

RAISE Home School CommunityConnections Call for Locality Led Projects Updated 16 April 2026



RAISE Home School Community Connections

Call for Locality Led Projects

This document should be read in conjunction with the following:

- **RAISE Strategic Area Plans**
- **RAISE Locality Led Projects – Identification of RAISE Locality Led Projects and RAISE Locality Led Project Identification Template Guidance Notes**
- **RAISE Assessment Panel Scoring Guidance**
- **RAISE Evaluation Framework**

The RAISE Programme

The RAISE Programme is a whole community and place-based approach to tackling educational disadvantage in 18 localities¹ across Northern Ireland, supporting the Department of Education’s vision that “every child and young person is happy, learning and succeeding”.

The TransformED strategy outlines the Minister of Education’s priorities for the transformation of teaching and learning in Northern Ireland. The strategy focuses on the core areas of curriculum, assessment, qualifications, school improvement and tackling educational disadvantage. Complementing existing schools-based programmes, RAISE is the signature approach to tackling educational disadvantage in this regard.

The RAISE Programme’s Strategic Objectives are:

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

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 have been 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.



Home School Community Connections – Call for Locality Led Projects

Twelve of the RAISE localities prioritised objectives in their Strategic Area Plan to improve links between home, school and community. It was suggested that some of these objectives would involve the recruitment of individuals into ‘home school liaison’ / ‘link officer’ / ‘family support worker’ type roles. While these objectives broadly covered the links between home, school and community there was limited consistency across the plans as to the specific roles, what the focus would be and how they would be delivered.

When considering the RAISE Strategic Area Plans, the Assessment Panel and subsequently the RAISE Programme Board noted that a more strategic approach may lead to better outcomes. The Minister of Education agreed that these objectives should be held back from Call One, launched on 5 September 2025, to determine the most appropriate way forward.

The Department is now seeking proposals to enhance links between home, school and community, to deliver against the relevant objectives for the following RAISE localities.

- Antrim
- Ballymena
- Carrickfergus
- Coleraine
- Derry/Londonderry
- Dungannon
- East Belfast
- Enniskillen
- Millisle and Donaghadee
- Newry
- North Belfast
- South Belfast

The relevant objective(s) for each locality and the maximum available budget are set out at **Annex A**. These should be considered along with the detail set out in each Strategic Area Plan.

All proposals must be delivered in line with the following principles:

- All proposals must be delivered as a programme over the 2026/27 Academic Year.
- Proposals may include the employment of individuals in ‘Home School Community Connection’ roles however, all proposals must clearly articulate the programme of work over the 2026/27 Academic Year.

¹ Belfast has been sub divided into four areas.

- The Programme can be led by either schools or the community but must demonstrate how links between home, school and the community will be forged or enhanced. All



partners should be listed within the proposal and the role of each partner must be clearly articulated.

- There should be a focus on strengthening relationships between schools, families and the wider community.
- There should be a focus on addressing barriers to learning and raising achievement.
- There should be a focus on supporting pupil attendance and re-engaging pupils in school. The focus on attendance must be on improving the attendance of those in the 'AT RISK' Tier (5.00-9.99% absence). The Department publishes a range of attendance statistics that can be found here: [Pupil attendance | Department of Education](#).
- There should be a focus on the delivery of support for parents to help them engage in their children's education. This could include (but is not limited to):
 - school readiness; ○ early learning through play; ○ transitions at key stages;
 - literacy and numeracy; ○ cognition and learning at various stages; ○ positive parent and child relationships; ○ emotional health and wellbeing; ○ behaviour strategies; and ○ sleep and nutrition/ routines.
- Where relevant, there should be a focus on the needs of particular groups within the locality, in line with the needs articulated in the Strategic Area Plan.
- The programme should be appropriately targeted within the locality to maximise the number of pupils benefiting.
- The programme should be complementary to existing provision. However, it is not envisaged that the projects will take the form of signposting to other organisations' programmes. Rather, projects will directly support the needs of children and young people and families.

Evaluation

The successful projects will be subject to robust evaluation and bids must outline clearly how the impact achieved for children and young people will be measured. The Department will also commission an independent evaluation of projects during delivery.

Who can apply?



Project proposals are invited from organisations with experience of successful working in the locality, schools serving those pupils who live within a RAISE locality or area identified within the locality's Strategic Area Plan (excluding independent and preparatory schools), early years providers, colleges and properly constituted community groups and voluntary organisations. Examples of which include Associations, Trusts, Companies limited by Guarantee, Community Interest Companies, Charitable Incorporated Organisations or Industrial and Provident Societies. Proposals from Churches will also be considered.

As one of the key objectives of the RAISE Programme is raising aspirations through a whole community approach to education, collaborative/ consortium proposals are encouraged.

Submitting a proposal for a Locality Led Project

To propose a Locality Led Project organisations will be required to complete a Locality Led Project Identification Template.

The *RAISE Locality Led Projects – Identification of RAISE Locality Led Projects and RAISE Locality Led Project Identification Template Guidance Notes* document is available [here](#).

The template should be completed on the RAISE online platform via the following link:

<https://raise.whole.school/project-bid-form/signup>

Organisations will be asked to create an account on the RAISE online platform. This will allow access to the platform and the creation of a project proposal template. Organisations will be able to view all the project proposals they have created on the platform dashboard.

Organisations should regularly save any changes by pressing the save button at the bottom of the page. Completed project proposals must be submitted by pressing the submit button on the bottom of the page. Submitted project proposals can be viewed and edited up until the call deadline.

Organisations may also withdraw a submitted project proposal from consideration by the Assessment Panel by pressing the withdraw button at the bottom of the page. Pressing the withdraw button will not permanently delete the project proposal and it can be reversed by pressing the submit button again.

A project will deliver against one Locality Objective, and a specific template must be completed for each project proposal. Several proposed projects may be submitted against a Locality Objective. An organisation can propose multiple projects by completing the template for each proposed project.



Careful consideration should be given to the scope of each objective to ensure full implementation, for example, in terms of the geographical area covered. The information provided will be used to assess and score your proposal in line with the process set out in the attached guidance notes for completing this application.

For any technical queries with the RAISE online Platform, please contact Wholeschool on 028 90 610220 or e-mail support@wholeschool.ie.

Assessment Process

All project applications will be assessed by a panel. The panel will include officials from the Department of Education, the Department of Health, the Education Authority and the Education and Training Inspectorate.

The *RAISE Assessment Panel Scoring Guidance* is available [here](#).

Timescales

All project applications must be submitted via the online platform **by 12 noon on 29 April 2026**. Late applications will not be accepted.

An Assessment Panel will consider applications in April/May 2026, and it is anticipated that successful projects will be notified by the end of May 2026. Letters of Offer will be agreed thereafter, with the expectation that the majority of projects will commence no later than September 2026.

Appeals

This process does not include an opportunity for unsuccessful applicants to appeal the outcome of the call. The decision of the Assessment Panel will therefore be final.

Annex A

Locality requirements and available budget

The information provided in the table below provides a high level overview of the individual locality requirements. This should be read in conjunction with the relevant Strategic Area Plan and the linked objectives.

Locality	Objective	Locality Requirements	Available Budget
Antrim	Objective 2 – Family Link	Focus on attendance and improving the link between pupil, parents and the school.	£125k



Ballymena	Objective 1 – Readiness to Learn & Attendance	Focus on school readiness at Key Stages 1 and 2. Supporting parents and equipping them with strategies to support emotional regulation of children.	£175k
Carrickfergus	Objective 1 – Improving Attendance	Focus on improving attendance by strengthening relationships between education settings and children and young people, parents and community.	£150k
Coleraine	Objective 4 – Primary Transition Parental Support Programme and Objective 5- Reducing Persistent School Absenteeism	Focus on parental engagement and capacity to support children aged 7-11 years, equipping parents with the knowledge and strategies to help with their children’s educational journey. Reduce school based avoidance and persistent absenteeism among Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils by implementing a family connector model across post-primary schools.	£75k Proposals should take both Objective 4 and Objective 5 into consideration.
Derry/ Londonderry	Objective 1 – Strengthen and enhance connection between education and community sector	Strengthen and enhance the collaboration and connectivity between the education sector and community sector working across nursery, primary and post-primary schools with children, young people and families.	£300k
Dungannon	Objective 3 - Irish Traveller School Completion	Promote achievement and school completion for Irish Traveller children through community-based educationfocused support utilising relationship-based practice linking with current statutory services to ensure that all families are effectively supported.	£90k



East Belfast	Objective 1 - Improve Attendance and Engagement in Learning for Pupils and Parents/Carers	Improve Attendance and Engagement in Learning for Pupils and Parents/Carers through School Connectors, across three transition stages, strengthening community and school connections with children, young people and families through enhancing parental support within the local community.	£200k
Enniskillen	Objective 3 – Parental Engagement in Learning	Raise pupil aspirations and improve educational outcomes by supporting parental engagement in learning through key transition points and strengthen relationships between schools, parents, and the wider community.	£120k
Millisle and Donaghadee	Objective 1 – Strengthen relationships between children and young people, schools, families and the wider community	Strengthen relationships between children and young people, schools, families and the wider community	£80k
Newry	Objective 1 - Home School	Improve attendance through developing a	£150k
	Community Link	home/school/community link service which would adapt a trauma informed relational approach to support parents and young people.	



North Belfast	Objective 1 – Family/School Connectors	A programme which will improve attendance and parental supports enhancing educational equity and inclusion with targeted evidence-based programmes which have demonstrated effectiveness and impact.	£150k
South Belfast	Objective 1 – Improve Primary and Post-Primary Attendance	Improve the attendance and engagement of primary and post-primary school pupils through community-based workers, working closely with schools.	£260k

