, a role which requires commitment in terms of planning, pedagogy and role-modelling partnership working.
- Key to the success of shared learning is comprehensive and **collaborative planning** by teachers/practitioners prior to lessons which helps ensure that the learning experiences are inclusive and that account is taken of the children and young people's individual learning and social and emotional needs. Planning should include engaging in dialogue with children and young people to shape Shared Education programmes and exploring a range of new and existing resources and teaching strategies to deliver enjoyable learning experiences to those involved. They also need time to implement and evaluate shared learning experiences.

- Teachers need to be able to avail of opportunities to acquire the **skills, competence and capability** to deliver shared lessons (see also Area 2: '*Capacity Building*').
- The main challenge identified is the **time commitment** involved in planning and administrating shared classes, although many appreciate that this is necessary to ensure the success of the programmes.
- Engagement in Shared Education provides opportunity for teachers/practitioners to reflect upon and review their practice and **contribute positively to the development of quality practice within the setting**.

Leadership Level

- Leaders play a vital role in **embedding the culture and ethos** of Shared Education within their organisation.
- In the most effective practice, leaders had a **clear vision for Shared Education** which was embraced by the whole school community. In these partnerships, Shared Education featured prominently

in the schools' development plans and was an important contributor to school improvement.

- **Embedding Shared Education** within SDPs is seen as crucial for the mainstreaming of Shared Education, and a clear demonstration of commitment by Boards of Governors and school leaders.
- It is recognised that leaders are faced with a number of challenges and priorities within their organisations and that Shared Education, although important, may not always be high on their **list of priorities**.
- **Leaders new to Shared Education need support** to understand the aims and objectives to deliver effective practice in Shared Education.

Partnership Level

- Established partnerships can experience **challenges to their participation** in Shared Education which include location, logistics and time-tabling issues in post-primary settings. However, localised solutions have been developed to address these challenges which can be shared across the system and may assist other partnerships faced with similar issues.

- There is recognition that partnerships are at different **stages and contexts** which can bring challenges in the delivery of Shared Education. Particular issues raised include pupil numbers, class sizes, rurality and community dynamics. Cross-border partnership working through the PEACE IV Shared Education projects has brought a different dynamic and additional learning and benefits to Shared Education.
- Other challenges have been brought about through **changes in circumstances** within partnerships, such as school closures, a change in leadership and significant pressures due to conflicting priorities.
- Some partnerships simply see Shared Education as a method of collaboration for educational benefits only, rather than an opportunity to improve community relations and to contribute to the delivery of CRED policy commitments. In some partnerships, Shared Education is regarded as an 'add-on' rather than an **integral part of learning and teaching**; this was particularly evident in post-primary partnerships.
- **Barriers to participation** have been identified which can impact on new schools or educational settings seeking to engage in Shared Education for

the first time. These include geographical isolation, population demographics, lack of knowledge, available funding, and community resistance. There can also be challenges which affect the participation of certain sectors/settings e.g. Irish Medium, and special schools.

- The **involvement of youth services** in a small number of school partnerships made a **positive contribution** to developing the pupils' leadership and self-advocacy skills. In the effective practice, this learning was consolidated through evening youth programmes which furthered the pupils' understanding of other communities and cultures and strengthened their friendships.
- **Planning in pre-school partnerships** can be difficult where one setting with morning and afternoon sessions is partnered with a setting which provides a morning or full-time session only.

Parents and Community Level

- Evidence from evaluation reports indicates that highly effective partnerships **engage parents in the planning, delivery and evaluation** of Shared Education. Partnerships overcame parental concerns



about, or opposition to, Shared Education by highlighting the beneficial learning outcomes for the pupils.

- Where partnerships created the environment or provided the opportunity, parents reported that they also enjoyed **developing friendships with parents** from the partnership school(s). In addition, the parents stated that they felt welcomed by the staff of the other school(s) and were comfortable in new and unfamiliar environments. The modelling of good relations and friendships by the parents and the staff in the presence of the pupils was identified by the parents and the staff as a valuable outcome.
- A small number of partnerships reported that they faced **community opposition to Shared Education**, but this only increased their resolve to progress the work in the best interests of their pupils and to promote and celebrate their shared learning in the community. Shared Education enabled partnerships, and in particular children and young people, to model good community relationships across and within communities.

- Feedback from pre-school settings indicated that Shared Education must **embrace wider support networks involving parents, families and communities** as well as schools and education providers. It was suggested that opportunities must be provided for parents from diverse backgrounds to share their beliefs, concerns and positive learning experiences across socio-economic, ethnic, cultural and gender borders with other parents and agencies. Furthermore, there needs to be outreach work built in to reach hard to access or hard to engage families in order to address barriers to participation and ensure equality of opportunity. Such approaches must be fully understood and supported by Management Committees and Boards of Governors and across the community, voluntary and statutory sectors.
- Shared Education **experiences, leading to connections and friendships**, will positively influence children's behaviours in the future in terms of building cross-community links and friendships. Opportunities for children to meet outside of school (with support from parents) will contribute to the longer-term benefits of sharing.

- Pre-school settings indicate that Shared Education has **enabled parents from disparate communities/sides of the border to engage with one another** in a purposeful manner.
- Where **parents/carers are engaged in programme activity** it has enabled them to begin to recognise the benefits of Shared Education for their children. It has also strengthened relationships between home and school/staff, enabling open communication and building trust, thus improving outcomes for children, particularly those in disadvantaged areas.
- **Engagement with the community** through Shared Education activity inspires wider society representatives to partake in activity, i.e. Fire service, Police etc.

System Level

- Effective and full embedding of Shared Education across the system will take **time and requires greater collaboration**. Connections and links need to be further strengthened between the DE/the EA and other government departments where work aligns with Shared Education and developed further

with other stakeholders, including education and sectoral bodies, government and non-government agencies. This will provide opportunities to share learning, recognise effective practice and explore opportunities to embed Shared Education across multiple organisations.

- **Education and Training Inspectorate support for Shared Education** through inspection, reporting on and disseminating effective practice contributes to the development and embedding of Shared Education, affirms current participation by partnerships and encourages others to become involved.
- The contribution of education and sectoral bodies has been achieved by effective collaboration between and, in certain cases, within individual organisations. However, **closer and more regular engagement between stakeholders** has also been identified as an area for improvement to advance Shared Education.
- Shared Education partnerships welcome the **support provided by the education bodies**. The EA has helped establish partnership working and enabled



progress along the partnership framework. CCEA has developed a range of resources and materials that have assisted in the delivery of Shared Education.

- While the involvement of HEIs to date has been welcomed and valued in terms of Teacher Professional Learning, NSSI and celebration events, **scope remains in relation to Initial Teacher Training and Early Professional Development** in preparing trainee teachers for delivering Shared Education in a mainstreamed environment.
- It is recognised that progress has been made in ensuring that consideration of Shared Education is accepted as normal practice within **policy development and implementation** processes. Links to other policy areas have also been made, for example, with some local councils and, where this has taken place, positive outcomes for partnerships have been achieved. Initial work is underway between the DE, the EA and TEO to seek opportunities to align funding programmes and Community Relations outcomes.

What do we need to do, where do we want to go, how will we get there?

Pupil Level

We want to be in a position where:

- All children and young people in Northern Ireland have the opportunity to experience quality shared learning which meets the aims of Shared Education in a safe and secure environment at every stage of their educational journey.
- All children and young people see Shared Education as a normal part of their education and they are actively involved in the planning and evaluation of shared activity across partnerships.
- All children and young people are given opportunities to explore and learn about good relations, respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion in and through shared learning experiences which must be relevant to the pupils' unique local circumstances.
- Shared Education experiences are able to continue beyond the school setting for all children and young people in youth settings.



Teacher/Practitioner Level

We want to be in a position where:

- Teachers/practitioners recognise, understand the benefits of and are committed to Shared Education.
- Teachers/practitioners are provided with opportunities to establish professional relationships and learning communities with peers from their partner setting and others across various sectors and school phases. This will assist in their ability to plan collaboratively, share expertise and develop new and existing resources.
- The teacher/practitioner voice is captured across schools/partnerships to inform current practice, next practice and how Shared Education is coordinated and led across settings.

Leadership Level

We want to be in a position where:

- Pre-school/School/Youth leadership, principals, Senior Leadership Teams, Management Committees and Boards of Governors (or equivalent) value, promote and actively encourage Shared Education

through their collaboration so that it is normal practice embedded within the culture and ethos of the organisation.

- Shared Education is clearly visible within, and an integral part of, the SDP (or equivalent of participating organisations), with evidence of collaborative planning, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on Shared Education at all levels.
- Leadership empower and enable their workforce to deliver quality Shared Education.
- Leadership explore opportunities to efficiently and effectively use and share resources in order to improve learning experiences for pupils, ensuring changes in leadership and the movement of staff do not disrupt the operation of the Shared Education partnership.

Partnership Level

We want to be in a position where:

- All educational settings across Northern Ireland have the opportunity to commence, continue or enhance Shared Education partnership working, addressing gaps in provision where they exist.

- All partnership settings have a clear pathway for children and young people to participate in Shared Education.
- Shared Education benefits are strengthened through collaboration in transition across and between school phases, for example pre-school/primary and primary/post-primary, through youth services involvement at all phases, and by further strengthening relations with local communities.
- Partnerships are aware of and make full use of opportunities available through other funding streams to enhance Shared Education programmes.

Parents and Community Level

We want to be in a position where:

- Partnerships are at the heart of the local community and seek to instil the culture, ethos and respect for others promoted through Shared Education.
- Parents, care givers and the wider community are aware of the benefits of Shared Education and are supportive of and engaged in Shared Education.
- SDPs, or equivalent, include specific plans for engaging with parents, care givers and the wider

community. Parents and care giver voices are used to inform Shared Education provision.

- Partnerships are engaged with, connected to and supported by other individuals, groups and agencies within their local and wider community to enhance the delivery of Shared Education.

System Level

We want to be in a position where:

- All organisations with a role in the education system or in community relations work collaboratively to help shape future decisions around the advancement of Shared Education.
- The DE and the EA continue to work together and in partnership with others to set the strategic direction for Shared Education, setting out the key priorities and objectives for the advancement of Shared Education.
- The DE further embeds Shared Education throughout its policy framework including its statutory areas of responsibility for pre-school, primary, post-primary, special schools, EOTAS centres, youth settings and Outdoor Education Centres.

- The EA, as the responsible authority for the provision and delivery of education (including youth services), embeds Shared Education within the functions and services it provides for schools and the Youth Service, ensuring that efficient and effective use is made of any Shared Education funding provided. The EA's Performance and Engagement Committee, on behalf of, and in the name of the EA Board, continues to oversee the management of EA's performance and delivery of agreed outcomes by ensuring the effective delivery of all EA's statutory functions including encouraging, facilitating and promoting Shared Education.
- Those named education and sectoral bodies with duties and powers within the Act continue to develop their role and responsibilities in relation to Shared Education. The DE supports and challenges its ALBs to ensure that existing and proposed educational policies and services seek to encourage, facilitate and, where applicable, promote Shared Education.
- The ETI continue to regularly monitor, evaluate and report on Shared Education learning experiences in partnerships.

3.2 Area 2: Capacity Building

Objective: To develop the education workforce, so it is equipped to deliver and support quality Shared Education.

What do we mean by "Capacity Building"?

Enhancing the skills and abilities within partnerships and across the wider education system to support the effective delivery of high quality Shared Education.

Those with a part to play in making Shared Education normal practice in our education system, as highlighted in the preceding 'Participation and Collaboration' section, must have the capacity to carry out their role.

In educational settings, teachers/practitioners must have the competence and capability to deliver quality Shared Education experiences for their children and young people. Leaders require the capacity to be able to embed Shared Education into the ethos and culture of their respective organisations, to lead, and enable others to lead, their settings to work in partnership with others. In the wider



system, building capacity means ensuring organisations involved in the NI education system understand, recognise and have the capability to support Shared Education partnerships to work collaboratively.

Where are we, what have we achieved?

Learning Leaders - A Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning encompasses the development of a teacher professional learning framework designed to address fragmentation and bring coherence to a career-long continuum of teacher professional learning; to support the expansion of good practice within the current system through collaborative communities; and to develop and build leadership capacity. Initial Teacher Education (ITE), Induction, Early Professional Development (EPD) and career-long Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) are aimed at ensuring teachers have the skills and knowledge necessary to teach in Northern Ireland's grant-aided schools, in order to help all children and young people reach their full potential.

Over the last number of years, there has been significant progress in building capacity for those delivering Shared Education, or with related responsibilities throughout the education system. In educational settings, the majority

of that capacity has been built through professional development programmes organised through the funded Shared Education programmes. The capacity in educational organisations has advanced since the introduction of the Act in 2016, as the organisations have begun to deliver on the powers and duties placed on them by the Act.

Since the introduction of the funded programmes, the majority of the capacity building activity has been focused on teachers and leaders within pre-school, primary, post-primary and special school partnerships. The Shared Education TPL Programmes have aligned with the Learning Leaders Strategy, with a focus on equipping teachers and leaders with the knowledge and skills which are essential for the delivery of quality Shared Education.

The importance of continuous staff development to empower and build capacity among staff to deliver quality Shared Education is recognised by the EA and partnerships themselves. Accordingly, the EA, the Early Years Organisation (EYO) and their delivery partners have placed an appropriately high focus on building teachers' pedagogic practice and expertise through TPL. Each of the funded projects i.e. DSC SESP, PEACE IV CASE and SfS, have provided practitioners and leaders



with a range of centrally-led and partnership-led TPL opportunities through an investment of over £12m, over 6 years. The provision of substitute cover to release teachers/practitioners and leaders to avail of these TPL opportunities accounts for a large proportion of this funding invested.

The focus of capacity building can be categorised into three distinct levels - Teacher/Practitioner, Leadership and System.

Teacher/Practitioner Level

The focus of the funded programmes' professional development has been on building the capacity of teachers/practitioners in key areas such as Teaching Sensitive & Controversial Issues, Good Relations, Skills for Sharing and the Use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to support partnership working. The funded programmes have delivered the following:

- **TPL modules:** At June 2021, 4,671 teachers have engaged in a series of TPL Modules which have focused on key areas for delivering Shared Education. These have been developed and facilitated by the EA, the HEIs and other external bodies while also incorporating teacher and pupil

voices within their content. Teacher developers, experienced practitioners from existing Shared Education partnerships, were seconded to the EA to support development of TPL modules.

- **The Network of Shared School Improvement (NSSI):** This was developed in 2017 as a Pathway Project for *Learning Leaders*. The initiative was funded as part of the DSC SESP and provided Shared Education partnerships with an opportunity to engage in Joint Practice Development (JPD) programmes within their partnerships and across clusters of partnerships. This investment of over £2m has seen 97 JPD programmes delivered up to December 2021, with 24 Cluster Leaders trained in leading JPD and 710 practitioners from 141 schools engaging in the learning process.
- **Partnership-led TPL:** Professional development opportunities also involve peer to peer learning during regular engagement and support between teachers/practitioners from partner organisations as they work together to plan, deliver and evaluate shared lessons. Ideas, practice and experience are exchanged improving individual skills and competencies. This individual learning has been



broadened further through for example, intra and inter-partnership learning communities, the Shared Education Conference in 2018 and the '*Sharing Works*' Magazine. These approaches provide a platform for partnerships to showcase their practice and demonstrate the opportunities and range of learning experiences which are possible across partnerships.

- **Sub cover:** Significant levels of sub cover have enabled practitioners to develop professional relationships; plan for the delivery of Shared Education; share expertise, experience and resources.
- **Pre-school practitioner support:** SfS delivered support for teachers/practitioners to facilitate Shared Education activity, including initial training programmes, facilitation of partnership meetings and peer learning forums for pre-school settings. SfS focused on empowering collaborative leadership at all levels. Capacity building meant teachers and practitioners fully understood the rationale for programme engagement and the added value Shared Education brings, and how peer learning

enabled teachers and practitioners to develop and confidently deliver Shared Education activity.

- **Whole staff team approach.** SfS has implemented a practitioner/teacher programme where the entire staff team gain an understanding of the purpose, activity and actions required to meet the outcomes and the importance of monitoring and evaluating impact.

Higher Education Institutions

- HEIs are responsible for ITE and have had some involvement in the DSC SESP and PEACE IV CASE Shared Education projects e.g. the development and delivery of a number of the TPL Modules and supporting NSSI Clusters with the implementation of JPD Programmes.
- Steps have been taken by some of the HEIs to bring together trainee teachers from different providers to engage in conversation and activities. In addition, a limited number of trainee teachers have had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the resources and materials developed to support the delivery of Shared Education e.g. the *Pupil Pathway* and the online TPL Hub.

Induction and Early Professional Development (EPD)

- The restrictions put in place in relation to face to face contact due to the COVID-19 pandemic have accelerated the move towards the development of online TPL modules. This has increased and improved access to Shared Education TPL for all teachers, including newly qualified teachers.
- Since 2019, the EA programmes for EPD teachers have incorporated Shared Education within their themes. This has supported the increased awareness and understanding of Shared Education among newly qualified teachers.

Leadership Level

Middle and Senior Leadership

The Shared Education Middle/Senior Leadership Programme has provided training for over 500 middle leaders to work collaboratively to enable the successful leadership of partnerships. The programme provided training on the following key themes:

- The nature of Shared Education;
- The role of the Shared Education coordinator;

- Effective planning for Shared Education;
- Monitoring and evaluating Shared Education;
- Developing community connections within Shared Education partnerships;
- Anti-Bias Training;
- Approaches to dealing with sensitive and controversial issues;
- Embedding and sustaining Shared Education.

Principals and Boards of Governors

- Additional training for School Leaders has been provided across DSC SESP and PEACE IV CASE. This focused on developing a shared vision, understanding the benefits of Shared Education and establishing practices and processes for partnership working. Over 400 school leaders participated in this programme.
- Two specific Boards of Governors Shared Education Training Programmes (Defining & Developing Shared Education and Expanding & Embedding Shared Education) have been developed by the EA and are included in their annual menu to school governors.



At October 2021, over 300 governors had attended the training which has been operational since 2018/19.

- The PEACE IV SfS model has a specific focus on working with Boards of Governors/Management Committees to develop and implement a Shared Education Policy for each institution to promote the sustainability of Shared Education. Information sessions, training and peer learning forums were also offered to build knowledge, skills and understanding within settings.

System Level

Those responsible for making and implementing policy must understand the aims and objectives and recognise the practical delivery issues of Shared Education.

- Responsibility within the DE for advising on the Act and monitoring its implementation falls to the Shared Education and Community Relations Team (SECR). Following the introduction of the Act in 2016, DE officials and representatives from those bodies named in the Act were briefed by SECR through a series of information sessions on the requirements of the Act, including the definition

and purpose of Shared Education and the need to consider Shared Education in all policy and operational work.

- The EA has implemented organisational changes within its education directorate. The EA Director of Education, who reports to the EA Chief Executive, has lead responsibility for Shared Education and is assisted by an Assistant Director with responsibility for Shared Education and Sectoral Support. Following consultation with schools and stakeholders, a new section was created in 2017/18 led by a Head of Shared Education and Sectoral Support. This section has responsibility for DSC SESP, PEACE IV CASE, Strule and wider SEC provision.
- Since the introduction of the Act and delivery of the information sessions, capacity for Shared Education in education and sectoral bodies has been largely driven by the organisations themselves and, in some cases, through their involvement in various pieces of work linked to the funded Shared Education programmes.
- Through management and operation of the core funded projects, the DE and the EA dedicated teams



have developed their capacity through greater understanding, knowledge and experience of Shared Education.

- The ETI has developed the knowledge and capacity of inspectors and associated assessors to evaluate Shared Education through the work of district inspectors and staff development. The ETI has played a key role in embedding Shared Education from the initial development of Shared Education in partnerships.
- Additionally, the Inspectorate produced a *Developing Shared Education: A Framework for School Partnerships* and similar Frameworks for early years and youth settings. Through inspection, the ETI evaluates Shared Education experiences that contribute to school improvement. Shared Education is specifically referenced at appropriate points in the Inspection and Self Evaluation Framework (ISEF) that is used by inspectors to guide the process of inspection. Effective practice identified during inspections is disseminated within the ETI and across the education sector.
- The ETI was commissioned by the Department to evaluate and report on the DSC SESP and published

an evaluation report in October 2018. In September 2018, an inspector from the ETI was seconded to the Department to support work on Shared Education, including an evaluation of the NSSI. The Inspectorate continue to give advice to the Department on the development and mainstreaming of Shared Education.

- The movement of staff within and between educational settings and the wider system has enabled capacity, in the form of experiences, skills and knowledge to be shared around the system.
- External agency expertise: A range of agencies have helped develop programmes and resources to support community relations. The involvement of these organisations has further developed the capacity across schools and educational organisations by transferring skill and knowledge to teachers/practitioners.

What have we learned?

Teacher/Practitioner Level

- The **capacity of teachers/practitioners** to plan, deliver, monitor and evaluate Shared Education is



crucial in order to meet the intended outcomes of Shared Education.

- **Shared Education has had a positive impact on continuous professional development.** It was reported that teachers/practitioners are more confident in their ability to lead Shared Education learning experiences, consequently adding to the sustainability of such experiences in the future.
- **Staff valued and benefitted from the joint professional learning** resourced through the DSC SESP, which resulted in many of the staff reflecting on their own identities and thinking about the impact of their 'lived experience' and what they felt comfortable in discussing in the classroom.
- **When partnerships explored sensitive and controversial issues,** such as aspects of history, the **learning was deeper than in other situations.** Learning which took place in perceived single-identity and symbolic venues challenged pre-conceptions held by pupils and adults. However, practitioners reported that there are still difficulties in the teaching of sensitive and controversial issues and this will continue to require further training and

support. It is essential that children and young people in a Shared Education partnership explore good relations, identity, diversity and community cohesion.

- While the **curriculum was unanimously praised as appropriate to the purposes of Shared Education,** there remains a challenge in helping teachers to understand how they could use Shared Education to meet curriculum requirements.
- In the **most effective practice, the partnerships' action plans contained well-focused targets,** informed by rigorous and honest self-evaluation. Staff valued time to meet regularly with other teachers to reflect jointly on their partnership's progress.
- **Timing of training and access to training highlighted by practitioners as critical** in their ability to engage effectively without impact on their day-to-day teaching. Timing of the introductory training was too late for some partnerships, who were well progressed in their first year before this training was available. A few respondents commented that demand for training courses was so



high that they were unable to secure a place, with courses booking out immediately upon notification of same. Three-day courses, whilst beneficial, were difficult for some teachers to access due to location and/or clashes with other responsibilities. Access to training for those working in special schools was reported to be an issue for some partnerships, with suggestions that sub-cover also be available for special needs assistants and the children they care for, to get the most benefit.

- **Additional training and support needs:** This includes general implementation guidance on the type of shared class experiences that work well; support accessing expertise/external tutors; opportunities to share learning with other partnerships; support using IT in the delivery of shared classes (particularly important during COVID-19 restrictions on contact); incorporating mental health into learning experiences; and increasing focus on greater inclusion of children with special educational needs.
- **Sharing of practice in early years** settings has been beneficial and visiting another setting has allowed staff to gain new ideas.

- SfS has identified that when there is a **whole staff team approach** and attendance at the information and training sessions the Shared Education experiences are richer.

Leadership Level

- Leadership at all levels within educational organisations helps to **establish a culture for sharing**, create environments to build relationships and establish effective practices to improve outcomes for children and young people involved in partnership working.
- In the **most effective partnerships, Shared Education featured prominently in the schools' development plans** and was an important contributor to whole school learning and improvement.
- The **Shared Education coordinators** worked creatively to overcome the initial challenges of joint working and, in many instances, the coordinators **reported that their professional learning increased as the partnership progressed.**

- **Succession planning and distributed leadership is critical to sustain relationships in Shared Education partnerships** when there are staffing changes. For example, new leaders will be required to have capacity and understanding of Shared Education in order for a partnership to continually progress.
- **Skills transfer.** There was limited evidence of partnerships evaluating the impact of working with external partners on the professional learning of staff.
- In the partnerships which reached the **expanding and embedding stages**, a key feature was the **increasing involvement and empowerment of staff in the leadership** and development of Shared Education.
- School leaders have provided valuable feedback on the range of TPL offered by the EA. This has highlighted the **opportunity for a series of operational changes to delivery models and the timing of TPL.** Several low cost and no cost options for improving TPL have been suggested e.g., aligning Staff Development Days, developing a TPL Menu, using digital software to support TPL etc.

- Many **practical issues have been resolved** e.g. TPL online registration portals, early notification of modules and the timing of TPL to enable participation.
- There is also evidence that Shared Education is being translated into **quality standard frameworks that enable its values to be embedded into practice** in pre-schools and schools.
- The capacity of pre-school and school leaders has also developed through Shared Education, with **increased confidence in the use of quality frameworks to self-evaluate teaching and learning.**

System Level

- TPL approaches used throughout DSC SESP and PEACE IV CASE have provided valuable learning in the future provision of high quality TPL for Shared Education e.g. Joint Practice Development, Partnership TPL and blended TPL programmes. The projects have provided the ability and agility to adapt TPL according to the needs and feedback from practitioners who have participated. This learning



can now be used to inform TPL delivery across all areas, not only Shared Education.

- There is room for improvement and more efficient use of limited resources. The largest expense of capacity building activities undertaken through the DSC SESP was sub cover at circa 75% of the total TPL bill. There are alternative, less expensive methods of delivery which require small changes to policy or operation e.g. the alignment of Staff Development Days.
- Education and sectoral bodies, like schools and youth settings, are susceptible to changes in key personnel and the associated loss of experience, knowledge and understanding of Shared Education. In the larger organisations that experience, knowledge and understanding can also be concentrated in small teams or areas of the organisation, with less awareness in other areas which may have a significant role to play in advancing Shared Education.
- On the other hand, the movement of staff experienced in Shared Education can bring benefits. For example, Teacher Developers, experienced

teachers from Shared Education partnerships, have been seconded to the EA to bring their lived experience of practical Shared Education delivery in schools to help develop TPL modules and resources. In turn, they have been able to broaden their knowledge and understanding of the policy and operational aspects of Shared Education at system level.

- Shared Education can complement and supplement other forms of collaboration such as Area Learning Communities, Entitlement Framework and Extended Schools.
- Capacity has also been built at an implementation level, with PEACE IV SfS Early Years Specialists and PEACE IV CASE Development Officers now equipped with the skills to work on a cross-border basis to manage the current projects and any potential future PEACE funded, or other initiative, to support the advancement/mainstreaming of Shared Education.
- PEACE IV Shared Education programmes have helped to build capacity in cross-border working, including between the DE and Department of Education (RoI); and between cross-border PEACE IV



SfS/CASE project partners. The experience has facilitated relationship building between education authorities and key interested parties, which can be sustained and developed in the future.

What do we need to do, where do we want to go, how will we get there?

Teacher/Practitioner Level

We want to be in a position where:

- There is an understanding of the definition, purpose and benefits of Shared Education and all teachers/practitioners are aware of the *Sharing Works* policy and the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*, including its vision, aims and guiding principles.
- Teachers/practitioners have the skills, knowledge and ability to deliver quality Shared Education.
- Teacher/practitioners have opportunities and easier access to engage in, and contribute to the development of, different forms of professional development.
- We can establish professional learning communities/networks, in line with the Learning Leaders Strategy, to share practice and build professional relationships.

- Teachers/practitioners are aware of the range of professional development opportunities open to them and the various resources available, and can use these to support the delivery of Shared Education.

Leadership Level

We want to be in a position where:

- All leaders understand the definition, purpose and benefits of Shared Education and are aware of the *Sharing Works* policy and the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*, including its vision, aims and guiding principles.
- All leaders have the knowledge, understanding and skills to lead Shared Education partnership working within their own organisations and across the partnership, enabling and empowering the whole workforce to be involved in the delivery, or support, of Shared Education.
- All leaders have the opportunity to engage in, and contribute to the development of, training programmes which equip them with capacity to undertake their leadership role across the Shared Education partnership.

System Level

We want to be in a position where:

- Educational organisations understand the definition, purpose and benefits of Shared Education and are aware of the *Sharing Works* policy and the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*, including its vision, aims and guiding principles.
- Education bodies, including the DE, the EA, CCMS and CCEA, continue to build capacity to comply with their respective Shared Education duties across all areas of their organisations, exploring opportunities to build capacity in educational settings in a more efficient and effective way.
- There is a culture of collaboration across all educational settings, organisations and relevant external partners which promotes Shared Education.
- A range of coherent, purposeful and intentional professional development approaches, which are continuous from Initial Teacher Education to Senior Leadership, are provided to support the expansion of good practice in planning, delivery and evaluation of Shared Education.

- The lessons learned and the relationships built through Shared Education and its collaborative communities are used as a vehicle to inform and, where appropriate, deliver non-Shared Education professional development.
- The ETI continue to identify and disseminate effective practice and high quality Shared Education learning and teaching experiences.
- Alternative less expensive methods of delivery of capacity building measures are explored and, where practical, implemented across the system.



3.3 Area 3: Support and Resources

Objective: To provide the infrastructure and resources to support Shared Education partnerships to deliver quality Shared Education.

What do we mean by “Support and Resources”?

Providing the necessary resources and infrastructure to support partnerships to deliver high quality Shared Education and to promote the efficient and effective use of resources.

The NI education system provides an extensive network of support for educational settings. Settings also support each other through existing collaborations. Support is provided by education bodies including the DE, the EA, the CCMS and the CCEA through the policies and services they deliver for settings. Additionally, sectoral bodies represent, advocate and support their respective sectors. There are a number of external agencies which complement and supplement this supportive network for education.

Educational settings also have access to a range of resources, including human, financial, information technology and educational resources, to assist them in the education of our children and young people.

In terms of providing the support and resources for the mainstreaming of Shared Education, it includes making the best use of existing support networks and resources, by aligning them to the needs of Shared Education partnerships and where gaps occur, to develop the specific support and resources required to assist partnerships in delivering high quality Shared Education.

A supportive policy context, with clear relationships established between Shared Education and other policy areas, along with a support network that works collaboratively to understand and react to the different contexts and experiences of partnerships, is critical to the mainstreaming of Shared Education.

Where are we, what have we achieved?

Support

Intra/Inter Partnership Support

As relationships and levels of trust within Shared Education partnerships grow over time, the level



of support provided by leaders, including Boards of Governors, and practitioners for one another increases. This peer to peer support internally within partnerships has been invaluable for sharing expertise, engaging in planning and evaluation and for the development of shared resources to improve Shared Education delivery.

In addition to the intra partnership support, there have also been examples of inter partnership support, where practitioners across differing partnerships have connected professionally to discuss aspects of Shared Education.

EA Support

The EA has been responsible for the management, implementation and evaluation of the DSC SESP and PEACE IV CASE project. Significant investment has been made to create teams of Development Officers who work to inspire, support and challenge Shared Education partnerships to deliver high quality Shared Education programmes to children and young people.

To support the advancement of Shared Education, the funded programmes provided a high level of support to partnerships to help them progress through the continuum outlined in the ETI's *Developing Shared Education: A*

Framework for School Partnerships. Furthermore, support was given to newly established partnerships to build relationships and the foundations of partnership working. Development Officers were also responsible for the development of resources to complement the delivery and evaluation of Shared Education.

What has been achieved to date has been outlined below:

- The funded projects have created a strong core of highly experienced professional and knowledgeable staff in the EA who are best placed to provide support to partnerships and to lead in the advancement of Shared Education.
- The Development Officers from the EA have worked in collaboration with partnerships to plan, monitor and evaluate Shared Education provision.
- Strong personal and professional relationships have been established between Development Officers and Shared Education partnerships.
- Across the system, the EA Development Officers have identified partnerships demonstrating effective practice and have shared learning with other partnerships.

- Part of the EA support role has included professional development of the workforce to deliver highly effective Shared Education through TPL and Professional Learning Communities (see also Area 2: 'Capacity Building').

Early Years Organisation Support

The Early Years Organisation, as lead delivery partner for the PEACE IV SfS project, provides a similar level of support to pre-school partnerships as that provided by the EA to schools. Activities undertaken by the Early Years Specialists (EYS) within the PEACE IV SfS programme have been outlined below:

- Provision of initial training and mentoring support to all partners involved.
- Supporting the ongoing development of curriculum content, training and materials related to the project, in line with the curricular and inspection requirements in Northern Ireland and/or the Republic of Ireland.
- Supporting the planning, delivery, and evaluation of setting activity, including the development of setting shared action plans in line with pre-school development plans.

- Supporting the development and sustainability of the local SfS partnerships.
- Contributing to the delivery of the SfS communications and advocacy strategy.
- The EYS have provided training and peer learning clusters to partnerships, which has empowered staff in the settings to achieve the outcomes of the programme.
- EYS have shared examples of good practice from partnerships and demonstrated how this practice has supported both settings and partnerships with development planning, policy and monitoring and evaluation.
- The Early Years Organisation has developed a range of resources including Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme (MIFC) to support implementation of Shared Education activity with preschool settings.

DE Support

The DE, in compliance with its duties in the Act, encourages, facilitates and promotes Shared Education through the *Sharing Works* policy and the financial support provided to meet the additional costs of sharing.



The DE's policy framework provides the strategic direction to support educational settings deliver high quality Shared Education. The wider education policy landscape has potential to align further with and support achievement of the objectives of Shared Education. For example, the *Children and Young Peoples Strategy 2020-30* includes outcomes which complement those for Shared Education i.e. children and young people live in safety and stability and in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted. Shared Education is listed in the accompanying delivery plan as a key enabler to achieving those outcomes. *Learning Leaders*, the Department's policy for teacher professional development, focuses on partnership working, placing collaboration and sharing of practice within and across all stakeholder groups to build capacity and develop next practice, at the centre of teacher education programmes.

The ETI in their 2018 Evaluation Report on the DSC SESP reported that a key feature of the success of the project has been the strategic leadership provided by the DSC SESP Project Board, the DE and the EA. Through the Project Board, key stakeholders have worked collegially and collaboratively, steering the development of Shared Education. The DE has guided, supported and

provided appropriate challenge to the EA in the ongoing management and delivery of the project, drawing on the Department's extensive expertise from previous community relations programmes. The DE is also represented on the Project Board for PEACE IV CASE and SfS as a key stakeholder, working collaboratively with the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), Department of Education (RoI) and projects leads.

The ETI supports Shared Education partnerships by including evaluations of the quality of Shared Education within inspection reports and disseminating effective practice within the ETI and across the wider education sector. In addition, Shared Education is directly referenced within the Inspection and Self Evaluation Framework.

Education and Sectoral Bodies' Support

All of the education and sectoral bodies named in the Act have complied with their duties and exercised the powers provided by the Act. Shared Education plays a prominent role in the annual business plans of Arm's Length Bodies and all have taken an active role in advancing Shared Education and promoting its benefits to the groups and sectors they represent. The Advancing Shared Education



Reports to the NI Assembly⁵ describe how the education and sectoral bodies support Shared Education. The third report published in March 2022 outlines a variety of activities, such as working in collaboration with others to deliver SECs, development of Shared Education policies, providing curriculum planning and professional learning materials, supporting NSSI clusters, awareness raising, promotional activities and helping to identify and mitigate against barriers to participation.

Other External Support

As well as the support provided by organisations directly involved in education, Shared Education partnerships have been able to avail of a range of support and resources provided by external partners, including those with an interest in, or responsibility for, the promotion of good relations. Alternative funding streams beyond the main funded programmes have allowed Shared Education provision to flourish beyond the main projects. Expertise and skills have been sourced from outside partnerships to complement, supplement and enhance the learning that takes place in schools. Organisations, including local councils, have been able to signpost partnerships to

⁵ Available at Shared Education | Department of Education (education-ni.gov.uk)

others who can assist them in the planning and delivery of Shared Education.

Resources

Human Resources

- Staff were given time, for example through the alignment of School Development Days and Directed Time, to support their professional development and to build relationships between partners.
- Using the leadership allowances provided by funded projects, Shared Education Coordinators/Leaders posts were established across most partnership schools, to promote, encourage and lead Shared Education.
- Teachers' experience, whether through delivery of shared lessons or professional development, has been used to disseminate learning across organisations and the wider system.
- There has been a movement of staff, including secondments, across the education system to support the progression of Shared Education, resulting in a sharing of knowledge and skills, for example experienced teachers seconded from schools to the EA.

- Advocates for Shared Education, such as Board of Governor Champions, have been identified across some partnerships. Their role has been to promote the culture and ethos of Shared Education across their organisations.

Curricular and Learning Resources

An extensive range of Shared Education resources have been developed and shared with partnerships through a range of platforms to assist in the delivery of Shared Education:

- *A Pupil Pathway: A Resource for Teachers to Support Shared Education* has been created to assist practitioners in the planning, delivery and evaluation of Shared Education. It provides partnerships with a series of learning objectives for pupils at each key stage from pre-school to Post 16.
- CCEA have created a series of Shared Education resources, which align with the NI Curriculum, to support partnership working.
- As well as reporting on the quality of the DSC SESP Project in 2018, the ETI have commented on the quality of Shared Education within school inspection reports when it has been highlighted by school leadership. The ETI produced the

'Developing Shared Education: A Framework for School Partnerships' (2016) to assist schools in their planning and on-going evaluation of Shared Education. Further ETI Frameworks have also been produced for early years and youth settings. In addition, within the Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework for schools there is direct reference to Shared Education. The ETI has also produced a webinar for the schools sector on Shared Education, supported by the EA and a principal with extensive experience in Shared Education.

- Partnership Case Studies outlining practice, challenges and successes have been developed jointly between the EA and practitioners.
- Effective practice Shared Education activity develops deeper community engagement; the impact is much wider than simply within the setting. PEACE IV SfS has developed baseline templates, shared lesson plans, and information leaflets templates for parents and practitioners.
- External partners have developed a range of resources specifically focused on improving Community Relations which can be accessed by partnerships.

- Links with HEIs and academics has helped incorporate a research driven, evidence based approach to expanding and embedding Shared Education.

Financial Resources

Significant investment has been made in Shared Education over the last number of years. Since 2015/16, through DSC SESP, PEACE IV and additional DE funding, over £50m has been committed to advancing Shared Education. A further £76.5m of capital funding has been pledged to deliver a number of SECs (see 'Physical Resources' below). The funding has predominantly been aimed at primary, post-primary and special schools to extend and enhance the collaboration among existing partnerships and to support the establishment of new partnerships. See section 1.5 for further detail on funding.

The evaluations of the funded programmes are being used to inform decisions around the future resourcing of Shared Education.

Information Technology

Information Technology (IT) has been used for the administration and delivery of Shared Education. The

COVID-19 pandemic has changed how the EA and the wider education system and partnerships use technology to engage with, administer, and support Shared Education partnerships.

Opportunities exist for the further development of ICT resources to increase connectivity within and between partnerships and the education system. For example, a range of IT software is available within the C2K network to support collaboration at all levels.

The outbreak of the pandemic in early 2020 accelerated the transition to a more blended approach for pupil to pupil activity and capacity building. Support has also been offered to teachers through a range of online TPL.

Pre-school settings redirected programme funds towards increasing digital capability and facilitation of Shared Education learning within year 4. This was a direct result of COVID-19 and allowed the project to continue, as IT enabled virtual collaboration and Shared Education activity to occur.

However, the overwhelming feedback from settings is that it is not a replacement for face-to-face engagement. IT in this situation is an enabler, but not a replacement.



Physical Resources

The SEC Programme is a headline action under the Executive's T:buc Strategy and is aimed at providing capital investment to schools to facilitate and deliver the following types of sharing:

- Shared Education facilities (new facilities for Shared Education are built to allow for shared educational use by schools within the model);
- Enhanced educational facilities (current facilities are improved to allow for Shared Education use by all schools within the model); and
- Shared Education Campuses (where schools are co-located and share infrastructure).

Funding has been provided for the first two calls through the Fresh Start Agreement.

The separate Strule Shared Education Campus will bring together around 4,000 pupils from five controlled, maintained and voluntary post-primary schools and one special school in Omagh. Each school will retain their individuality and ethos whilst maximising the opportunities provided through collaboration and sharing. The £8.6m Arvalee School and Resource Centre, the first school to

open on the site in September 2016, delivers education and learning programmes to support children and young people aged 3 to 19 years who have moderate and severe learning difficulties.

What have we learned?

Evidence from evaluations indicates that:

Intra/Inter Partnership Support

- Providing opportunities for intra and inter **partnership collaboration between teachers/practitioners** has assisted them in their planning, delivery and evaluation of Shared Education. For some teachers/practitioners, depending on their context, this was their first opportunity to connect with peers to discuss practice, share learning and develop lessons.
- Teachers/practitioners need the **support of leadership** who recognise the benefits of Shared Education to children and young people, staff and the community. Supportive leadership is evident in highly effective partnership working.
- School leaders, who connect regularly and have developed positive **professional relationships**



across the partnership, have valued the **peer support** and opportunities to learn from others.

- There are choices partnerships can make to make sharing easier, for example, aligning School Development Days helps to strengthen relationships between staff, fosters a collegiate environment, facilitates the **sharing of practice** and is an effective and efficient way of addressing a common need.
- There is evidence that the experience of collaboration, after an average of less than five years, is already leading to **the re-engineering of some school systems and processes** e.g. alignment of School Development Days and the use of digital solutions for collaboration.

EA Support

- The support and challenge provided by the EA, within the funded projects, has been **valued by Shared Education partnerships**. Partnerships report that **the EA support must continue**, must be sufficient to meet partnerships' needs and that there should be the minimum level of bureaucracy in the processes associated with Shared Education.

- The **EA should continue to embed Shared Education** across the whole organisation, overseen, on behalf of the EA Board, by the EA's Performance and Engagement Standing Committee.
- The level and type of support provided by the EA to partnerships in the 'defining' and 'developing' stages of partnership working was at a higher level than those partnerships further along the continuum. **Partnerships at all stages required a certain level of support in order** to guide and assist them when developing innovative practice or changes in approach to Shared Education delivery.
- **Capacity building** provided by the EA has been welcomed and valued by partnerships as this has helped develop the workforce within the partnerships to deliver Shared Education.

DE Support

- The education policy landscape has the potential to positively encourage, facilitate and promote the further advancement of Shared Education. While synergies exist between Shared Education and a range of DE policies, **integrating Shared Education more fully into other departmental**



policy areas, will assist in embedding it across the education system.

- The DE has learned of the benefits of **working collaboratively with other stakeholders** to encourage, facilitate and promote the advancement of Shared Education.

Education and Sectoral Bodies' Support

- Significant work has been ongoing within **education and sectoral bodies to assist in the advancement of Shared Education**. However, their work would benefit from **greater collaboration among and between those bodies**.

Other External Support

- **External support can enhance and extend the quality of Shared Education provision** across partnerships. In the most effective practice, partnerships worked with a range of organisations, such as community relations bodies, environmental groups, and others; this work was beneficial to the pupils, the staff and the communities.

Resources

Human Resources

- Successful Shared Education partnerships are built upon **strong relationships** and a **workforce with the capacity to deliver** quality Shared Education. The investment in relationships and professional development across partnerships has been critical for the growth and development of partnership working.
- Teams created within the DE and the EA with the specific **experience, knowledge and understanding** of Shared Education, alongside the relationships between those teams, have been a vital component to the success of Shared Education delivery.
- **Shared Education Coordinators/Leaders** within each partnership have been pivotal to the success of partnership working. They work collaboratively to plan, implement and evaluate partnership action plans, whilst promoting the culture of Shared Education.
- The **involvement of the ETI in the evaluation of Shared Education partnerships** during the DSC



SESP was welcomed by partnerships and supported their progression along the continuum identified in self-evaluation frameworks.

Curricular and Learning Resources

- In the effective practice, **contextual information** about each school and pupil was **shared by staff** so that the individual needs of the pupils were met and any barriers addressed.
- The most effective shared learning experiences involved opportunities for the teachers to **facilitate whole class and small group discussions**, where the children and young people explored issues which were **relevant to their academic, social and personal lives**.
- Certain aspects of Shared Education, for example, **Teaching Sensitive and Controversial Issues and Community Connections** have been noted as **areas for improvement** and will require further development of resources and support material.
- The **NI Curriculum provides opportunity for Shared Education** across various areas of learning. More work is necessary to help partnerships identify these opportunities relevant to their context.

- As Shared Education has developed through the funded projects, the accompanying resources and support material need to be **regularly reviewed and refreshed to address emerging lessons**.

Financial Resources

- An assessment of the impact of prior funding under the funded projects indicates that there are **three main inescapable additional costs** incurred by partnerships to deliver Shared Education – **leadership, transport, and time to plan, deliver and evaluate shared activities**. Other costs include provision for pupils with SEN and for primary schools which have composite classes.
- In the most **effective practice**, partnerships **made use of existing funding and resources collaboratively** to enhance learning experiences. For example, some partnerships made more efficient use of their transport budget by having less frequent but longer shared classes; others explored the use of local resources in their community and accessing alternative sources of funding.
- **Annual budgets can be challenging** to the long-term planning of Shared Education.

- Partnerships need **early notification of budgets and arrangements** in order to plan effectively for Shared Education activities in the academic year.
- The funding provided for Shared Education has to recognise that the **partnership is the unit of relevance** rather than the individual setting.
- **Robust financial processes** provide **assurance** and offer protection to the public purse and those responsible for managing and monitoring spend through the Shared Education projects. Good financial management also assists in measuring the impact and **value for money of Shared Education**.
- Until all schools have the opportunity to be involved in Shared Education and a consistent and mainstreamed approach to delivery is in place, it is difficult to give consideration to incorporation of a Shared Education premium in **central school budgets**.
- There is **limited evidence and evaluation** available of the additional, inescapable costs of delivering Shared Education in **pre-school and youth settings partnerships**. Evaluations of

current and future funding programmes for these settings should focus on collecting and providing the evidence base which can inform the long term delivery arrangements for partnerships involving pre-school and youth settings.

Information Technology

- **Online contact between pupils can enhance relationships** and shared experiences but is not a replacement for face-to-face Shared Education. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need, and the opportunities available, for a more blended approach to Shared Education.
- There is potential for **greater use of IT** to support partnership working, monitoring and evaluation and communication between educational organisations/partnerships.
- Teachers/practitioners have endeavoured to use technology to maintain contact between partnerships and there are good examples of this working. They are keen to work with the PEACE IV SfS/CASE project partners and would **welcome support and training as to how best to deliver Shared Education in the current climate and**

to maximise the use of technology/virtual classrooms to maintain linkages with children and staff.

Physical Resources

- In the most effective practice, partnerships made **purposeful and innovative use of spaces, facilities and infrastructure.**

What do we need to do, where do we want to go, how will we get there?

We want to be in a position where:



Policy – The DE will set the policy direction in line with the Shared Education Act, *Sharing Works* and the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*.

Process – The EA will inspire, support and challenge partnerships

in regard to the planning, delivery and evaluation of Shared Education.

Practice – A range of educational partners will work to support partnerships/settings to deliver, identify, evaluate and report on Shared Education.

Intra/Inter Partnership Support

We want to be in a position where:

- The support provided by peers is expanded and amplified across the system as participation levels increase. Support will include intra and inter partnership collaboration, coaching and mentoring, exchange and the sharing of effective practice.

EA Support

We want to be in a position where:

- The EA continues to provide dedicated support to partnerships for the standard processes and practices associated with Shared Education.
- The EA, where appropriate, aligns its services to the requirements of Shared Education.



DE Support

We want to be in a position where:

- The DE, where appropriate, aligns its policies to Shared Education.
- The DE works in collaboration with all stakeholders, including the NI Assembly, to provide the necessary support and resources to Shared Education partnerships.
- The DE and the ETI have in place an agreed process for inspecting and reporting on the quality and the benefits of Shared Education, which has considered the lessons learned and the feedback from stakeholders on the inspection and reporting processes for Shared Education.

Education and Sectoral Bodies' Support

We want to be in a position where:

- Education and Sectoral Bodies come together to coordinate and collaborate the support and resources they provide for Shared Education.

Other External Support

We want to be in a position where:

- Higher Education Institutions support the development of practitioners, providing them with the knowledge, understanding and skills to prepare them for working in a Shared Education partnership.
- Shared Education partnerships are able to maximise the access to available external support e.g. other government departments, local District Councils, community and voluntary organisations etc.

Human Resources

We want to be in a position where:

- Professional relationships between all stakeholders are strengthened and utilised in order to advance Shared Education.

Curricular and Learning Resources

We want to be in a position where:

- Partnerships have access to the necessary resources and materials which enable them to deliver high



quality Shared Education, for example, the *Pupil Pathway*.

- Shared Education partnerships have access to a library of exemplars of practice in the delivery of Shared Education.
- Resources, aligned to the NI Curriculum, continue to be developed and refreshed in order to assist the delivery of Shared Education.
- Partnerships make use of all other complementary resource materials and support available to them to enhance Shared Education delivery, for example, *Community Use of Schools: A Guidance Toolkit for Schools* and dedicated support structures within the EA, to facilitate a wide range of out of hours provision and maximise opportunities to engage with parents and the wider community.

Financial Resources

We want to be in a position where:

- Partnerships are provided with financial support, notified in good time to facilitate long term planning

wherever possible, which covers the inescapable additional costs associated with delivering quality Shared Education.

Information Technology

We want to be in a position where:

- An online Shared Education Hub supports the delivery and administration of Shared Education.
- Partnerships have access to, and an understanding of how to use, a range of IT software and online material to support Shared Education delivery.

Physical Resources

We want to be in a position where:

- Partnerships are able to make innovative use of space, facilities and infrastructure to deliver effective Shared Education in line with relevant guidance and protocols which may apply.
- Partnerships, who are in a position to, are able to move towards the establishment of a SEC.



3.4 Area 4: Communication

Objective: To promote a common and widespread understanding of the definition of Shared Education, its purpose, benefits, how to get involved, and its relationship to other policy areas

What do we mean by “Communication”?

Communications play a critical role in the success of change initiatives and programme roll-outs, as they address the need to proactively, consistently and clearly explain what is changing, why it is changing, and what is required of stakeholders.

Successful mainstreaming of Shared Education, to the point where it is normal practice, is dependent on achieving the buy-in of all stakeholders and commitment to the changes which the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy* seeks to bring about. The main stakeholders primarily include children and young people, teachers/

practitioners, school leaders and the education sector generally, however there are also clear and intended purposes for wider society, including families and communities. Effective stakeholder communication and engagement is essential to increase the likelihood of successful mainstreaming of Shared Education. Put simply, for Shared Education to have maximum impact, it needs to reach out beyond educational structures.

Shared Education has a clear definition and purpose, as set out in the Act. However, there is a need to promote greater understanding of this across schools and other educational settings, including those already engaged in Shared Education, and those yet to participate. In some cases, for instance, existing partnerships have used their collaborative practice to improve educational outcomes, and, whilst this in itself is obviously a positive benefit of sharing, there may be limited promotion of good relations, and respect for diversity, identity and community cohesion, which are equally important aspects of Shared Education.

More generally, the wider public may not be aware of Shared Education; that it is happening in schools and other educational settings across Northern Ireland; the impact and benefits it brings for children and young



people and for wider society; and how it differs from, and complements, integrated education.

Feedback from those attending the Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategic Insights Lab was very clear in articulating the need for continued promotion of Shared Education, raising its profile within and beyond the education sector, and recognising and celebrating its contribution to a more peaceful and shared society.

The communications element of mainstreaming Shared Education is about ensuring that relevant messages regarding Shared Education reach the right audience, at the appropriate time, via the appropriate channel. It is about ensuring:

- Increased public awareness of the nature, purpose, impact and benefits of Shared Education for children and young people, partnerships, the wider education sector and for communities themselves.
- Increased engagement of Shared Education partnerships with parents, carers and the wider community.
- Promotion of all available support and resources, which can assist leaders and teachers/practitioners

involved in Shared Education to effectively focus their activities on delivering on the purpose of Shared Education; this will include awareness of the planned Essential Criteria, which will determine eligibility for accessing mainstreamed funding.

- Greater understanding and application of Shared Education across all organisations involved in education, particularly those with statutory duties and powers under the Act.
- Children and young people are given the opportunities to voice their opinions and use their authentic experiences to help shape Shared Education delivery at both partnership and system level.
- Teacher/Practitioner voices are captured to help inform and develop Shared Education moving forward.
- Celebrating successes and demonstrating the positive impact of Shared Education.
- Continued support from the NI Executive, political representatives and wider society.

- Optimum use of all communication channels to help embed a culture and ethos of Shared Education across the education system and beyond.

Where are we, what have we achieved?

System Level

Following the introduction of the Shared Education Act in 2016, it was incumbent on the DE to ensure that all relevant parties were fully aware of their roles and responsibilities resulting from the duties and powers conferred on them by the Act. DE officials and representatives from those bodies named in the Act were briefed via a series of information sessions on the requirements of the Act, including the need to consider Shared Education in policy and operational work.

To generate greater awareness and understanding of Shared Education, the DE has also developed a short guide for schools entitled '*Options for Sharing and Integrating*'. It includes information on Shared Education programmes, jointly-managed schools and SECs. Copies have been distributed to all schools.

Communication with a wider range of stakeholders has been mainly related to, and instigated by, the Shared

Education funded projects, with key messages focused on, for example, operational processes, sharing of practice, teacher professional learning opportunities and celebrating successes. Audiences for these messages have been largely those with direct involvement in the projects and, to a lesser degree, others in the education system.

Working with a range of partners, the DE and the EA have sought opportunities to promote the work of Shared Education partnerships, such as piloting jointly organised celebration events as part of Shared Education week in 2018, and the co-design and communication of the availability of a number of resources to support Shared Education delivery.

Beyond the DE and the EA, all of the other education and sectoral bodies referred to in the Act have taken steps to raise the profile of Shared Education, exercising the powers granted by the Act to encourage and facilitate Shared Education. The educational and sectoral organisations took part in the celebration events held in 2018, using the opportunity to showcase their roles, and those of their respective sectors, to support Shared Education partnerships.



The establishment of Project Boards to oversee the funded projects and the development of the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*, has brought together the co-funders, delivery partners and other stakeholders, ensuring a consistency of messaging across those organisations, providing a platform to celebrate success and encouraging the exchange of views, perspectives and experiences of Shared Education.

The Project Boards, through various sub-groups and stakeholder consultation, have also been able to reach a wider audience of those with an interest in Shared Education, providing opportunities for others to contribute to the discussions on how it can be advanced. For example, the DE-chaired Mainstreaming Shared Education Project Board established a Stakeholder Reference Group and commissioned the Department of Finance-led Strategic Insight Lab to harness the views of a wide range of stakeholders which have informed development of this Strategy.

Engagement and regular dialogue with external organisations has also supported the advancement of Shared Education in recent years. For example, discussions between the DE, the EA and TEO has created opportunities to link Shared Education programmes, and

the DE's *Community Relations, Equality and Diversity* policy, with the TEO Urban Villages programmes (Schools of Sanctuary, Buddy Up scheme and Creative Schools), evidenced in joint events organised through Good Relations Week in September 2021. These links and connections with other Shared Education initiatives will assist in the promotion of Shared Education to a wider audience outside of the education sector.

In 2018, a Shared Education week was organised by the Shared Education Learning Forum (SELF) in partnership with key organisations i.e. the DE, the EA, CCEA, C2K, Community Relations in Schools (CRIS), Queen's University Belfast, and Fermanagh Trust. The events over the week celebrated the success of Shared Education and provided practical insight into delivery of high quality Shared Education.

The SEUPB commissioned an evaluation of the PEACE IV projects, the findings of which were launched through a week of focused social media activity in April 2021, held online due to the challenges of COVID-19. This provided an opportunity to promote the benefits of Shared Education delivered across schools and pre-school settings, showcase case studies of effective practice and promote mainstreaming of this work.



Social media through Facebook, Instagram and the DE/EA Twitter accounts now plays a key role in how we are sharing information. Social media has been a key tool to inform schools of important updates and information in a timely and easily accessible manner.

The COVID-19 pandemic, as it has done with all aspects of normal life, has had an impact on how stakeholders communicate and has required changes to the key messages around Shared Education. This has presented new opportunities to communicate messages via virtual and online platforms and this should continue to be built on going forward.

Partnership Level

The level of communication in terms of awareness raising, promotion of Shared Education and engagement with stakeholders varies across partnerships and can be dependent upon factors such as leadership, school phase, experience and local circumstances.

Many of the Shared Education partnerships listen to and capture the voice of children and young people through joint student councils, questionnaires, surveys and through their involvement in the planning and evaluation of lessons.

Shared Education has provided increased opportunities for regular communication between teachers/practitioners, which has resulted in the building of personal and professional relationships within and between partnerships. However, dependent on circumstances, the messaging may be targeted at specific departments or staff.

Many partnerships use a variety of methods to engage with parents and the wider community for example, school websites, information leaflets, partnership bulletins, shared parental sessions and events. Others, with less experience in this area, could learn from practices displayed by those partnerships.

There have been examples of partnerships who have communicated with external partners to help inform the delivery of their Shared Education programmes. This involves accessing expertise, signposting to resources and connecting with other agencies. At community level, work is already underway with some of the District Councils to promote community connections with local Shared Education partnerships, to further develop the opportunities to engage with parents, carers and local communities, in conjunction with the Councils' Good Relations Officers.



The EA, and PEACE IV SfS, through their management of the funded projects, communicate with their partnerships on a regular basis to highlight the work being done with partnerships, by partnerships and with the support of the EA Shared Education Teams and the SfS Early Years Specialists.

The funded projects continue to communicate and promote the work of partnerships through the issue of regular newsletters and information is readily accessible through their respective websites.

Through the funded projects the EA have assigned Development Officers to support the ongoing promotion and profiling of Shared Education and are now promoting project activities, and Shared Education generally, on social media. Online and digital platforms have been used successfully to support, promote and celebrate the work of partnerships in relation to home learning activity and achievements. The promotion of Shared Education has been evident in celebration events and through the publication of the Shared Education magazine which was developed by a designated team within the DSC SESP.

In addition, a number of videos have been created by the EA which capture leadership, practitioner and pupils'

experiences of Shared Education. These have been used to engage and inform the wider education community.

For many newly formed partnerships additional support and guidance is required on how to present their involvement in the programme.

All of these communication channels can be built on as mainstreaming is implemented.

What have we learned?

Good communications, within and between partnerships, and with the wider education system can improve the level and quality of Shared Education. By working together, sharing and listening to different views and perspectives on Shared Education, particularly the first-hand experience of learners, it will help to not only make Shared Education normal practice, but also make the shared practice more relevant to all involved.

System Level

- We have learned that **more can and should be done to promote Shared Education**, its benefits for partnerships and local communities and how it contributes to a more peaceful and shared society. Further engagement and better coordination with



other government departments, key stakeholders, including education and sectoral bodies, using various media channels to reach a wider audience, is necessary.

- There is some evidence to indicate that there is a **lack of understanding on the definition and purpose of Shared Education**. There is a need to work towards dispelling any misconceptions and improving the understanding of how Shared and Integrated Education complement one another.
- We know that communicating the **right message at the right time to the right people** is crucial to ensure expectations of the new *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy* are managed. There are opportunities to make more use of various mediums, such as social media, to reach a wider audience in order to promote Shared Education. Throughout the development of Shared Education, the benefits of engagement with all stakeholders, particularly children and young people, has been recognised, as it provides invaluable opportunities to better understand and respect the perspectives and views of those who are directly impacted upon.

Partnership Level

- In the most effective practice, partnerships **sought and valued the opinions and views of children and young people** in the planning and evaluation of Shared Education, for example, through Joint Student Councils and Pupil Forums.
- In the most effective practice, partnerships **communicate across their own and other partnerships** to embed the culture of Shared Education, share practice and celebrate success.
- Evaluations have highlighted that some partnerships **communicate with parents and the local community** better than others though the distribution of news/information through their respective school newsletters, websites, apps, class accounts and Facebook accounts.
- Partnerships who have established **open lines of communications with external partners**, including the EA and local District Councils, have improved their access to additional support, which has led to the delivery of progressive Shared Education Programmes.

- In general, at programme level, communicating and **showcasing the benefits of Shared Education to the target audience of a wider general public is the most challenging.**

What do we need to do, where do we want to go, how will we get there?

Partnership Level

We want to be in a position where:

- Building on the strong foundations established through the funded projects, all partnerships are supported to engage effectively with their pupils, workforce, parents, care givers and the wider community to raise awareness of the work of the partnership, celebrate successes and promote the culture of Shared Education across the local community.

System Level

We want to be in a position where:

- A Shared Education Communication Strategy and action plan are in place which outline the internal and external communications required to engage

with stakeholders to raise awareness of and promote Shared Education both within and beyond the education sector and ensure the successful mainstreaming of Shared Education. As a minimum, the Communications Strategy should:

- actively promote Shared Education, clearly outlining its definition, purpose, scope, benefits and impact;
- provide appropriate levels of information, including celebrating the successes of Shared Education, to stakeholders using the most effective mediums and messages;
- develop clear and consistent communications that are aligned with the vision and Strategy;
- ensure that timely updates are shared with appropriate stakeholders in relation to implementation progress, what to expect in the future and how they will be impacted; and
- create opportunities for stakeholders to engage and share their views, which will be used to help inform the future development of Shared Education.

3.5 Area 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

Objective: To measure the impacts of Shared Education, including the evaluation of attitudinal change, at both a partnership and system level.

What do we mean by “Monitoring and Evaluation”?

The process of collating, assessing and reporting on the extent, quality, impact and advancement of Shared Education to bring about continual improvement.

Monitoring and evaluation processes are used throughout the education system to assess performance, with the ultimate goal of making improvements. In relation to Shared Education, there are a number of different levels, approaches to, and reasons for monitoring and evaluation, beginning at the individual school/setting right through to system level. Going forward, it is envisaged that the monitoring and evaluation of Shared Education will follow an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) approach which

has been adopted across wider government and public bodies, structured around three basic questions:

- **How much did we do?**
- **How well did we do it?**
- **Is anyone better off as a result?**

Answers to these questions can help drive improvement.

The Shared Education Act places a duty on the DE to report biennially to the NI Assembly on how Shared Education has advanced, how it has delivered educational benefits to children and young people, and contributed to improving community relations. The DE is also required to report on how the education and sectoral bodies named in the Act comply with or exercise their respective duties or powers in relation to Shared Education.

As the public authority with overall responsibility for the education budget, the DE must undertake financial monitoring of any funding provided for Shared Education, to inform decisions on financial management, impact and value for money. Shared Education also features prominently as a contributor to a number of outcomes stated in the NI Executive’s *New Decade, New Approach* agreement and draft PfG.



At school and other educational setting level, teachers/practitioners and leaders routinely self-evaluate how their partnership's shared activities impact on the ultimate beneficiaries of Shared Education, that is the children and young people who participate. A regular programme of inspections carried out by the ETI assists schools and other educational settings with this process.

The ETI, with responsibility for inspection and the promotion of good practice in the education system in Northern Ireland, plays a crucial role in the monitoring and evaluation of Shared Education. Through the inspection process, the ETI can consult with parents, children and young people, teachers/practitioners, leaders and the wider community to report on the impact and highlight good practice and make recommendations regarding how these could be extended and improved.

Where are we, what have we achieved?

Participation rates in terms of children and young people, teachers/practitioners, settings, areas of learning, parental engagement and governor involvement have been captured directly from Shared Education projects. Evaluations have been carried out to identify gaps in

participation, for example, in terms of geographical areas, and under-representation in some sectors/school phases and used to inform the development of new programmes.

The *Developing Shared Education Frameworks*, produced by the ETI, and the inclusion of specific reference to Shared Education in the ETI's ISEF, has helped Shared Education partnerships to identify their position on a continuum to inform future planning, implementation and evaluation of Shared Education provision. The use of these tools has become common practice across a large majority of partnerships. This has been enhanced by the development in 2019 of *A Pupil Pathway: A Resource for Teachers to Support Shared Education*.

Quantitative and qualitative information has also been collected throughout the capacity building initiatives associated with the funded projects. The evaluation of this information has been used to inform changes in provision, for example, focusing teacher professional learning on identified areas of need.

Monitoring and evaluation of financial spend across the funded projects has been used to identify the essential additional costs of sharing and has informed part of



the funding models developed and tested in 2018/19 and 2019/20. These models were focused on funding requirements for pupil engagement in a mainstreamed Shared Education environment.

The ETI monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of Shared Education provision, where evidence is presented by the participating setting during the inspection process. The Chief Inspector, in the biennial report, makes specific comments on the current range and extent of Shared Education learning experiences across the education sector, highlights good practice and makes recommendations regarding how these can be extended and improved.

A variety of methods have been used to capture the impact of Shared Education on pupils, staff and parents in relation to their participation in Shared Education including surveys, focus groups and questionnaires.

System Level

All the Shared Education funded programmes have robust monitoring processes in place and a good range of quantitative and qualitative data has been captured from

across all participating settings and associated stakeholder groupings using a variety of methods.

System level data is mainly captured through the funded projects, with the DSC SESP using the OBA format to present monitoring and evaluation data. A number of evaluation reports were also commissioned through the DSC SESP, including the ETI DSC SESP Evaluation Report (2018), the DSC SESP TPL Evaluation Report (2020), and the DSC SESP Post-Primary Review (2020). The monitoring and evaluation processes for the PEACE IV SfS project are built into project delivery schedules and shared with settings at the commencement of each year's activities. Lead practitioners and teachers plan, implement, evaluate and reflect on the Shared Education provision using a baseline approach, with the ETI Framework supporting NI settings and Siolta standards for early years supporting settings in the Republic of Ireland.

SJC consultancy, in partnership with the National Children's Bureau, was commissioned by the SEUPB to assess the impact of the interventions within the PEACE IV programmes i.e. SfS and CASE. The Shared Education impact evaluation was published in March 2021.



Other sources of information include the School Omnibus Survey, Young Life and Times (YLT) and Kids' Life and Times (KLT), the annual school census and the 2019/20 Shared Education Pilot school survey.

All the information captured through system-level monitoring and evaluation is used to inform the biennial report to the NI Assembly, as required by the Act, and can be used to inform other policy area outcomes.

Monitoring and evaluation underpins the governance and accountability arrangements within the Department and its ALBs. See Area 6: '*Governance and Accountability*'.

What have we learned?

Partnership Level

- It can be difficult to assess the impact of Shared Education, both in terms of identifying the **appropriate measurements** of education and reconciliation outcomes, and to **isolate the impact** of Shared Education from other interventions.
- Partnerships should have **effective planning and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation** - for schools this will be embedded in the SDPs. The ETI DSC SESP Evaluation Report (2018) highlighted

that, while there is evidence of schools including Shared Education in their SDPs, this continues to be an area requiring further improvement.

- Analysis of funding/finance throughout the funded projects has allowed for **the inescapable costs of pupil engagement in Shared Education to be identified**.
- While most teachers cite the benefits of Shared Education experiences for the pupils, partnerships report that **measuring pupils' attitudinal change remains a challenge** and there is a requirement for a uniformed approach.
- In the most effective practice, the partnership's action plan contained **well-focused targets, informed by rigorous and honest self-evaluation**. Staff met regularly to reflect jointly on progress in meeting their targets and, as a result, had a clear view of the impact of the work and of their way forward within the ETI Framework.
- There are external organisations which have developed and piloted monitoring and evaluation tools which can **assist partnerships in defining community relations indicators and outcomes**, which may be replicated in other partnership



settings in planning for future delivery. For example Community Relations In Schools (CRIS) has developed the GRACE (Good Relations And Collaborative Education) model and accompanying GRACE Impact Framework Tracker (GIFT) which has been piloted with the Moving Forward Together (MFT) Group.

- In the effective practice in monitoring and evaluation, the **views of the children and young people were listened to, valued and acted upon**. In some instances, it was recognised that a pupil's perspective of what went well/needs changed can sometimes be different to the teacher's view, therefore it is vitally important that this is taken on board. For example, feedback through joint Student Councils on shared lessons was used by practitioners to inform the planning, delivery and evaluation of shared activities. Partnerships noted that practitioners and pupils need time at the beginning and end of each year of Shared Education to collate pupils' ideas.

- In some partnerships, particularly post-primary partnerships, schools have reported that it is more **difficult to provide sufficient time** for planning, monitoring and evaluating Shared Education. Nonetheless, the majority of partnerships agreed that monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the impact of Shared Education is helping to embed Shared Education within settings.

System Level

- There is a need for a **Shared Education monitoring and evaluation framework** which clearly defines the vision and outcomes for Shared Education, how and when these will be measured, the requirements at partnership and system level and how and when the results of this process will be reported. The framework should be built around the existing tools available to partnerships and the wider system, including the ETI's *Developing Shared Education Frameworks and the Pupil Pathway*.
- Any monitoring and evaluation framework **should consider all aspects of Shared Education** and not just its impact. For example, capacity building



measures should be regularly monitored and evaluated to identify gaps in skills and competencies for Shared Education and to ensure that the TPL provision is addressing those gaps.

- Participation, for example, in terms of parents and Boards of Governors, is **not consistently captured** across all funded projects and all partnerships. There is a need to provide guidance and support to partnerships on the best methods for capturing this data.
- As part of mainstreaming, any monitoring/evaluation requirements should be subsumed into **normal monitoring/evaluation processes and any additional reporting should be limited** to that information required for the generation of system-wide data for Shared Education. It is acknowledged that it can be challenging to identify, measure and isolate the impact of Shared Education.
- Partnerships have been very clear that Shared Education **monitoring and evaluation should be proportionate and should not increase the burden** on existing processes and procedures

unduly, in particular, in terms of setting realistic timescales for the evaluation of attitudinal change, and recognising that the improvement of community relations is a long-term commitment and process.

- Partnerships and the wider system have indicated that they would welcome **clarity around future inspection processes** to routinely monitor, assess and support the development of Shared Education within schools, other educational settings and across partnerships. For example, one proposal was to shift the focus of performance measurement from the individual setting to partnership or network level. The ETI, through consideration of Shared Education in its inspections, evaluations and reports, can encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education amongst existing partnerships and those settings yet to be involved.
- Financial monitoring and evaluation through the funded projects has helped to **identify the additional costs** associated with Shared Education for partnerships and the wider system. This information is continuing to inform the development of future arrangements for Shared Education.



What do we need to do, where do we want to go, how will we get there?

Partnership Level

We want to be in a position where:

- Partnerships have a clear understanding of the monitoring and evaluation requirements expected of them.
- Each partnership setting has Shared Education embedded in its SDPs or equivalent, supplemented by an annual action plan based on common needs which includes key targets and outcomes for Shared Education and identifies how these will be monitored and evaluated.
- Partnerships use the self-evaluation tools to reflect on current practice; identify and celebrate the strengths of the partnership; identify and address areas for improvement in shared activity; plan for joint practice development; and focus on raising standards through partnership working.
- Each partnership makes available, as and when required, an evaluation report which, as a minimum, provides detail on participation; impact on

educational benefits; pupils' and practitioners' views; community relations; and Shared Education budgets and spend.

System Level

We want to be in a position where:

- A monitoring and evaluation framework is in place which clearly defines outcomes, success criteria, metrics and methodology for the evaluation of Shared Education. The framework includes a means of reporting participation rates and evaluating educational benefits, efficient and effective use of resources, equality of opportunity, good relations and respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion, in line with the requirements of the Act.
- The Shared Education monitoring and evaluation framework will, where possible, identify and incorporate information from existing monitoring and evaluation processes that can complement and be used to measure the quality and impact of Shared Education.
- Monitoring and evaluation processes are able to demonstrate impact, identify good practice and

promote the success of Shared Education, while addressing areas for continuous improvement.

- The ETI continue to develop and promote self-evaluation to help partnerships to self-assess their practices, methodologies and capacity in relation to the delivery of Shared Education.
- The ETI review Shared Education in its inspection reports, particularly in relation to the added value, the quality and effectiveness, the efficient and effective use of resources, and the sustainability of the Shared Education learning experiences. The Chief Inspector regularly reports on the range and extent of Shared Education learning experiences across the education sector, highlighting good practice and making recommendations regarding how these could be extended and improved.

At whatever level, the monitoring and evaluation of Shared Education in a mainstreamed environment should:

- Take account of the context within which the organisation is working;
- Improve Shared Education delivery and the impact it has on children and young people;

- Identify any gaps in provision in mainstreamed Shared Education, for example in participation, in the knowledge and skills of practitioners, or in the support and resources available to assist partnerships;
- Make the best use of available IT systems to gather, collate and report on Shared Education activities, to deliver common and consistent monitoring and evaluation information that can be aggregated into population level data;
- Be proportionate and not add additional burden on the system. Data will be collected locally and centrally from a number of sources, including schools and other educational settings, education and sectoral bodies, academic research and commissioned reports; and
- Be used to inform and improve decision making.



3.6 Area 6: Governance and Accountability

Objective: To implement delivery arrangements for Shared Education over the longer term that are sustainable and provide value for money, accountability and governance of public funds.

What do we mean by “Governance and Accountability”?

Leadership at all levels providing the governance and accountability to ensure the quality, impact and value for money of Shared Education.

Leadership at all levels of the education system carries responsibilities for governance, which provides the framework and structures by which an organisation is controlled and operates, and the mechanisms by which it, and its people, are held to account.

All Shared Education stakeholders have a collective responsibility and, in some cases, an obligation to carry

out their role, whether it be in the educational setting or in a supporting organisation, to create an education system which provides children and young people with positive Shared Education experiences which contribute to a more peaceful and shared society.

Formal structures already exist throughout the NI education system to ensure good governance. Principals and Boards of Governors, and their equivalent in Early Years and Youth settings, are responsible for creating a learning environment which places sharing and a culture of respect for others at the heart of their ethos. For example, in schools, Boards of Governors and school leaders, through the priorities and targets outlined in SDPs, set the strategic direction for their organisations. Through self-evaluation, Boards of Governors and school leaders celebrate the strengths of the school and identify and set out actions to address areas for improvement. Regular monitoring and evaluation of performance against the SDP, with regard to the findings of ETI inspection reports, and taking action for continuous improvement, completes the cycle of good governance.

In relation to Shared Education, Boards of Governors and senior leadership teams take responsibility to



ensure Shared Education is embedded throughout the organisation, making the best use of available resources to deliver the desired quality and impact of working in partnership with other schools. Good governance and leadership is also about championing Shared Education and its benefits beyond the school gates, setting the tone of collaboration and good relations for others in the community to follow.

At a system level, those bodies named in the Act are responsible for complying with the duties and/or exercising the powers provided by the legislation and are accountable to the NI Assembly.

In financial terms, the DE, its ALBs and educational settings in receipt of public funding are responsible for ensuring sound financial management and for the deployment of public resources responsibly in the public interest for the purpose for which it is provided. Key to this is ensuring robust mechanisms are in place which can demonstrate the impact of the investment made available in support of Shared Education which, in turn, can inform an assessment and provide assurances over value for money.

Where are we, what have we achieved?

Partnership Level

At a partnership level, the specific governance and accountability arrangements depend on the Shared Education project in which organisations have been involved. Eligibility criteria, application processes, terms and conditions, targets, objectives, and monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements have been largely driven by the requirements of each project and its funders.

Boards of Governors and leaders from partner settings, through a process of self-evaluation and engagement, identify common areas of need to be addressed through the Shared Education provision, which are laid out in the three year SDP or equivalent and include a series of objectives and success criteria. The PEACE IV Sfs settings adopt an ongoing self-evaluation process, documenting what they currently do in relation to each outcome and areas for further development are identified and laid out in an action plan.



In most partnerships, responsibility for planning, implementation and evaluation of Shared Education has been assigned to a Shared Education Coordinator/Leader. This involved the creation of an annual action plan which focused on the development of a Shared Education programme based upon the four pillars of Learner Centred, High Quality Learning & Teaching, Effective Leadership and Community Connections.

Teachers/practitioners work collaboratively to plan, deliver and evaluate Shared Education lessons in accordance with the action plan developed within the partnership. The *Pupil Pathway* resource has been developed to support this process.

Throughout the academic year of the action plan, teachers/practitioners produce qualitative and quantitative data which demonstrates impact against the success criteria outlined in the SDP and action plan. The coordinator collates this data and presents the findings to the partnership leaders and project managing authorities.

The ETI inspection reports can also provide assurance on the quality and impact of Shared Education, where the individual setting provides evidence. During the DSC SESP, the ETI were commissioned to evaluate the

impact of the project. The ETI monitoring visits helped partnerships to identify their position on the Framework continuum and evaluate the quality of provision at that time to assist school leaders to inform their next steps.

"Every School a Good School – The Governors Role" is an online reference guide about the roles and responsibilities of school Boards of Governors. The guide includes information on the role governors have in encouraging their school's participation in Shared Education, promoting equality, good relations and diversity, the achievement of high standards of educational attainment and responsibilities around ensuring effective and efficient financial management.

System Level

At a system level, the governance and accountability arrangements for Shared Education have been largely dictated by the duties laid out in the Act; the commitments made in successive Programmes for Government and in *New Decade New Approach*; the requirements of the various funded projects; and the normal demands of managing public expenditure.

The Act places a duty on the DE to report biennially on the operation of the Act, including statements on the extent



to which the named bodies have complied with the duties or exercised the powers provided by the Act, participation levels and the extent to which the purpose of Shared Education has been achieved. The NI Assembly, through the biennial Report, hold each of the organisations to account.

There are, in effect, three cohorts of partnerships through the funded projects, with experience of differing governance and accountability arrangements. The governance structures of each of the funded projects set the strategic direction of the projects and were responsible for defining eligibility, application, implementation, monitoring, financial management and evaluation processes.

In terms of the DSC SESP, a Project Board, reporting to the Delivering Social Change Programme Board, was established to oversee the development, delivery and governance of the project, with representation from the funders and key stakeholders. The EA, responsible for the operational delivery of the project and reporting to the Project Board, advised, monitored and provided support for the partnerships through a team of Development Officers led by a Project Manager.

The PEACE IV CASE project has quarterly Project Management Board meetings, with representation from the EA, Leargas, SEUPB and Accountable Departments - the DE and the Department of Education (RoI). The Project Board was established to oversee the development, delivery and governance of the project. The delivery partners are responsible for the operational delivery of the project and report to the Project Board, and advise, monitor and provide support for the partnerships through a team of Development Officers led by a Project Manager.

The PEACE IV SfS project has quarterly Project Management group meetings with all partners EYO, Fermanagh Trust and National Childhood Network, and quarterly steering group meetings with other stakeholders, including SEUPB and Accountable Departments - the DE and the Department of Education (RoI). An advisory group meets once per year with key stakeholders.

The EA has established a Performance and Engagement standing committee, which on behalf of, and in the name of, the EA Board oversees the management of EA's performance and delivery of agreed outcomes by ensuring the effective delivery of all EA's statutory functions



including encouraging, facilitating and promoting Shared Education.

The EA's Shared Education and Sectoral Support Team has responsibility for management and operational delivery of the DSC SESP, PEACE IV CASE, SECs and the implementation of the CRED policy across schools. The team has been responsible for inspiring, supporting and challenging partnerships in terms of the level, the quality and the impact of Shared Education.

A Shared Education Mainstreaming Pilot for former DSC SESP partnerships operated during the 2019/20 academic year. The purpose of the pilot was to further inform decisions on how Shared Education could be embedded, i.e. mainstreamed, within our education system. As part of the pilot development, the Department, in collaboration with the DSC SESP Project Board, developed a set of Essential Criteria to help partnerships plan their shared activities and to set minimum standards that must be met by partnerships to access funding support. The Essential Criteria were trialled during the 2019/20 Shared Education pilot and have been revised based on feedback from participants in the pilot and agreed by the MSEPB.

The DE's SECR is responsible for the Shared Education Act and the *Sharing Works* policy, and for the coordination of input to and the drafting of the Advancing Shared Education Report to the Assembly. The team supports and challenges DE policy teams and ALBs to take a full and active part in the advancement of Shared Education.

Through the DE's sponsorship role and the annual business planning processes, there is a direct link between the NI Assembly's commitment in relation to Shared Education (as set out in the Act, the draft PfG, its Outcomes Delivery Plan and the *New Decade, New Approach* agreement) and the activities and objectives outlined in the DE's and ALB's annual business plans. The DE regularly monitors these activities through the formal governance structures in place between it and its ALBs, and the provision of input from relevant bodies to inform the Advancing Shared Education Report to the Assembly.

The ETI, through its inspection reports and commissioned evaluations of various aspects of the Shared Education funded projects, seeks to promote improvement in the standards of learning and teaching through Shared Education, by supporting partnerships in their use of self-evaluation. The ETI promotes the dissemination of



good and innovative practice identified across Shared Education through its inspection and evaluation work.

What have we learned?

Partnership Level

- In some of the partnerships, Shared Education is regarded as an 'add-on' rather than an **integral part of learning and teaching**; this was particularly evident in post-primary partnerships. There was some evidence of collaboration that did not align with all the core components of Shared Education, for example in some cases funded Shared Education activities appeared to be used to deliver the Entitlement Framework.
- **Shared Education Coordinators** should serve on or have a direct link to the Senior Leadership Teams within all post-primary settings. This will enable enhanced communication and improved decision making processes on matters related to Shared Education.
- To maximise its impact, Shared Education must be an **integral part of governance structures** in the partnership. Effective leaders have a clear vision for

Shared Education which is embraced by the whole school community. In these partnerships, Shared Education featured prominently in the schools' development plans and was an important contributor to school improvement. In more effective partnerships, a key feature was the increasing involvement and empowerment of staff in the leadership and development of Shared Education.

- In the most effective practice, the **governors worked together** to develop joint approaches to aspects of school improvement and to share perspectives on community relations.

System Level

- The **diversity of representation within the Project Boards** of the funded projects was a strength, bringing together the knowledge, skills and authority to take major decisions on how best to advance Shared Education. However, at times this presented a challenge to meet the different requirements of stakeholders and reach consensus on any particular issue.
- The **building of strong professional relationships** amongst funders, managing



authorities and delivery partners has created open lines of communication and a spirit of collaboration which has led to the successful management and delivery of the projects.

- There is a need, when developing future arrangements for Shared Education, such as terms and conditions to access any available funding, that **early engagement with key stakeholders** is essential, particularly with those directly involved in delivery. Imposition of governance arrangements without agreement and proper understanding caused challenges for all concerned. Therefore, consultation with stakeholders in the development of governance arrangements should be included when finalising mainstreamed Shared Education plans.
- While it is acknowledged that there is a requirement for governance and accountability within Shared Education, many stakeholders have raised concerns about the **levels of bureaucracy and administration** associated with the funded projects. It is recognised by both the partnerships and the wider system that placing an overly excessive burden on partnerships could potentially have an

adverse impact on current participation and future engagement.

- Stakeholders recognise that there needs to be an **independent level of scrutiny and accountability** over Shared Education policy and its delivery. Structures to fulfil this role have been put in place, including Project Boards, the inspection services provided by the ETI in relation to Shared Education, the EA's Performance and Engagement standing committee, the DE Board and the NI Assembly and its Education Committee. External factors, such as COVID-19, the NI Assembly suspension, and the impact on ETI inspections as a result of industrial action, have limited elements of this scrutiny and accountability in recent years.
- It is encouraging to note that **education and sectoral bodies have taken up the opportunity provided by the powers granted within the Shared Education Act** to take an active role in the advancement of Shared Education and have demonstrated a willingness and commitment to support partnerships in their Shared Education delivery.



What do we need to do, where do we want to go, how will we get there?

Partnership Level

We want to be in a position where:

- Those with a responsibility for governance across partnerships, for example, Boards of Governors/ Management Committees, work collaboratively to support and challenge the promotion and implementation of Shared Education. Leadership roles are distributed amongst the workforce to empower staff to lead in the planning for, and the development of, Shared Education.
- Those with a responsibility for leading Shared Education capture and make available the evidence to demonstrate the impact of Shared Education within their partnership and take steps to ensure other forms of collaboration complement, but do not duplicate, Shared Education activities.
- Partnerships work collaboratively with support organisations, including the EA and education and sectoral bodies, to review, modify and update practices and processes associated with Shared

Education in order to demonstrate continual improvement.

System Level

We want to be in a position where:

- The long term delivery arrangements for Shared Education, including financial support, participation and monitoring and evaluation, are co-designed and agreed by all parties involved to ensure they are fit for purpose while not being overly bureaucratic. Through involvement in the co-design process, stakeholders demonstrate their commitment to their roles and responsibilities in advancing Shared Education.
- Organisations responsible for supporting Shared Education partnerships report regularly to highlight the positive impact and progression of Shared Education, reflected in the biennial report to the NI Assembly.
- Existing governance structures are used to continue to hold organisations responsible for supporting Shared Education partnerships to account for the quality, impact and value for money of their Shared

Education activities, to deliver the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

- The ETI support and challenge partnerships to demonstrate and improve the quality and impact of their Shared Education provision.





Part C



Chapter 4: CONCLUSION AND IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Conclusion

Shared Education is making a difference. Whilst good progress has been made in embedding the concept in our education system, in particular since the formal Shared Education policy and legislation were introduced, we are only part way there.

This Strategy plots out an initial way forward in articulating the longer term vision, aims and objectives and supporting arrangements which can help to ensure that, in the future, Shared Education represents normal and accepted practice across the education system.

Mainstreaming Shared Education is acknowledged to be an iterative, and somewhat complex, process to manage over the next period of time, involving convergence of different funding streams. In time, we will seek to explore if support for Shared Education can be subsumed into the Common Funding Scheme so that it becomes part of core funding for schools, however we are not yet at a stage where that is deemed feasible.

There are, of course, a variety of challenges to overcome along the way as we seek to further advance Shared Education.

This will involve expanding the reach of Shared Education into current non-participating schools, further development of the concept in pre-school, school, and youth sectors, and increased engagement across the system to ensure alignment of relevant policies and practices.

It will also involve recognition and consideration of a range of issues impacting on delivery such as addressing current gaps in provision (including for example EOTAS); geographical and demography limitations in certain areas including rurality and competition for partners; logistical issues particularly in post-primary schools; working with stakeholders and relevant sectoral bodies in facilitating enhanced participation of under-represented sectors, for example Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta in respect of the Irish Medium sector; reluctance of some local communities to embrace Shared Education; and developing effective



longitudinal metrics/measures to establish the change brought about by Shared Education.

An initial Mainstreaming Shared Education 'Delivery Plan', setting out a more detailed series of measures and actions to be progressed over the coming years in response to those challenges and priority areas for development identified will be developed. Further detail on this is provided below at section 4.3.

Fundamentally, the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy* represents a change in approach to how we deliver education. It seeks to recognise the importance of Shared Education and the role it plays in supporting the education of children and young people, and in helping to realise a range of wider societal benefits.

It challenges the notion that Shared Education is an 'add on'; and places it firmly as a central and integral part of the services offered by education institutions and a child's educational pathway.

Continued strengthening of relationships between schools and other settings is of benefit to us all in terms of fostering a positive shared learning environment for children and young people, which can flow outwards to parents, families and the wider community, leading to

greater mutual understanding and cohesion between the citizens of Northern Ireland. This can only impact positively on the broader economy and long term stability and prosperity for the region.

It should also be noted that this Strategy including, in due course, associated delivery plans, will be treated as living documents which can be revised and updated accordingly, in line with future policy, financial or other contextual developments. This includes the findings of the Independent Review of Education and, crucially, the availability of resources.

How the Strategy will be implemented

Chapter 2, in setting out the vision, aim, objectives, outcomes and guiding principles of the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*, acknowledges that this will be a long-term process which will take time to deliver.

4.2 Outcomes

The intended outcomes of this Strategy are:

- Children and young people have quality Shared Education learning experiences on a continued and progressive basis.

- A competent and well trained education workforce delivering and supporting quality Shared Education.
- The necessary infrastructure and resources are in place to assist partnerships to deliver quality Shared Education, and to promote the efficient and effective use of resources.
- The purpose, benefits and impact of Shared Education are understood across the education system and by practitioners, parents, stakeholders and the wider community.
- An agreed process is in place to measure the impact of Shared Education and to evaluate attitudinal change.
- Robust arrangements are in place to support the efficient and effective delivery of Shared Education.

4.3 Delivery Plans

Implementation of the Strategy and delivery of the intended outcomes will involve the setting of strategic priorities and goals on a short, medium and long term basis, by way of delivery plans with SMART targets.

The DE will have responsibility for and the central co-ordinating role in terms of delivery of the Strategy.

It is proposed that an Oversight Group will be established to direct and monitor implementation of the Strategy, with secretarial support provided by the DE's SECR.

Membership of the Oversight Group will include senior officials from relevant Directorates in the DE and the EA and representatives from key stakeholder organisations. The group will have responsibility for setting, agreeing and monitoring delivery against the targets in the delivery plans. It is proposed that the plans will cover the following periods:-

- Initial term: Strategy launch to end of year 1
- Short term (2-3 years)
- Medium term (3-5 years); and
- Long term (6-10 years).

Progress on delivery against the targets in the delivery plans will also form part of the biennial statutory report to the Assembly on the operation of the Act.

The Oversight Group will agree the initial data requirements which will be needed to baseline and monitor delivery on the SMART targets in the delivery plans and will regularly review and update the data requirements, if necessary, over the lifetime of the Strategy.



Collaborative working and embedding of Shared Education envisaged through implementation of this Strategy can be achieved by making better use of existing resources and provides opportunities to explore potential savings and efficiencies by integrating Shared Education into current policies and practice.

However, it is recognised that there are costs to sharing and that delivery of this Strategy, mainly in the operational aspects of sharing, will require a budget to cover the inescapable additional costs of Shared Education. Where appropriate, delivery plans will include estimated costings, which will be subject to business case approval and the availability of funding.

4.4 Risks and Impacts

It is recognised that there are a number of external factors which might potentially impact on the implementation of the Strategy. These include the ongoing implications of the COVID-19 pandemic; the uncertain fiscal/budgetary position; and the impact and outworkings of the current Independent Review of Education.

The Oversight Group will seek to manage these and other emerging risks and impacts on an ongoing basis.

4.5 Monitoring and Review of the Strategy

A milestone review(s) of the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy* will be required throughout the implementation period. This will help identify any new or emerging issues affecting the delivery of the Strategy and allow for any required adjustments to improve the advancement of Shared Education.



Actions

&

Data

Appendices

Appendix A: SHARING WORKS KEY ACTIONS

Area 1: Defining Encouraging and Facilitating Shared Education		Progress (as at Oct 2021)	Status
Key Action 1	<p>Bring forward legislation (DE)</p> <p><i>DE will bring forward a Shared Education Bill which will provide a statutory definition of Shared Education and provide a power to encourage and facilitate Shared Education. A draft Shared Education Bill accompanies this document.</i></p>	Shared Education Act (NI) 2016 received Royal Assent May 2016. The Act provides a statutory definition of Shared Education, outlines its purpose and places duties and powers on a number of education and sectoral bodies including the DE and the EA.	Achieved
Key Action 2	<p>Provide co-ordinated and effective support for practitioners (EA)</p> <p><i>In order to support effectively the further development of Shared Education, dedicated officers will be appointed in each Education and Library Board (or within the Education Authority) with responsibility to encourage, facilitate and support Shared Education.</i></p> <p><i>They will also operate as a regional team, working in conjunction with DE and its Education & Training Inspectorate and with other key stakeholders particularly the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>develop and drive forward a strategy for advancing Shared Education that includes setting targets and goals and monitoring Shared Education activities;</i> 	<p>The EA's Shared Education and Sectoral Support Team made up of School Improvement Professionals, is well established. It is responsible for the DSC SESP, PEACE IV CASE, Strule Shared Education Campus and wider SEC provision and provides a range of support, advice and guidance to schools/settings.</p> <p>To date, dedicated EA support officers have been recruited through and funded by the DSC SESP and PEACE IV CASE Shared Education programmes, and the Transition Phase budgets. As DSC SESP draws to a close, the EA, in collaboration with the Department, is considering how best to support Shared Education partnerships in pre-school, school and youth sector in a mainstreamed environment.</p>	Ongoing

- *review existing and proposed policies within education and ensure that where appropriate activities seek to encourage and facilitate Shared Education;*
- *commission research and evaluation(s) into Shared Education;*
- *facilitate the sharing and dissemination of good practice; and*
- *report annually on progress being made.*

Sectoral Support Bodies and other stakeholders will also have a role in encouraging and facilitating Shared Education. The Education Authority will consider how best to coordinate the range of support that may be available.

The team have worked closely with the DE, the ETI and other stakeholders in developing the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*, which includes details of how Shared Education provision will be monitored and evaluated, how Shared Education will dovetail and align with other educational policies, and how good practice will be further identified and disseminated.

The EA also contribute and provide input to the biennial Shared Education Report to the Assembly.

Progress to date in advancing Shared Education has been achieved largely through the EA's collaboration with stakeholders. As part of the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*, the EA will seek ways to improve the coordination and collaboration of all stakeholders including CCEA, potentially by the establishment of a stakeholder forum.

Key Action 3

Develop self-assessment tools for practitioners (ETI)

The Education and Training Inspectorate will develop a Shared Education Continuum model, which can be used by schools and other non-formal educational settings, to self assess their practices, methodologies and capacity in relation to the delivery of Shared Education. This will be supported by the development of quality indicators. In undertaking this work, the Inspectorate will draw on existing learning and work by other stakeholders who have sought to develop a Shared Education Continuum model.

The Shared Education Continuum will be an effective tool to assist practitioners in carrying out effective initial self-reflection to identify their baseline in relation to Shared Education, to set effective goals and to measure how much progress they have made in meeting these goals.

The ETI created the *Developing Shared Education: A Framework for School Partnerships* (the Framework) published in 2014 which supports partnerships in self-evaluating the quality of their Shared Education provision, and setting targets for development. The Framework is aligned to the four pillars of Every School a Good School: Learner-Centred, High Quality Learning and Teaching, Leadership and Management and Community Connections. Two additional Shared Education Frameworks have been created by the ETI to support early years (published 2016) and youth settings (published 2018) in the planning, implementation and evaluation of Shared Education. Each partnership is required, through joint self-evaluation, to identify its baseline position across the four development stages of the Framework: defining, developing, expanding or embedding. The Framework has been well-received by practitioners and has helped guide action planning to effect improvement in partnerships. In September 2021, as part of the work relating to the 'Mainstreaming Shared Education' Strategy, the DE requested that the ETI carries out a review of the Framework to support the embedding and mainstreaming of Shared Education; this work is in progress and will be informed by the views of principals, lead practitioners and learners.

Achieved



Area 2: Future Funding of Shared Education		Progress (as at Oct 2021)	Status
Key Action 4	<p>Provide funding support 2014-18 (DE and partners)</p> <p><i>DE is, in conjunction with funding from the Delivering Social Change project and Atlantic Philanthropies, providing a funding stream to support Shared Education in schools over the next four years. This funding will focus on schools that have already engaged in collaborative working. Funding of £25 million over four years will be available. This represents a significant funding commitment against the backdrop of an extremely challenging financial landscape in the coming years.</i></p> <p><i>DE will also work with the Special EU Programmes Body to advise on how best Peace IV funding can be used to support further the development of Shared Education in schools that have not yet engaged in Shared Education, as well as across pre-school and youth work settings in a way that will complement the Delivering Social Change Shared Education project.</i></p>	<p>DSC SESP programme supported pupil activity in approx. 371 schools/settings from the 2015/16 academic year until June 2019 with continuing support for capacity building up to June 2022. Support for former DSC SESP schools has continued as part of the DE funded Transition Phase arrangements, focusing on capacity building and leadership.</p> <p>PEACE IV Shared Education programme introduced 2017, anticipated fully concluding 2023, reaching approx. 290 schools and 73 pre-school settings (at its highest) in NI including those involved with schools and settings in the Republic of Ireland as part of cross border arrangements.</p> <p>The level of engagement with Youth Work settings through Peace IV has not been as originally planned.</p> <p>There are opportunities to expand the reach of Shared Education in particular via non-formal Youth settings through the future PEACE PLUS programme, currently under development.</p>	Achieved





Key Action 5

Develop sustainable long-term delivery arrangements (DE)

Whilst a significant number of pilot projects have taken place with external funding support, the Department wants, in the longer term, to see Shared Education not as an 'add on' or optional enrichment activity but as a normal and common experience for all young people firmly embedded within the ethos of each school.

Consequently, DE will use the learning from both the Delivering Social Change and Peace IV projects, as well as other long standing practices of collaborative, inclusive and citizenship education, to determine how best to support educational establishments in offering Shared Education in the longer term from 2018 onwards.

The DE, working closely with the EA and a range of stakeholders, has considered the learning from DSC SESP, PEACE IV and other collaborative practices to determine how best to support Shared Education beyond the lifetime of the funded programmes, culminating in the development, publication and implementation of the new *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy*.

An accompanying funding model, designed to support pupil engagement in experienced partnerships of primary, post- primary and special schools, is being developed and, subject to Ministerial agreement, business case approval and the availability of budgets, will be rolled out once funded programmes come to an end and Public Health Agency guidance allows for the resumption of pupil engagement.

Work to develop similar arrangements for pre-school, EOTAS and youth settings will be required.

Ongoing



Area 3: Structures for Shared Education	Progress (as at Oct 2021)	Status
<p>Key Action 6</p> <p>Develop innovative options for sharing (DE)</p> <p><i>DE will develop innovative options for sharing. The Executive's 'Together: Building a United Community' strategy includes a target to commence 10 new Shared Education Campuses in the next five years.</i></p> <p><i>In response to the interest of some controlled and maintained schools, DE has, in consultation with the Catholic Trustees and Transferors Representatives Council, brought forward guidance for a jointly managed school model that will provide an alternative model for educating pupils from different community backgrounds together at the same school (ie one that will provide Shared Education with a Christian ethos managed by a Board of Governors with balanced community representation).</i></p>	<p>SEC programme progressing with 4 projects under calls 1 and 2 having commenced (see update below – Key Action 7). A fifth project under consideration was terminated due to unsustainable enrolment numbers at the schools involved.</p> <p>Funding for the third call of SEC projects is being explored.</p> <p>DE Circular 2015/15 published.</p> <p>Options for Sharing and Integrating: A short guide for schools also communicated to schools which included information on jointly managed schools.</p> <p>Transformation to Integrated status process is well established.</p> <p>To date, no development proposals have been brought forward in respect of jointly managed schools.</p> <p>Developmental work ongoing to highlight and encourage shared solutions being adopted in context of Area Planning.</p> <p>In a written statement made to the Assembly on 9 August 2021 which set out area planning priorities for 2022-2027, the Minister of Education outlined her expectation that <i>"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..."</i>.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>



Key Action 7

Provide capital investment to support schools sharing educational facilities (DE)

As noted above, the Executive's 'Together: Building a United Community' strategy includes a target to commence 10 new Shared Education Campuses in the next five years. DE is responsible for delivering this programme.

The Shared Education Campuses Programme complements work already underway in DE on Shared Education and area planning. It is aimed at providing capital assistance to schools to facilitate Shared Education (on a cross community basis) by either providing new Shared Educational facilities, enhancing existing shared facilities or through Shared Education Campuses.

The programme targets schools that can demonstrate the following types of sharing:

- *shared educational facilities – where new educational facilities are built to allow for shared use by all schools within the model;*
- *enhanced educational facilities – where current educational facilities are improved to allow for shared use by all schools within the model; and*
- *Shared Education Campus – where schools are co-located and share infrastructure.*

The key purpose of the Shared Education Campuses Programme is to ensure high quality educational benefits to children and young people. To ensure the best chance of successful long-term collaboration among schools, projects need to build on a solid foundation of existing sharing and have the support of their local community.

Capital investment is being provided via both Strule (Omagh) project and SEC programme.

Plans for 4 SECs being progressed currently with funding secured under the Fresh Start Agreement announced in March 2016. Funding stream for third call projects yet to be identified.

Department remains committed to advancing the Strule programme, with construction provisionally planned to complete in 2026.

Ongoing



Area 4: Embedding Sharing Throughout the Education System	Progress (as at Oct 2021)	Status
<p data-bbox="174 360 376 395">Key Action 8</p> <p data-bbox="450 360 936 464">Develop effective monitoring and evaluation arrangements (DE, ALBs and ETI)</p> <p data-bbox="450 491 909 627"><i>Effective monitoring and evaluation arrangements for Shared Education will be put in place.</i></p> <p data-bbox="450 655 943 895"><i>DE in conjunction with its Arm's Length Bodies will require schools engaging in Shared Education programmes to outline specific plans and goals for Shared Education in their School Development Plans.</i></p> <p data-bbox="450 927 936 1305"><i>The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations require schools to outline their strategies for raising the standards of attainment among all pupils. It is expected that School Development Plans will explicitly set out the contribution Shared Education programmes are expected to make in raising pupil attainment.</i></p>	<p data-bbox="972 360 1883 531">Monitoring and Evaluation arrangements, at partnership and system levels to support longer term delivery arrangements for Shared Education, are under consideration and will form a part of the <i>Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy</i> delivery plan.</p> <p data-bbox="972 563 1906 730">Arrangements will align with the reporting requirements laid out in the Act and will include Essential Criteria for Shared Education, linked to the provision of Shared Education funding, requiring schools/settings to embed Shared Education in the school development planning process, or equivalent.</p> <p data-bbox="972 762 1877 1281">The ETI has played a key role in the evaluation of Shared Education across the education system to promote the sharing and development of effective practice. Its production of self-evaluation materials, including key quality indicators, supported Shared Education partnerships in their action planning, supporting them to aspire to the next stage of the continuum within the Framework. The ETI provided professional development opportunities for its inspectors and associate assessors to support robust evaluation and the dissemination of effective practice. In January 2017, the ETI established a new framework for inspections across all school phases called the Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework (ISEF). Key Shared Education indicators and reflective questions were integrated into the ISEF to promote self-evaluation of practice in Shared Education.</p>	<p data-bbox="1962 360 2085 395">Ongoing</p>



In monitoring and evaluating arrangements for Shared Education, the Department will seek to assess the attitudes of children and young people through on-going research (eg: Young Life & Times survey).

Where schools and other educational institutions are in receipt of a Shared Education funding, the Education and Training Inspectorate will explicitly review the use of that funding in its inspection reports particularly in relation to:

- *the added value of such Shared Education activities;*
- *the quality and effectiveness of the Shared Education activities;*
- *the value for money of the funding provided; and*
- *the sustainability of the initiatives.*

The Chief Inspector's Report, which is published biennially, will make specific comment on the current range and extent of Shared Education activities across the education sector, highlight good practice and make recommendations regarding how these could be extended and improved.

In September 2016 and in October 2018, the ETI published comprehensive evaluation reports which documented detailed findings on the progress and impact of the funding of the DSC SESP on the learning experiences and outcomes for children and young people across the Shared Education partnerships. In November 2018, the Chief Inspector's Report (2016-2018) made specific comment on the progress of Shared Education through the implementation of the DSC SESP. In 2019, the ETI ran a live webinar for practitioners to support the dissemination of the DSC SESP evaluation report entitled 'Does Sharing Work? – the challenge and benefits of Shared Education'; this is now available as a video-on-demand recording which continues to be used for teacher professional learning purposes in schools. In November 2020, the ETI published its report on the progress of the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Summer Camps Programme led by the EA's Youth Service. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the ETI's district inspectors have engaged with organisations to support continuity of shared learning experiences through the effective use of digital learning platforms, in line with the health and safety restrictions and protocols.

In addition to the ETI evaluations of the DSC SESP highlighted above, other significant associated evaluative work has been taken forward in terms of assessing the impact and effectiveness of Shared Education programmes and initiatives to date. This includes the evaluation of NSSI (2020) funded through DSC SESP, the EA/DE evaluations of 2018/19 and 2019/20 funding pilots, the EA Evaluations of the DSC SESP Teacher Professional Learning Strategy (2020) and NSSI (2021), and evaluations of PEACE IV Shared Education programmes commissioned by SEUPB. This is alongside a wide range of other related research and evaluation reports undertaken externally e.g. Queen's University.

Ongoing



		<p>The DE has also commissioned analysis of impact of Shared Education through a number of periodic and ad hoc surveys including, for example, YLT and KLT surveys, School Omnibus etc.</p> <p>Subject to senior departmental officials' and Ministerial approval, the SEC Team will progress procurement of an Outcomes Based Evaluation of the Limavady SEC to determine the impact which a Shared Campus has from an educational and good relations perspective. The methodology applied, analysis and findings will help and inform the development, design and drafting of future policy, and guidance for the SECP and how other shared campuses may be evaluated.</p>	
Key Action 9	<p>Develop the workforce</p> <p><i>DE will, as part of its work to finalise a new teacher professional development strategy, ensure that this includes steps to provide teachers, from initial teacher education through to the most experienced teachers, with opportunities to learn together, including preparation for teaching through Shared Education.</i></p> <p><i>DE will contribute to and await the outworking of the independent review of teacher education infrastructure commissioned by the Department of Employment and Learning and will consider the</i></p>	<p>The ethos of Shared Education is reflected in <i>Learning Leaders</i>, the Department's Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning published in March 2016, six months after <i>Sharing Works</i>. Whilst <i>Learning Leaders</i> does not specifically reference Shared Education, it does however have the vision that "Every teacher is a learning leader, accomplished in working collaboratively with all partners in the interests of children and young people". Also to be noted that Annual Action Plans associated with delivery of <i>Learning Leaders</i> include reference to Shared Education.</p>	Ongoing





	<p><i>outcomes in the context of future arrangements for initial teacher education and its proposed strategy for teacher professional development with a view to ensuring that student teachers and teachers returning for professional development can be provided with opportunities to learn together, including preparation for teaching through Shared Education.</i></p> <p><i>DE will liaise with Higher Education Institutions and other relevant education providers on aligning their approaches to professional learning for practitioners in Shared Education with the vision and aims of this policy.</i></p> <p><i>DE will also consider the development needs of early years practitioners and youth workers. In working with the Special EU Programmes Body, DE will seek to encourage the inclusion of capacity building for early years practitioners and youth workers within the Peace IV Shared Education thematic area.</i></p>	<p>EA engagement with HEIs responsible for teacher training has led to some involvement in the delivery of capacity building elements of the funded projects. Further engagement to be taken forward with HEIs as part of efforts to embed Shared Education system wide.</p> <p>Significant opportunities for leadership and teacher professional learning supported through Shared Education funded programmes to date. This has included support for early years practitioners via PEACE IV Sharing from the Start project.</p> <p>It is expected that there will be further capacity building opportunities for educational professionals across participating pre-school, school and youth settings through the upcoming PEACE PLUS programme.</p>	
<p>Key Action 10</p>	<p>Align educational policies (DE, ETI and CCEA)</p> <p><i>It is critical that a coherent and effective approach to Shared Education is embedded across educational policies.</i></p> <p><i>The Education & Training Inspectorate will undertake independent reviews of current practice in relation to the delivery of:</i></p>	<p>All DE policy teams must consider Shared Education in development or implementation of new policies/programmes or revision of existing ones. Arm’s Length Bodies must take account of same and demonstrate how they are fulfilling their statutory duties in respect of Shared Education. The extent of how this is achieved is captured and</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>



- *Personal, Social and Emotional Development (Pre-School Education);*
- *Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2);*
- *Local and Global Citizenship (Key Stages 3 and 4);*
- *The Curriculum Framework for Youth Work (Youth Service); and*
- *The Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) policy (including consideration of the opportunities that are provided for children and young people to discuss and explore issues associated with divisions, conflict and inequalities).*

Work will be undertaken with CCEA, which has statutory responsibility for advising the DE on matters concerned with the curriculum and the development and production of teaching support materials for use in schools, in order to address recommendations regarding the content of these areas of learning and in supporting teachers and other educationalists in their delivery.

reported upon within the biennial Report to the Assembly, a legislative requirement of the 2016 Shared Education Act.

While significant progress has been made in some areas, it is acknowledged there is still work to do to align relevant educational policies (both in terms of policy making and policy implementation) with Shared Education. The 'Participation and Collaboration' and 'Support and Resources' key areas of the *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy* outline how Shared Education will become further embedded within education policy.

The ETI carried out an evaluation of the impact of the CRED Policy on schools and youth organisations in 2015. This evaluation drew on the ETI's inspection findings for Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) learning in pre-school settings, Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) in primary schools and Learning for Life and work (LLW) education in post-primary schools.

In the Chief Inspector's Report 2016-2018, the Chief Inspector highlighted the vital opportunities, provided by involvement in Shared Education partnerships, to extend the children's work and to enhance the children's learning in a range of ways. The



Chief Inspector did, however, caution that Shared Education must be regarded as an integral part of learning and teaching rather than an 'add-on'. The Report cited, as examples, PSED in the pre-school curricular guidance, PDMU in primary schools, and history education and Learning for Life and Work in post-primary schools as curricular areas which should all reinforce Shared Education.

The ETI has engaged with CCEA to align resources in Shared Education with emerging effective practice through the curriculum. In September 2018, an ETI Inspector was seconded to the DE to work on a full-time basis to support work on Shared Education. In November 2019, the Pupil Pathway resource was published; this publication was developed collaboratively by the EA, the DE, the ETI, CCEA and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE). It provided lines of progression for pupils in the form of specific curricular outcomes for PSED in pre-school, PDMU in primary schools, and LLW, English, English literature and history in post-primary schools.

In September 2020, the ETI produced a scoping report for the DE on the policy document, Priorities for Youth. It found that youth work was providing a valuable opportunity for young people to build upon their school-based learning by equipping them with the skills, attitudes and behaviours to recognise, understand and respect difference and to build new



		<p>relationships. While concluding that much of the youth work curriculum as outlined in 'The Model for Effective Practice' is still relevant, it recommended that it be reviewed to take greater account of the lives of young people today to ensure that it supports young people to understand more fully their community and the world in which they live, and support them to proactively bring about positive changes.</p> <p>CCEA, working closely with the EA and other educational stakeholders, has developed and updated material and resources relating to Shared Education: including providing TPL courses. It has also been involved in the development of the Network of Shared School Improvement Joint Practice Development programmes, the Pupil Pathway resource, and developed a number of other resources which advance the core Shared Education aims of improving educational and reconciliation outcomes.</p>	
<p>Key Action 11</p>	<p>Support Special Schools and Learning Support Centres (DE)</p> <p><i>DE encourages active participation of pupils with Special Educational Needs to engage in shared learning activities with their peers. Special schools will be encouraged to partner with other schools for Shared Education.</i></p>	<p>Both the former DSC SESP project and subsequent PEACE IV Shared Education programme have provided opportunities for special schools to become involved in Shared Education.</p> <p>More than half of all special schools (22 schools in total; 56%) are currently involved in funded Shared Education partnerships.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>



In supporting this, DE will consider how Shared Education and the enhanced collaboration between mainstream schools, learning support centres attached to mainstream and special schools can most effectively meet the needs of children and young people with disabilities, those with emotional and behavioural difficulties and those with special educational needs. This work will focus on the development of effective models for collaboration that can ensure, wherever possible, that children and young people are taught in mainstream schools.

For the small minority of children and young people where mainstream schooling is not suitable, the Department in conjunction with its Arm's Length Bodies will seek to ensure that, where possible, they have meaningful opportunities to learn with children and young people in mainstream school environments.

An ETI 'Guide to Collaborative Practice', which is based on learning from 24 special schools that worked collaboratively on a joint curriculum project of their choosing with a neighbouring mainstream school, has already been produced.

Remaining special schools will be further encouraged to participate in Shared Education including through the upcoming PEACE PLUS programme.

Of those 136 mainstream schools currently offering specialist provision classes, 56 are currently involved in Shared Education partnerships. Schools will continue to be encouraged and supported to give those pupils opportunities to engage in Shared Education activities where possible. The EA are currently taking forward a piece of work designed to assist in overcoming any barriers to Shared Education participation which may exist for children who have or may have SEN.

EOTAS settings are yet to be involved.

The draft pupil engagement funding model underpinning the Mainstreaming Strategy, developed under the direction of the MSE Project Board and in consultation with the Stakeholder Reference Group, includes additional provision to support pupils with SEN to participate fully in Shared Education, whether they attend mainstream or special schools.

The Mainstreaming Strategy sets out detail on the additional support and resources that will be made for pupils who have or may have SEN and how participation of all settings, including special schools will be encouraged and facilitated.

Availability of the ETI guide entitled '**Learning across the Continuum' A Guide to Collaborative Practice 'Sharing Practice: Supporting Inclusion' (2012)** will be further promoted as part of the accompanying communications strategy.



Key Action 12

Promote engagement with parents, carers and wider community (DE, ALBs, schools, and other educational settings)

The Department and its Arm's Length Bodies will encourage schools and other educational establishments to ensure Shared Education supports, encourages, and enables the development of meaningful relationships with and between parents, caregivers and the wider community.

Specific plans for engaging with parents, caregivers and the wider community will be expected within their plans for advancing Shared Education. Schools will be expected to specifically reference this within their School Development Plans.

'Community Connections' is one of the four pillars of the ETI Shared Education self-evaluation Frameworks. It is however recognised by the ETI in their 2018 DSC SESP evaluation as an area for further improvement.

The draft Essential Criteria, which will accompany the mainstreamed funding model, will require partnerships to outline how they will engage with parents, caregivers and the wider community as part of their SDPs (or equivalent) and annual action plans.

The *Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy* will include a focus with regard to enabling schools/ settings to connect with the wider community.

Significant promotional work on Shared Education has been undertaken to date including production of the '*Sharing Works*' magazine and events around the annual Good Relations week in collaboration with TEO.

A distinct Communications Plan, currently in development, which will complement mainstreaming efforts, will seek to aid promotion of Shared Education beyond the immediate formal/non-formal learning environment in order to further promote understanding of Shared Education and encourage wider buy-in across families and communities.

In addition, PEACE PLUS is anticipated as enabling further development of this area.

Ongoing

Key Action 13

Promote engagement with children and young people (DE, ALBs, schools, and other educational settings)

In advancing Shared Education, the Department and its Arm's Length Bodies will encourage schools and other educational establishments to continue to develop meaningful ways of giving children and young people a voice and of listening and responding to their views. This is in line with UNCRC Article 12 (Respect for the views of the child) which encourages adults to listen to the opinions of children and involve them in decision-making.

To facilitate effective pupil participation within schools, the Department has published a circular that provides further guidance for Principals and Boards of Governors on how to encourage pupil participation in decision making. The circular includes information and guidelines on best practice to help schools identify the method and degree of participation that best suits the needs of their pupils. One of the case studies included in the circular showcases an example of two neighbouring post-primary schools, one from the controlled and one from the maintained sectors, who have developed a joint school council to discuss areas of mutual interest.

Recognised as effective practice, the DE and its partners actively promote the "pupil voice" within Shared Education.

In line with the right enshrined in United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (Article 12), individual schools/settings and Shared Education partnerships are strongly encouraged to engage with children and young people through a range of different fora. Many instances of good practice exist in this regard. A variety of resources also exist, including Circular 2014/14 and NICCY's Democra school council guidance, to assist schools/settings in enabling children and young people to have a meaningful say in decisions that affect them.

Engagement with pupils is included in the ETI self-evaluation Frameworks for Shared Education and in the Essential Criteria which partnerships will have to meet to access support from the mainstreamed funding model. Accompanying guidance under development by the EA will also include reference to supporting resources available as highlighted above. A toolkit comprising of example Shared Education activity recently developed by the Secondary Students' Union (SSUNI) is also available.

Development of the Mainstreaming Strategy has included consultation with and input from student representatives through the Innovation Lab's Strategic Insights Programme.

Ongoing



	<p><i>The DE website also contains information on school councils, which are one mechanism by which effective pupil participation can be achieved, and links to the Democra-School programme.</i></p>	<p>The Communications Strategy to be taken forward as part of Mainstreaming will include further efforts to engage with children and young people.</p>	
<p>Key Action 14</p>	<p>Equality of opportunity and good relations (DE in conjunction with Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMdFM)/TEO)</p> <p><i>DE recognises that schools and other educational institutions have an important role in promoting equality of opportunity and good relations.</i></p> <p><i>The Department will, in conjunction with OFMdFM (which has responsibility for equality legislation), consider the case for schools and other educational institutions to be designated as 'public authorities' under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and thus to be required to comply with the statutory duties to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. In doing this, consideration will be given to reducing the demands that will be placed on schools and other educational institutions in terms of meeting their specific responsibilities under Section 75 whilst maintaining their core duties to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.</i></p>	<p>Whilst some early discussions did take place following the publication of <i>Sharing Works</i>, no progress has been made in terms of this action. This action has therefore not been included as part of the Mainstreaming Strategy.</p> <p>Whilst there is no duty placed specifically on schools (as a public authority) under S75 legislation, schools and other settings are still very much encouraged to have due regard to the promotion of equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of good relations in their work via Shared Education and CRED policy.</p>	<p>Not Achieved</p>





In the event that schools and other educational institutions are designated as 'public authorities', the Department and its Arm's Length Bodies will, in consultation with the Equality Commission, consider the support arrangements that schools would need following a decision by OFMdfM on whether and how to designate schools as 'public authorities'.

It is expected that one aspect of meeting the duty to promote good relations will include engagement in Shared Education initiatives.

Appendix B: SHARED EDUCATION PARTICIPATION

Table 1: Levels of Participation, by Shared Education Programme, June 2019, June 2020 and June 2021

Phase	Schools				Pupils			
	30 June 2019	30 June 2020	30 June 2021	Change between June 2019 and June 2021	30 June 2019	30 June 2020	30 June 2021	Change between June 2019 and June 2021
DSC SESP								
Pre-school	16	16	16	0	615	711	0	-615
Primary Schools	246	246	246	0	40,056	19,496	0	-40,056
Post-primary Schools	99	97	95	-4	24,011	20,553	0	-24,011
Special Schools	10	10	10	0	701	244	0	-701
Sub-total	371	369	367	-4	65,383	41,004	0	-65,383
PEACE IV								
Pre-school	59	73	44	-15	1,797	2,341	1,038	-759
Primary Schools	254	255	255	1	19,126	21,630	16,050	-3,076
Post-primary Schools	21	22	22	1	748	49	60	-688
Special Schools	11	12	12	1	331	462	328	-3
Sub-total	345	362	333	-12	22,002	24,482	17,476	-4,526
OVERALL TOTAL	716	731	700	-16	87,385	65,486	17,476	-69,909

Table 2: Levels of participation compared to total school/pupil population between June 2019 and June 2021

Phase	Schools				Pupils			
	June 2019		June 2021		June 2019		June 2021	
	No. of schools participating in SE	As % of school population	No. of schools participating in SE	As % of school population	No. of pupils participating in SE	As % of pupil population	No. of pupils participating in SE	As % of pupil population
Pre-school ⁶	75	16%	60	13%	2,412	10%	1,038	5%
Primary Schools	500	63%	501	64%	59,182	34%	16,050	9%
Post-primary Schools	120	62%	117	61%	24,759	17%	60	0%
Special Schools	21	54%	22	56%	1,032	17%	328	5%
Total	716	48%	700	48%	87,385	25%	17,476	5%

Table 2 provides a breakdown of all schools and pupils participating in Shared Education compared to the total number of schools and pupils in the respective school phases.

⁶ voluntary and private pre schools and Nursery schools

