

WRITTEN STATEMENT TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

RESPONSE TO STORM AMY

26 NOVEMBER 2025

EMBARGOED UNTIL 27 NOVEMBER 2025

PAUL GIVAN MLA

MINISTER OF EDUCATION

STATEMENT FROM THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION - REVIEW OF THE PROCESS LEADING TO THE CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS IN THE CONTEXT OF STORM AMY

Following Storm Amy on Thursday 2 and Friday 3 October, I commissioned a review of the processes regarding the emergency school closures across Counties Antrim, Londonderry, Fermanagh and Tyrone.

The review has now been completed, and the Report has been published on the Department's website. It was carried out by Department of Education Officials with the support of the Education Authority.

While the decision to close schools was made in the interest of public safety, concerns were raised regarding the decision-making process, the timing and communication of the announcement and the proportionality of the closures. This review sought to assess the rationale, process, and impact of the decision.

Desktop research of evidence was carried out including timelines from both the Department and the Education Authority, media and social media coverage, AQWs, minutes of emergency planning meetings including the Local Impact Assessment Calls, evidence supplied by the

Department, the Education Authority and the Executive Office and one-to-one interviews with 18 school leaders in affected counties.

The report highlighted a number of significant concerns which arose from the chronology of events, including a lack of early Departmental involvement and representation; communication failures; timing and impact on schools; legal and procedural ambiguity; geographic confusion; and governance and authority concerns.

It is clear from feedback from schools that those affected understood the need for schools to close on health and safety grounds. School leaders welcomed the 'blanket' approach to school closures, removing the need for local decision making.

An Education Civil Contingencies Protocol is currently under development and will be expedited for completion by 31 December 2025. The Protocol will clearly define roles and responsibilities for the Department and the Education Authority, outline required processes and approvals and clarify the legal position. It will also establish a communications framework.

Key recommendations to be implemented arising from the report include:

- Updates to the Terms of Reference for the Education Authority's Silver and Gold meetings to require Departmental representation, and agreement to update Local Impact Assessment Call Meetings' Terms of Reference to include the Department.
- A process for the Education Authority to provide early alerts to the Department when school closures are being considered, including notification to senior Departmental officials and provision of Met Office forecasts with risk analysis.
- Ministerial approval for school closures and subsequent clearance of all Education Authority communications through the Department's Press Office.
- An outline of internal Departmental communication processes between its Teams within the protocol.
- Timely communication of closure decisions to schools and early alerts where possible.
- The Education Authority to establish an opt-in group messaging service for school principals and provide pre-written text messages for parents in the event of closures.
- The Education Authority to review internal processes to ensure transport and school improvement stakeholders are informed, and to develop a model school closures policy for schools.

- The Education Authority communications to schools must include helpline details, guidance on free school meals, staff implications, closure recording, and exceptional closure applications.
- A roundtable discussion to take place involving the Department, the Education Authority, C2K, and IT shared services to agree on future electronic recording and notification processes for school closures.

The report concludes that these issues must be addressed as a matter of priority going forward to avoid a repetition of the events surrounding Storm Amy.

Thank you

END.