

# RAISE Newtownabbey

## Strategic Area Plans





## RAISE Newtownabbey Strategic Area Plan

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# RAISE Newtownabbey Strategic Area Plan

## What is the RAISE Programme?

The RAISE Programme is a whole community and place-based approach to tackling educational disadvantage in 18 localities<sup>1</sup> across Northern Ireland, supporting the Department of Education’s vision that “every child and young person is happy, learning and succeeding”.

TransformED NI, a Strategy for Educational Excellence in Northern Ireland, outlines the Minister of Education’s priorities in a comprehensive strategy for the transformation of teaching and learning in Northern Ireland. The RAISE Programme is the signature approach to tackling educational disadvantage in this regard and will complement existing school-based programmes.

The RAISE Programme’s Strategic Objectives are:

- Raising achievement and addressing educational disadvantage; and
- Raising aspirations through a whole community approach to education.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**  
Raising **achievement** and addressing educational disadvantage;  
and  
Raising **aspirations** through a whole community approach to education

**RAISING ACHIEVEMENT**

- ✓ Raising standards with a focus on increasing literacy, numeracy and digital skills outcomes for all pupils;
- ✓ Reduce the gap between FSME and non-FSME pupils;
- ✓ Improve pathways for children which motivate and support learners at risk of exclusion, marginalisation and underachievement;
- ✓ Increase opportunities and empower education professionals through professional learning programmes.

**RAISING ASPIRATIONS**

- ✓ Increase the value of education to families and children;
- ✓ Increase pupil attendance, engagement, confidence and aspiration;
- ✓ Increase the proportion of school leavers going to positive destinations;
- ✓ Improve relationships between education settings and children and young people, parents and community;
- ✓ Build capacity within communities and increase collective impact through a whole community approach.

INTERMEDIARY BENEFITS

<sup>1</sup> Belfast has been sub divided into four areas.



The RAISE Programme helps to deliver on the mission set by the ‘A Fair Start’ report to ensure all children and young people regardless of background are given the best start in life. It aims to raise educational achievement and aspirations using a combination of Locality-Led Projects and Cross-Cutting Initiatives.

A series of Locality-Led Projects will be identified through an open call to deliver against the objectives and needs set out in the Strategic Area Plan for each RAISE locality. Cross-Cutting Initiatives will complement locality led projects by responding in a strategic way to priorities common to several localities and bringing additional opportunities to communities around key themes.

This bespoke Strategic Area Plan sets out the context for Newtownabbey and identifies the key issues that underpin educational disadvantage in the area, highlights potential proposals on how to address the identified gaps in provision and support the educational achievement of children and young people in the locality.

This Plan has been developed through a co-design process involving public engagement and creative approaches to give voice to organisations, children and young people and parents in the locality. The Department of Education recognises the commitment of local stakeholders and the Locality Reference Group to this co-design process. The Locality Reference Group has played a critical role in informing, shaping and developing this Strategic Area Plan on behalf of the locality. It was produced in accordance with the guidance on the development of a Strategic Area Plan which can be found on the [DE website](#)<sup>2</sup>. This Plan is owned by the locality and the Locality Reference Group.

The Department of Education recognises the commitment of local stakeholders and the Locality Reference Group to this co-design process.

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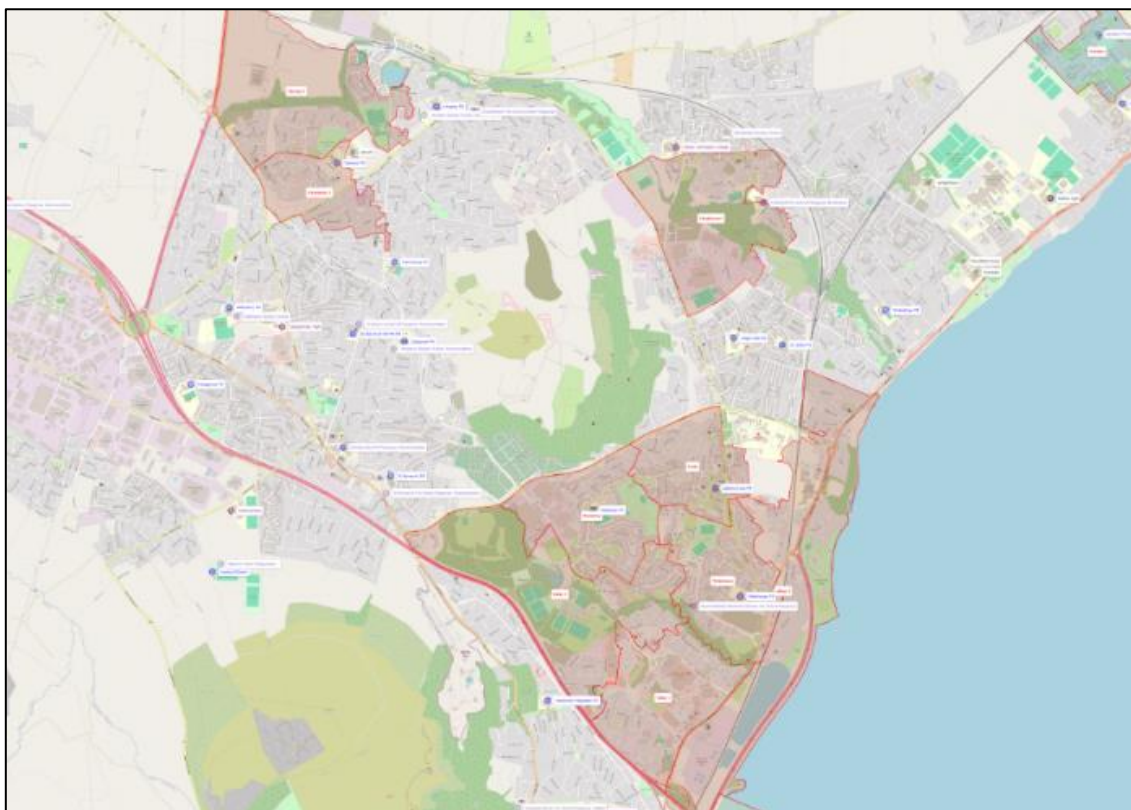
<sup>2</sup> [Developing a Locality Strategic Area Plan, Department of Education](#)



## Introducing the RAISE Newtownabbey Locality

The RAISE Newtownabbey locality is situated within the Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Government District (LGD), created in April 2015. The LGD area consists of 7 District Electoral Areas (DEAs) known as Airport, Antrim, Ballyclare, Dunsilly, Glengormley Urban, Macedon and Threemilewater. The LGD area consists of 72 Super Output Areas (SOA). The 4 DEAs which is referred to as Newtownabbey include Glengormley Urban, Macedon, Ballyclare and Threemilewater.

According to population figures from Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) the Antrim and Newtownabbey LGD has 144,485 people, of which 70,546 (48.8%) are male and 73,939 (51.2%) are female. (2021)<sup>3</sup>. The population aged 25 years and under is at 46,366 people which equates to 32% of the total population which is similar to the Northern Ireland average of 32.6%. 14.18% are 0-3yrs, 19.92% are 4-8yrs, 21.95% are 9-13yrs, 19.45% are 14-18yrs and 24.50 are 19-25yrs. Within the defined Newtownabbey area there are 26,456 children and young people aged under 25.



According to the Multiple Deprivation Measures (NIMDM) 28.7% of children and young people are living within, and experiencing, high levels of deprivation with the NI average being 25.2%, 9 of the 72 SOAs being ranked within the top 25% of most deprived wards according to figures released by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

<sup>3</sup> NISRA 2021 – [Population Figure Antrim and Newtownabbey](#). Retrieved from: [Census 2021 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)



(NISRA) 2021<sup>3</sup>, of which 7 are in the defined Newtownabbey area; Dunnanney, Coole, Monkstown 1, Whitehouse, Carmoney 1, Valley 2, Mossley 2 and Glengormley 2.

The Super Output Areas identified in the RAISE Newtownabbey Locality are Mossley 2, Abbey 1, Carmoney 1, Coole, Dunanney, Monkstown 1, Valley 1, Valley 2 and Whitehouse. The RAISE locality expands across the 3 DEA's which include Threemilewater, Macedon and Glengormley Urban DEA's.

There have been a range of engagements across the Newtownabbey area with the Locality Co-ordinator meeting stakeholders from the community, voluntary, school and statutory sectors. Different methods have been used to inform and raise awareness of the RAISE Programme which culminated in the first Engagement Event in November 2024 where 50 organisations attended. From this initial event there have been 25 subsequent stakeholder engagement meetings to discuss local priorities with the following sectors: Nursery, Primary, Post Primary, Youth Sector, Community and Council through Community Planning; complemented with a wide range of individual meetings.

The process for agreeing the Strategic Area Plan and the key objectives has included continued engagement across the locality with a Strategic Area Plan Workshop in March 2025 with further meetings taking place with the Locality Reference Group.



## Key Statistics - Why is the RAISE Programme needed in Newtownabbey?

The vision for RAISE Newtownabbey is:

**‘That all Children and Young People are ready to learn from cradle to career.’**

The statistics below set out the need for RAISE in the Newtownabbey locality:

- 44% of pupils within the locality are not achieving 5+ GCSEs A-C including English and Maths. Northern Ireland average is 25.25%. (DE School Census, 2023/24)<sup>4</sup>.
- The Absence Rate is 11.9% above the NI average of 8.2%.<sup>4</sup>
- Macedon DEA has the highest percentage of 18-24yrs who have never worked or have no qualifications or low level of qualification having 8.6% compared to the Northern Ireland average 5.6% and the highest across the LGD<sup>3</sup>.
- Domestic Violence Incidents are above the Northern Ireland average within the locality. [Source: NISRA 2024]<sup>5</sup>
- 35% of young people noted that they experienced gender-based violence at school with 42% being online. (Young Life and Times Survey, 2024)<sup>6</sup>.
- With 75% noting they do not report based on the worry they won't be believed.<sup>7</sup>
- 35% of children and young people noted they have barriers that hold them back from succeeding. (Source: EA - RAON, 2025)<sup>7</sup>.
- 33% of children and young people do not feel supported through big changes in education. These changes are transitional points KS1 to KS2, KS2 to KS3, KS3 to KS4 and pathways after school post 16.<sup>7</sup>
- 28% said they do not see themselves being able to get a job in the future.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Department of Education, 2024 – [School Censuses Data 23-24](#). Retrieved from: Department of Education TED Team.

<sup>5</sup> NISRA 2024. [Domestic Violence Incidents Antrim and Newtownabbey](#). Retrieved from: [Police Service of Northern Ireland | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

<sup>6</sup> Queens University, University of Ulster, 2024. [Young Life and Times Survey – Summary of Results 2024](#). Retrieved from: [Summary24.pdf](#)

<sup>7</sup> EA Youth Services 2025. [Regional Assessment of Need Draft Consultation 2026-2029](#). Retrieved From: [RAON-Plain-Text-Version-2026-2029.pdf](#)



The most up to date school census data available for the Newtownabbey Locality outlines:-

<b>Pupil Numbers: 3,087</b> (including nursery pupils)
<b>Absence Rate</b> is currently at 11.9% compared to the NI average of 8.2%.
<b>Statemented Pupils:</b> 235
<b>Stages 1&amp;2:</b> 504 (16.56%) Pupils with a SEN Category 1 & 2 compared to the NI average of 11.54%.
<b>Total SEN:</b> 423 (13.90%) Pupils with a SEN Statement compared to the NI average of 8.55%.
<b>FSME:</b> 1589 (52.2%) of pupils are in receipt of Free School Meals compared to the NI average of 25.9%.
<b>Minority ethnic pupils:</b> 144 (4.73%) Minority Ethnic Pupils compared to the NI average of 7.65%.
<b>Children looked after:</b> 33 (1.08%) Children Looked After compared to the NI average of 0.92%. <sup>5</sup>
<b>Irish Traveller:</b> *
<b>Roma:</b> *
<b>% of school leavers Not achieving 5+ GCSEs A*-C incl. Eng/Math 2017/18 to 2021/22:</b> 378 (44%) number of pupils did not achieve 5+ GCSEs A-C including English and Maths compared to the NI average of 25.25%.

\*data suppressed due to fewer than 5 pupils



## Existing Collaboration and Complementary Investment

There are several existing collaborations across the Newtownabbey locality which focus on working collaboratively with additional complementary investment to support children and young people holistically and to reduce barriers to improve educational outcomes.

The **Rathcoole Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership** was established in 2006. The partnership's membership comprises of representatives from the local community, voluntary and statutory organisations, and elected representatives. The partnership is funded by Department for Communities and is managed by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council.

**THRIVE** is a place-based collaboration in the Rathcoole and Monkstown Area. This collaboration brings together school groups, community and youth groups, church groups and early years settings to improve outcomes for children and young people using a collective impact approach. The key themes within the THRIVE collaboration are increasing aspirations, attainment, well-being and collaboration.

**Bawnmore and District Residence Association** work collaboratively with Hazelwood Integrated College, local primary schools alongside EA Youth Services.

Community Relations in Schools (CRIS) has worked collaboratively with local schools within the Newtownabbey area known as **Newtownabbey Empowering Schools Together** (NEST). NEST is a multi-sector collaboration consisting of 21 nursery, primary, post-primary and special schools, and remains an invitational initiative, open to all schools in the Newtownabbey locality.

There is an **Extended School cluster** within the locality with all action plans in line with the policy objectives to reduce underachievement, foster health and wellbeing and social Inclusion, improve life chances and develop the integrated delivery of support services.

**Hill Croft Special School Partnership** is a collaboration bringing together key stakeholders across statutory, community and voluntary sector co-ordinated by the PHA.

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership **Newtownabbey Locality Planning Group** focuses on developing and supporting multi-agency early intervention approaches, improving outcomes for children, young people and families at a local level, to better understand local issues, and to work together to produce more effective responses.



There is ongoing investment within the locality focused on tackling educational disadvantage, removing barriers to learning and to support access to educational opportunities. There is significant investment in Sure Start, Extended Schools and Statutory Youth Services who also fund Generic Non-Targeted provision as well as local area youth projects through their local awards.

In addition, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council have secured substantial funding through the PEACE PLUS Programme to deliver community education and learning programmes linked to employability.

Other government departments, including Department of Health, Department for the Economy, Department of Justice and The Executive Office also invest in the Newtownabbey Locality. Programmes include THRiVE, Skills for Life and Work and Capacity Building Programmes. Children and young people are further supported through the free services delivered by Libraries NI.



## Needs Analysis – children, young people, key stakeholders

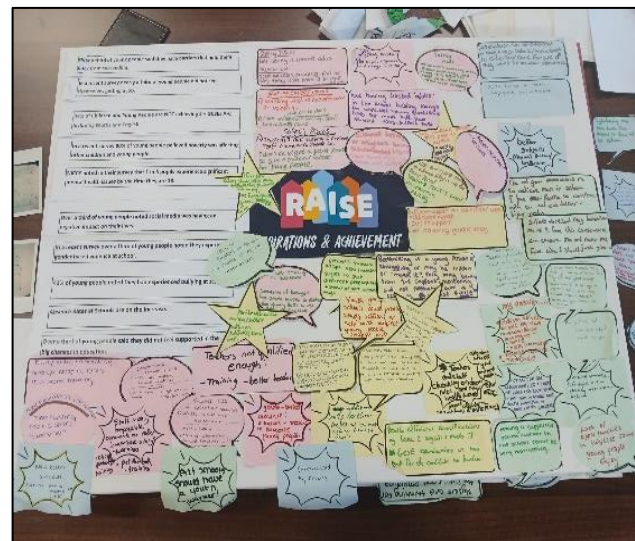
### Views of Children and Young People

Stranmillis University College Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement (CREU) was commissioned to consult with children and young people throughout all 18 localities. The RAISE programme has adopted the Lundy Model of Participation, 2007 to create opportunity for ‘Space, Voice, Audience and Influence,’ enabling children, young people and parents to express their views on their education.<sup>8</sup> Through the RAISE OPEN Future Workshop, Stranmillis CREU consulted with a group of young people from the THRiVE Youth Champions group.

A further four consultations were carried out across the Newtownabbey RAISE locality by the Locality Co-ordinator with young people from different settings across the area which followed the same approach as the Open Future Workshop. This involved 72 children and young people aged 8-18yrs old across the SOAs who were from the following sectors: community and voluntary youth sector, statutory youth sector and school sector. From these groups a further eight young people attended the RAISE Regional Consultation Event which took place in the Long Gallery at Parliament Buildings in April 2025.

Some of the key themes highlighted by the children and young people included:

- **Improved Support Systems:** Young people highlighted a need for more personalised, tailored one-to-one support in schools. Many reflected the positive relationships they had with youth workers within the school environment who supported them in their education and with their emotional health and wellbeing in times of crisis which they reported had a positive impact on their attendance and motivation.



- **Additional help with learning:** In all consultations young people expressed that there was a need for early additional support, especially linking to core subjects. In all consultations young people expressed that additional afterschool community-based homework and tutoring support should be universally available across the locality. Young people with additional needs expressed a strong desire to access support externally to the school to connect with their local

<sup>8</sup> Laura Lundy, 2014. Lundy Model of Participation. Retrieved from: [Enabling the meaningful participation of children and young people globally: The Lundy Model | Research | Queen's University Belfast](#).



community and to develop social skills and networks beyond the school walls. For many young people ongoing behavioural issues within the classroom; teaching methods not linking to learning styles; and the pace of teaching - with one young person saying, 'teaching is too fast to take it all in'; peer pressures; attitudes towards achievement; bullying; community attitudes; and parental support, all impacting on achievement. Young people noted additional support would be helpful especially in exam times and before issues escalated. They suggested there is a need to be taught how to learn, how to study and how to break questions down especially exam questions. One young person said that there should be, 'more help in basic stuff in primary school.'

- **Mental Health and Wellbeing:** The young people noted the lack of sufficient mental health support in schools. It was acknowledged that counselling services quiet rooms, sensory rooms are in place, but they are often too limited, and not all can access this support. Young people noted the positive experiences they had with youth workers who have been in their schools and were able to articulate the positive impact this has had on them in times of crisis.
- **Resources:** Several issues regarding school facilities were noted throughout the consultations. Hidden cost of education for having to supplement textbooks, art materials, materials, access to digital devices, wi-fi connection and the underfunding of arts departments and creative curriculum subjects.
- **Parental Support:** Young people in the workshops recognised that their parents' may not have the ability to support them due to their own personal experiences. They also noted that subjects have changed since they went to school and that this presents challenges in supporting them. They suggested parent programmes and community-based support programmes would be important as they reflected on the positive impact youth and community services have on the lives of children and young people.

To address the barriers highlighted, several priorities and suggested actions were highlighted by people which included their preference for a youth work pedagogy, more youth work support available in the school or external advocates, support for careers beyond traditional subjects and early support in learning to avoid getting further behind especially during exams times. Support throughout transitional periods especially; KS2 to KS3, more relational teaching, teacher training especially in dealing with behaviour to improve the learning experience for all. Young people recommend that decision makers should see their school reality through unplanned visits to better understand their experiences and challenges.



## Views of Parents and Carers

Parenting Focus were commissioned by the Department of Education to secure the views of parents and carers across the 18 localities. In Newtownabbey, a focus group was held with seven parents/carers/families of children who struggled with education. This consultation process focussed on the issues and solutions affecting the education of their children and young people through the lens of the parents/families/carers.

The key themes included:

- Difficulties in balancing education within family life: managing multiple children with differing needs especially afterschool, homework meltdowns to changing in attitudes towards school especially in post primary. Parents reflected they felt ill-equipped to manage this shift in attitudes.
- Parental Engagement and Communication: Parents expressed frustration of not being able to access face to face meetings which have declined since Covid. Inconsistent communication between teachers, classroom assistants and parents at time caused conflict and frustrations. Access to EA support and trying to navigate this especially for children and young people with additional needs.
- School Absenteeism: Major concern raised was the increase in school absenteeism and school refusals based on a range of complex issues. Parents attributed this to several factors, including increased academic pressure, social challenges, and a lack of emotional support within schools. They expressed their frustrations around schools focus on attendance figures rather than trying to understand and address the underlying issues.
- Improved support services for children and young people were identified which are accessible as currently long waiting list exist for any current support.

Parents suggested structured homework clubs, where children could complete their work with supervision, a summer school programme to support children and young people before the term begins, more group activities for children with similar needs would be beneficial, particularly for those with learning difficulties or social challenges. Inclusion was a major concern, with parents feeling that simple adjustments could make schools more accessible for children with dyslexia and other additional needs with more transparency around available services and clearer guidance on how to access them.

Furthermore, as part of the RAISE Programme, Parenting Focus carried out a parent's survey which was circulated to parents and carers across all 18 localities. 37 parents or carers from Newtownabbey responded.

The parents surveyed stated that almost 30% had children who experienced difficulties attending school due to anxiety and school refusal, with almost 60% of respondents having no difficulties with their children's attendance.



SEN, lack of confidence and emotional distress were barriers to children's engagement, with parents seeking a variety of additional learning supports from youth workers in schools to more creative approaches to learning.

Parents identified additional supports that would be welcome for themselves including parent programmes, improved communications with schools and more family support services and counselling.

Parents felt their children needed extra support and this included help with reading, speech and language and understanding the curriculum. Parents believe for their children to have hopes of future employment or further education, they need more support and guidance for both themselves, and their children.

Nearly 50% of those surveyed believe their child had difficulties controlling their emotion and behaviour at home after school and that their child would benefit from additional support to manage their emotion and behaviour.

Finally, 75% of parents surveyed stated their child has Special Educational Needs with 62% responding their child is neuro-diverse including autism or ADHD.



## Gaps in provision

Several gaps and emerging priorities have been identified in the Newtownabbey locality by the stakeholders and the Locality Reference Group, supported by an analysis of the available data and research. Throughout the engagement process it has been made clear that significant pressures and issues which impact on the lives of children, young people and the professionals who work with them daily are growing. Each of these emerging priorities has been examined in more detail with data and research to reaffirm the need for each priority which can or maybe be addressed through the RAISE Programme:

- Parental support in relation to supporting children in their early years for school readiness, targeting nursery and foundation linking to speech, language and communication skills.
- Support within schools for children and young people through a youth work methodology in key transitional periods of their education journey.
- Out of school learning support through wraparound services where possible within local SOA targeting children and young people who are identified as or at risk of disengagement and underachieving.
- Additional specialist support linked to literacy and numeracy skills and outcomes for all to support children and young people not meeting age related expectations and or underachieving.
- Targeted community support for KS4 young people especially in exams periods.
- Pathway support for Post 16 exploring positive destinations especially young people with additional needs.
- Professional training for teachers in relation to SEN and in dealing with behavioural issues.
- Community link to improve relationships between schools, parents and children and young people to support and grow collaborative working across the locality.



## Emerging Priorities

### Emerging Priority – Readiness to Learn – Cradle to Career

Improving readiness to learn was identified by the Locality Reference Group as the most important way that the RAISE Programme can benefit the locality.

#### *Early Years Focus:*

Readiness to learn in the early years should prioritise interventions to improve speech, language and communication and support parents to engage in their children's early development and learning. The RCSLT NI Launchpad Report presents a strategic framework to enhance speech and language therapy services in Northern Ireland. It outlines key priorities, including early intervention, workforce development, and improved access to care, aiming to ensure that individuals of all ages receive timely and effective support. The report reflects, 'expressive vocabulary at age 16 months predicts academic achievement 10 years later and at 30 months it predicts achievement in school-leaving exams age 15-16 years.' (Bleses et al. 2016, P.13)<sup>9</sup>. Support is also needed for children to emotionally regulate, be able to focus and learn by not being overstimulated or feeling unsafe.

#### *Primary Focus:*

Inequality issues can act as a barrier to learning and it is a priority in this locality that a wraparound approach to addressing issues impacting on learning is offered to primary-aged children. It is recognised that this needs to be a combination of in-school and out-of-school community-based support. Through stakeholder engagements, the importance of work to support emotional regulation, resilience and confidence was highlighted, to engage pupils in learning. After school learning, inclusive of a nutritional meal at the end of the day, could support children in their ability to complete homework. Stakeholders noted that during school holiday periods children and young people would benefit from learning opportunities and a summer school readiness programme, using a youth work approach with a focus of preparing for school. This was also reflected by parents in their focus groups.

#### *Transitions – Ages and Stages:*

In the Newtownabbey locality, 44% of pupils have been identified as not achieving 5+ GCSEs A-C including English and Maths, higher than the Northern Ireland average.<sup>4</sup> Primary school data also indicates that KS2 pupils are underachieving, reinforcing the need for early intervention for additional literacy and numeracy support for targeted groups of children and young people. Concerns were expressed consistently about the

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<sup>9</sup> Bleses, D et al. 2016. '*Expressive vocabulary.*' Cited In: RCSLT. 2025. [Language Launchpad Report](#). Retrieved from: [RCSLT-NI-Language-Launchpad-Report-May-2025.pdf](#)



increase in young people in KS2 disengaging from school and this escalating into KS3. Young people, parents and stakeholders advocated for more youth work interventions and additional support to be widely accessible.

### Emerging Priority – Special Educational Needs

In the Newtownabbey locality, almost a third of young people have special or additional needs across all nursery, primary and post primary settings. Noted by schools is the impact of the current workload, challenges presented by the increased needs and lack of support available to effectively support children and young people and staff with one noting, ‘the level of need is increasing in all schools, services have been reduced, and pressure on parents is also increasing.’ There is a need to support school staff, through professional development, to effectively support children and young people with additional needs within their environments.

Children and young people with special and additional needs need support through inclusive practices and approaches, help with linking them to positive destinations and improved access to community services and developing the skills to effectively access these services.

### Emerging Priority – Attendance

The absence rate across the locality is currently at 11.9% compared to the Northern Ireland average of 8.2% which varies across the SOAs.<sup>4</sup>

Absence rates were noted by schools as a key issue that needed to be addressed using a ‘whole community approach’ (Fair Start Report)<sup>10</sup>. There are many causes of school absence identified throughout stakeholder engagements, parent and children and young people consultations ranging from normal sickness to more complex issues such as school-based anxiety, mental ill health, social emotional issues linked to ACEs, safety issues and concerns, bullying, cyber bullying, poor peer relationships and home and community adversity.

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<sup>10</sup> Department of Education, 2021. [A Fair Start - A final Report and Action Plan May 2021](#). Retrieved from: [A Fair Start](#).



## Summary of Key Needs Identified

Priority Ranking	Objective
1.	<p><b>Speech, Language &amp; Communication</b></p> <p>To improve the speech, language and communication skills of children through an evidence-informed speech and language programme for children in nursery and foundation stages and training and support for staff to implement the programme.</p>
2.	<p><b>Attendance at Key Stage 2</b></p> <p>To improve the attendance of pupils in Key Stage 2 that have been identified by schools with absence concerns and/or at risk of disengagement from learning, through a youth mentoring programme.</p>
3.	<p><b>Out of school provision for SEN pupils</b></p> <p>To improve the personal, social and communicative skills of children and young people with SEN pupils through out of school provision supporting their inclusion in accessing provisions across the locality.</p>
4.	<p><b>Out of school Literacy and Numeracy at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3</b></p> <p>To improve literacy and numeracy skills of pupils at Key Stage 2 and 3 through out of school learning opportunities inclusive of specialised learning support for Key Stage 2 and 3.</p>
5.	<p><b>Attendance at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4</b></p> <p>To improve attendance and engagement of young people in Key Stage 3 and 4 through a youth engagement programme, who have been identified by the post primary schools.</p>
6.	<p><b>GCSE Attainment at Key Stage 4</b></p> <p>To improve GCSE attainment by providing a targeted intervention for pupils at Key Stage 4 pre-GCSE exams in community settings who have been identified through post primary schools in the SOAs.</p>
7.	<p><b>Readiness to Learn – Breakfast Clubs</b></p> <p>To improve children and young people’s attendance and readiness to learn through providing a healthy breakfast before school.</p>

The RAISE Newtownabbey Locality Reference Group has identified a further range of objectives to be considered should a future phase of the RAISE Programme be launched.



Priority Ranking	Objectives for future phase of the RAISE Programme
8.	Support children in KS2 with Literacy skills through additional specialised support.
9.	Literacy and Numeracy for early year professionals linked to speech and language.
10.	Post 16+ Programme aimed at exploring positive destinations.
11.	Support SENCOs across the locality through professional development courses as identified through a needs analysis.
12.	Family support worker to link with referred children and young people young people with an absence rate within Teir 2 15%-9.9% or highlighted at risk by the school.



## Next steps

To deliver against the objectives and identified needs set out in this Strategic Area Plan a series of Locality-Led Projects will be identified through an open call for projects. Project proposals are invited from a wide range of organisations. Further information is available in guidance notes on the [DE website](#)<sup>11</sup>.

Organisations will submit a Locality-Led Project Identification Template for consideration by an Assessment Panel against agreed assessment criteria. Decisions on the range of projects to be supported in each Locality will be taken by the RAISE Programme Board.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/raise-locality-led-projects>



RAISE Newtownabbey Strategic Area Plan Objectives						
Objective	Rationale	Measures	Who will benefit?	Scale of Support	Potential Solutions	Priority / Ranking
<b>OBJECTIVE 1: SPEECH, LANGUAGE &amp; COMMUNICATION</b>						
<p>To improve the speech, language and communication skills of children through an evidence-informed speech and language programme for children in nursery and foundation stages and training and support for staff to implement the programme.</p> <p>January 2026 – June 2027.</p> <p><b>Lead RAISE Intermediary Benefit:</b></p> <p>Raising Standards with a focus on literacy and numeracy skills outcomes for all pupils.</p>	<p>Stakeholders reflected the need for targeted early intervention in speech, language and communication to support children to be ready to learn. Training and support for staff to implement programmes was also identified as a key need.</p> <p>Newtownabbey’s locality vision centres around readiness to learn from cradle to career. Speech, Language and Communication is considered to be the foundations of this. The RCSLT NI Launchpad Report presents a strategic framework to enhance speech and language therapy services in Northern Ireland. It outlines key priorities, including early intervention, workforce development, and improved access to care, aiming to ensure that individuals of all ages receive timely and effective support. It noted that expressive vocabulary at the age of 16 months predicts academic achievement 10 years later and at 30 months it predicts achievement in school-leaving exams at the age 15-16 years.</p> <p>Speech, Language and Communication programmes have been previously delivered in some areas across the locality, and these have proven to be effective. However, a gap was identified in the resourcing the implementation of this</p>	<p>Speech and language diagnostic tools as a baseline measure</p> <p>Numbers of pupils benefitting</p> <p>Case Studies</p>	<p>Children at Nursery and foundation stage (P1, P2) across all SOAs.</p>	<p>There are 549 children in nursery and foundation stage (P1, P2) across all SOAs. Stakeholders identified particular gaps in provision in Mossley 2.</p>	<p>It is anticipated that this objective will involve the delivery of a programme which is informed by evidence of effective approaches to improving speech, language and communication.</p> <p>It will be delivered to pupils and potentially parents across nursery and foundation stages in education settings.</p> <p>Staff or volunteers will need to be trained to implement the programme and potentially offered coaching and support.</p>	<p>1. (High)</p>

	<p>programme and the scale of support across the locality.</p> <p>Any implementation needs to consider the impact of ACES on emotional regulation, safety, overstimulation and readiness to learn.</p>					
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**OBJECTIVE 2: ATTENDANCE AT KEY STAGE 2**

<p>To improve the attendance of pupils in Key Stage 2 that have been identified by schools with absence concerns and/or at risk of disengagement from learning, through a youth engagement programme.</p> <p>January 2026 – June 2027</p> <p><b>Lead RAISE Intermediary Benefit:</b> Increase pupil attendance, engagement, confidence and aspirations.</p>	<p>The Absence Rate is 11.9% above the NI average of 8.2%.<sup>5</sup> This rate fluctuates across the locality and across primary and post primary settings. Young people within the Newtownabbey locality reflected that societal, community, violence, bullying, social media and poverty issues were all impacting on attendance. Children and young people noted they have barriers that hold them back from succeeding and that they do not feel supported through significant changes in education. There is limited provision targeting KS2 pupils and this is an identified gap across the whole locality. Parents noted changes in attitude from primary to post primary reinforcing the need to aspire, motivate and encourage children in primary to avoid disengagement in KS3.</p>	<p>Baseline absence rates</p> <p>Engagement levels</p> <p>Feedback from Child, Parent, School</p>	<p>Key Stage 2 pupils who have been identified by primary schools serving the SOAs with absence concerns and/or at risk of disengagement from learning, using attendance data.</p> <p>Children from the RAISE SOAs identified by schools with absence concerns.</p>	<p>30% of a potential target of 258 young people in Key Stage 2.</p> <p>(30% an estimated figure proposed by locality stakeholders)</p>	<p>One potential solution would be a youth mentoring programme with small group interventions or one-to-one support for pupils delivered in the school setting or after school in community settings to improve motivation, increase engagement in learning and addressing underlying issues contributing to low attendance.</p> <p>Programmes could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-to-One Mentoring with individual support sessions focusing on personal development and coping strategies</li> <li>• Group Work Sessions with themes such as social skills and self-confidence.</li> <li>• Health and wellbeing exploring different aspects of mental health, emotional regulation, and personal resilience.</li> <li>• Transition Support Programme for P7 pupils preparing for post-primary education.</li> </ul>	<p>2. (High)</p>
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**OBJECTIVE 3: OUT OF SCHOOL PROVISION FOR SEN PUPILS**

<p>Improve the personal, social and communicative skills of children and young people with SEN through out of school provision supporting their inclusion in accessing provisions after school across the locality.</p> <p>Term Time Only</p> <p>January 2026 – June 2026</p> <p>Sept 2026 – June 2027.</p> <p><b>Lead RAISE Intermediary Benefit:</b> Improve relationships between settings and children and young people, parents and community.</p>	<p>Nearly a third of children and young people have special or additional needs across all early years, primary and post primary settings within the locality.</p> <p>Children and young people with special or additional needs through consultations noted lack of community services which they can access and noted this as a gap. Parents noted the lack of relationships with community settings and a need to bridge this. The Special School Partnership in Newtownabbey have highlighted the lack of community access to provision for children and young people with additional needs. This was reinforced through stakeholder engagement.</p>	<p>Numbers of children engaging with provision</p> <p>Baselines - Engagement Framework</p> <p>Case Studies</p> <p>Observations</p>	<p>Children and young people across the SOAs with Special Educational Needs.</p>	<p>There are 926 pupils with SEN across all SOAs.</p>	<p>It is anticipated that additional learning and development opportunities are provided for young people with SEN after school within community settings and wider community services.</p> <p>These additional opportunities will be aimed at developing personal, social and communicative skills of young people with SEN to support them in accessing wider community services after school</p>	<p>3. (High)</p>
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**Objective 4: OUT OF SCHOOL LITERACY AND NUMERACY AT KEY STAGE 3**

<p>To improve literacy and numeracy skills of pupils at Key Stage 2 and 3 through out of school learning opportunities inclusive of specialised learning support for KS2/3.</p> <p>Term Time: January 2026 – June 2026 Sept 2026 – June 2027</p> <p><b>Lead RAISE Intermediary Benefit:</b> Raising Standards with a focus on literacy and numeracy skills outcomes for all pupils.</p>	<p>44% of pupils within the locality are not achieving 5+ GCSEs A-C including English and Maths<sup>4</sup>. Young people in their consultations noted the need for community support especially before they became further behind and at risk of disengagement.</p> <p>The Fair Start Report<sup>8</sup> recommends the need for early intervention, additional literacy and numeracy support for targeted groups of children and young people, out of school learning support both parental and community to reinforce school learning to support retention. These interventions may include a range of approaches, literacy and numeracy specialist working across schools, afterschool provision in the community.</p>	<p>Attainment data Engagement Rates School Feedback Parent Feedback</p>	<p>Children and young people KS2/KS3 in the following SOAs; Valley 1, Valley 2.</p>	<p>There are approx. 400 children and young people in KS2 and KS3 across the SOAs.</p>	<p>It is possible that community-based afterschool provision is developed with a focus on literacy and numeracy activities and could include homework support, study skills support, and the provision of tutor/teaching support.</p> <p>This specialised support could be provided by teachers, tutors or external agencies with appropriate teaching experience.</p> <p>This afterschool provision might also include personal and social development activities and a nutritional meal.</p>	<p>4. (High)</p>
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**OBJECTIVE 5: ATTENDANCE AT KEY STAGE 3 & 4**

<p>To improve attendance and engagement of young people in Key Stage 3 and 4 through a youth engagement programme who have been identified by the post primary schools.</p> <p>Jan 2026 – June 2027 continued beyond if funding is extended.</p> <p><b>Lead RAISE Intermediary Benefit:</b> Increase pupil attendance, engagement, confidence and aspirations.</p>	<p>The Absence Rate is 11.9% above the NI average of 8.2%.<sup>5</sup> This rate fluctuates across the locality and across primary and post primary settings. Young people within the Newtownabbey Locality reflected that societal, community, violence, bullying, social media and poverty issues were all impacting on attendance. Children and young people noted they have barriers that hold them back from succeeding and that they do not feel supported through big changes in education. Children and young people have noted they have barriers that hold them back from succeeding. Children and young people noted the need for more youth intervention programmes to support young people who are struggling throughout their educational journey.</p>	<p>Attendance Rates</p> <p>Engagement Rates through Baselines</p> <p>Teacher Feedback</p> <p>Case Studies</p>	<p>KS3/4 young people who have been identified with absence concerns and/or at risk of disengagement through post primary schools in the SOA. Priority School Ballyclare Secondary due to limited access to alternative services.</p>	<p>Based on Stakeholder feedback 30% a potential target of 220 across the SOAs.</p>	<p>It is anticipated that programmes will be delivered to engage KS3/4 young people using methodologies such as small group work, issue-based work, mentoring aimed at identifying and addressing barriers to engagement with school.</p> <p>The programme will supplement and work in collaboration with existing provision including schools and youth services so as not to duplicate or displace existing services.</p>	<p>5. (High)</p>
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**OBJECTIVE 6: GCSE ATTAINMENT - KEY STAGE 4**

<p>To improve GCSE attainment by providing a targeted intervention for pupils at KS4 pre-GCSE exams in community settings who have been identified through post primary schools in the SOAs.</p> <p>Halloween, Feb Half Term, Easter 2025-26</p> <p>Halloween, Feb Half Term, Easter 2026-27</p> <p><b>Lead RAISE Intermediary Benefit:</b> Raising Standards with a focus on literacy, numeracy skills outcome for all pupils.</p>	<p>44% of pupils within the locality are not achieving 5+ GCSEs A-C including English and Maths.<sup>5</sup> Young people noted the need for support in community spaces that are deemed as safe, supportive and encouraging. Young people noted a need for universal learning support services to be available across the locality.</p> <p>This is community based support and should complement any school based support and participation in the RAISE Cross Cutting Initiatives.</p>	<p>GCSE attainment data</p> <p>Engagement Rates</p> <p>Achievement Rates</p> <p>Feedback</p> <p>Case Studies</p>	<p>Targeted support for KS4 young people who are identified from all post primary in the SOAs in need of additional support.</p>	<p>There are 216 young people across the SOAs based on 44% not achieving GCSE Maths and English.</p>	<p>Community based support for GCSE attainment could include out-of-school learning camps in half terms and Easter holidays in community settings working closely with schools.</p>	<p>6. (High)</p>
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**OBJECTIVE 7: READINESS TO LEARN - BREAKFAST CLUBS**

<p>To improve children and young people’s attendance and readiness to learn through providing a healthy breakfast before school.</p> <p>Term Time: January 2026 – June 2026 Sept 2026 – June 2027</p> <p><b>Lead RAISE Intermediary Benefit:</b> Increase pupil attendance, engagement, confidence and aspirations.</p>	<p>Inequality issues can impact readiness to learn and stakeholders noted the need to support children in primary school through a wraparound approach.</p> <p>Reflected by the LRG was that breakfast clubs throughout the locality exist however these are not available consistently across the locality.</p> <p>Within the Newtownabbey locality 1589 (52.2%) of pupils are in receipt of Free School Meals compared to the NI Average of 25.9%.<sup>5</sup></p> <p>There is significant investment through Extended school funding into Breakfast clubs. But it has been identified by the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Anti-Poverty Group that there are still gaps in provision other with children and young people not getting appropriate fuel to be able to learn in school.</p>	<p>Participation Levels</p> <p>Engagement Levels through teacher observations.</p>	<p>Targeting primary and post primary schools across the SOAs who serve children and young people from the defined SOAs without any existing provision.</p>	<p>There are 3087 children and young people across all the all the SOAs. However, the scale of support for this objective is restricted to those schools without any existing provision.</p>	<p>It is anticipated that resources for additional Breakfast Clubs in schools or in community settings could be provided throughout the SOAs for settings who are not able to access suitable funding to support children and young people readiness to learn. This should not displace any existing provision.</p> <p>Any potential solution should work closely with existing programmes within the locality.</p>	<p>7. (High)</p>
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