



Department of  
**Education**

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## CONSULTATION REPORT

## LEADING TOGETHER FOR EXCELLENCE

# A Transform**ED** NI Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning



# Introduction

## New Strategy for Professional Learning

In March 2025, the Minister of Education, Paul Givan MLA, launched the TransformED NI Strategy, which aims to achieve excellence in education in Northern Ireland by transforming teaching and learning through a wide-ranging reform programme. The TransformED Strategy and Delivery Plan included a commitment to refresh the Department's *Learning Leaders: Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning*, which dates from 2016.

On 11 May 2026, the Department launched a public consultation on a new professional learning strategy, *Leading Together for Excellence: A TransformED NI Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning*. The consultation ran for eight weeks from 11 May 2026 to 6 July 2026.

The new strategy aims to strengthen teacher professional learning as a central pillar of educational improvement within the TransformED Programme. It also responds directly to long-recognised system weaknesses, including fragmented professional learning provision, inconsistent access to high-quality development, loss of subject-specific expertise and the absence of a delivery infrastructure capable of sustaining reform at scale.

## Key Proposals

The strategy proposes comprehensive reform of teacher professional learning in Northern Ireland, creating a coherent, career-long system from Initial Teacher Education (ITE) through to system leadership. Key proposals are listed below:

- Establish a clear professional learning continuum spanning ITE, induction, Early Professional Development, experienced teacher learning, leadership development and system leadership.

- Modernise the Teacher Competencies to reflect current educational priorities and expectations for teaching professionals.
- Introduce distinct Leadership Standards for Northern Ireland, providing clearer expectations and development pathways for middle leaders, senior leaders and principals.
- Strengthen subject-specific and curriculum-aligned professional learning, ensuring teachers have greater access to high-quality professional development linked directly to curriculum delivery and improvement.
- Enhance ITE through the development of a common curriculum framework to improve consistency and coherence across teacher education programmes.
- Guarantee high-quality induction for newly qualified teachers, ensuring consistent support as teachers transition into professional practice.
- Strengthen and more clearly define Early Professional Development as a distinct phase of the teaching career, building confidence, expertise and reflective practice among early career teachers.
- Invest in leadership development at all levels, including aspiring leaders, middle leaders, senior leaders and principals, through structured professional learning pathways.
- Establish a Northern Ireland Centre for Educational Excellence and Improvement to provide strategic leadership, coordination and coherence for curriculum, professional learning, leadership development and school improvement.
- Create a unified digital professional learning platform to improve access to training, resources, collaboration opportunities and professional learning records across the system.

- Promote greater collaboration, continuity and system-wide coordination of professional learning to reduce fragmentation and ensure consistent access to high-quality opportunities.
- Align professional learning with the wider TransformED strategy, positioning teacher development as a key driver of educational improvement, teacher quality and pupil outcomes.

The strategy aims to move Northern Ireland from a fragmented professional learning landscape to a coherent, research-informed and career-long framework for teacher and leadership development, improving teaching quality, leadership capacity and outcomes for children and young people.

## Consultation

The consultation contained ten questions that sought the views of all stakeholders on the Department's proposals. The consultation was published on the Department's website, and a press release was issued to raise public awareness of the consultation. The Department also wrote to all schools and a range of other key organisations to encourage participation.

As part of the consultation process, an online questionnaire was used to enable as many people as possible to make their views known on the Department's proposals. A total of 120 responses were received via the online consultation survey hosted by Citizen Space. A summary of the responses to the online consultation is outlined in **Part One** of this document.

In addition, a further eleven organisations provided more substantial submissions via email. Five of the eleven organisations answered the consultation questions. The other five organisations provided detailed submissions of the draft Strategy. A summary of these comments and responses is provided in **Part Two** of this document.

## Part 1: Online Questionnaire Response

### Respondent profile

Table 1 provides a full breakdown of the respondent profile to the online questionnaire. As the table shows, the highest respondent groups were teaching staff / tutor / lecturer (63.2%) followed by leader of a school or education and training establishment (24.8%) together accounting for 88% of respondents.

| Option                                                                   | Total | Percent |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Member of a Board of Governors of an education or training establishment | 1     | 0.80%   |
| Member of the public                                                     | 0     | 0.00%   |
| Non-teaching staff                                                       | 0     | 0.00%   |
| Parent/ guardian                                                         | 3     | 2.40%   |
| Political representative                                                 | 0     | 0.00%   |
| Pupil / young person                                                     | 1     | 0.80%   |
| Leader of a school or education and training establishment               | 31    | 24.80%  |
| Teaching Staff / tutor / lecturer                                        | 79    | 63.20%  |
| Member of the voluntary and community sector                             | 0     | 0.00%   |
| Other                                                                    | 10    | 8.00%   |
| Not Answered                                                             | 0     | 0.00%   |
| Number of Respondents                                                    | 125   | 100.00% |

An analysis of the responses received through this consultation process is outlined below.

**Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the overall vision set out in the strategy: “To build an expert, confident teaching profession through high quality, career long professional learning that drives system excellence”?**

| Option                     | Total | Percent |
|----------------------------|-------|---------|
| Strongly Agree             | 63    | 50.40%  |
| Agree                      | 50    | 40.00%  |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | 1     | 0.80%   |
| Disagree                   | 7     | 5.60%   |
| Strongly disagree          | 4     | 3.20%   |
| Not Answered               | 0     | 0.00%   |
| Number of responses        | 125   | 100.00% |

**90.40% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with this proposal.** Of these:

- 86.08% of teaching staff / tutors / lecturers strongly agreed or agreed.
- 96.78% of leaders of a school or education and training establishment strongly agreed or agreed.

Respondents overwhelmingly supported the proposed vision, with over 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Many welcomed the focus on continuous professional development, recognising the importance of providing teachers with opportunities to update their knowledge, develop new skills, engage with research, and respond to changing educational needs throughout their careers. There was strong support for a more coherent and consistent approach to professional learning, with respondents highlighting the potential benefits for teacher development, retention, leadership capacity and pupil outcomes.

Respondents also consistently emphasised that the success of the vision will depend on adequate funding, protected time and effective implementation. Respondents also highlighted the importance of practical, high-quality professional learning, including face-to-face opportunities, subject-specific development and provision tailored to diverse contexts such as special schools and Irish-medium education. A recurring theme was the need to move from aspiration to delivery.

**Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that professional learning should be viewed as a career long continuum?**

| Option                     | Total | Percent |
|----------------------------|-------|---------|
| Strongly Agree             | 74    | 59.20%  |
| Agree                      | 42    | 33.60%  |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | 4     | 3.20%   |
| Disagree                   | 3     | 2.40%   |
| Strongly disagree          | 2     | 1.60%   |
| Not Answered               | 0     | 0.00%   |
| Number of responses        | 125   | 100.00% |

**92.80% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with this proposal.** Of these:

- 89.88% of teaching staff / tutors / lecturers strongly agreed or agreed.
- 100% of leaders of a school or education and training establishment strongly agreed or agreed.

Respondents strongly supported the principle that professional learning should be viewed as a career-long continuum. Many emphasised that teaching is a profession that continually evolves and requires ongoing development, reflection and engagement with new research, pedagogical approaches and subject knowledge.

There was broad agreement that all teachers, regardless of career stage, should have equitable access to high-quality professional learning opportunities, including experienced teachers who wish to deepen classroom expertise rather than pursue leadership roles.

A consistent theme was that professional learning must be relevant, meaningful and practically focused. Respondents highlighted the value of mentoring, subject-specific development, research-informed practice and opportunities to collaborate with colleagues. There was support for face-to-face learning and concerns that online provision alone would not meet teachers' needs.

Respondents also stressed the importance of ensuring access for substitute teachers, teachers in special schools and Irish-medium settings, and those wishing to pursue specialist, leadership or higher-level academic pathways.



**Question 3: Based on your experience, what are the most significant gaps in current professional learning provision? (please tick all that apply)**

| Option                                                                                                                         | Total | Percent |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Lack of subject specific professional learning linked to the curriculum.                                                       | 86    | 68.80%  |
| Professional learning is too generic and not sufficiently tailored to classroom practice.                                      | 70    | 56.00%  |
| Limited coherence across career stages (Initial Teacher Education, induction, early career, experienced teachers, leadership). | 55    | 44.00%  |
| Insufficient time and protected space for high quality professional learning.                                                  | 114   | 91.20%  |
| Limited access to high quality research informed practice.                                                                     | 51    | 40.80%  |
| Gaps in SEN related professional learning.                                                                                     | 66    | 52.80%  |
| Limited professional learning in digital pedagogy and the use of AI.                                                           | 53    | 42.40%  |
| Insufficient opportunities for collaborative, school or cluster based professional learning.                                   | 71    | 56.80%  |
| Limited support for leadership preparation and development.                                                                    | 67    | 53.60%  |
| Limited clarity about entitlement to professional learning across the system.                                                  | 51    | 40.80%  |
| Fragmentation across providers, with no single source of coordination or oversight.                                            | 68    | 54.40%  |
| Not Answered                                                                                                                   | 1     | 0.80%   |

Respondents identified insufficient time and protected space for professional learning as the most significant gap currently. This was selected by over nine in ten respondents (91.2%).

Other commonly identified issues included a lack of subject-specific professional learning linked to the curriculum (68.8%), insufficient opportunities for collaborative school or cluster-based learning (56.8%), and professional learning that is too generic and not sufficiently tailored to classroom practice (56.0%).

More than half of respondents also highlighted concerns about fragmentation across providers with limited coordination or oversight (54.4%), limited support for leadership development (53.6%), and gaps in SEN-related professional learning (52.8%).

Overall, the findings highlight the significant issues with professional learning that have been evident in Northern and suggest a strong demand for more protected time, greater coherence, and more relevant, practice-focused professional learning opportunities across the education system.

**Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that implementation of the Initial Teacher Education Curriculum Framework will enhance coherence and consistency across all Initial Teacher Education courses in Northern Ireland.**

| Option                     | Total | Percent |
|----------------------------|-------|---------|
| Strongly Agree             | 25    | 20.00%  |
| Agree                      | 53    | 42.40%  |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | 36    | 28.80%  |
| Disagree                   | 8     | 6.40%   |
| Strongly disagree          | 3     | 2.40%   |
| Not Answered               | 0     | 0.00%   |
| Number of responses        | 125   | 100.00% |

**62.40% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed this proposal.** Of these:

- 51.89% of teaching staff / tutors / lecturers strongly agreed or agreed.
- 80.65% of leaders of a school or education and training establishment strongly agreed or agreed.

A majority agreed that implementation of the framework would improve coherence and consistency across ITE, and school leaders were particularly enthusiastic about the framework.

Respondents stressed that its success will depend on effective implementation, adequate funding, sufficient time for professional learning, and strong support for beginning teachers. Key themes included the need for more practical classroom-focused training, high-quality mentoring and induction, greater clarity about the framework's content, and recognition of diverse educational contexts such as SEN, special schools, Irish-medium education and alternative qualification routes.

While a small number of respondents expressed concerns about the framework's clarity and deliverability, there was broad agreement that a well-resourced and effectively implemented framework could strengthen teacher preparation and early career development.

**Question 5: The strategy proposes modernising the current Teacher Competences. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this is necessary to support professional growth and clarity of expectations?**

| Option                     | Total | Percent |
|----------------------------|-------|---------|
| Strongly Agree             | 39    | 31.20%  |
| Agree                      | 52    | 41.60%  |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | 23    | 18.40%  |
| Disagree                   | 5     | 4.00%   |
| Strongly disagree          | 6     | 4.80%   |
| Not Answered               | 0     | 0.00%   |
| Number of responses        | 125   | 100.00% |

**72.80% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed this proposal.** Of these:

- 70.88% of teaching staff / tutors / lecturers strongly agreed or agreed.
- 74.20% of leaders of a school or education and training establishment strongly agreed or agreed.

There was strong support for modernising the current teacher competencies to reflect current and emerging technology, SEN, inclusion, and changing classroom contexts. A number of responses noted that updating competencies alone would not address core issues such as workload and lack of training. A small number of respondents raised concerns about creating additional bureaucracy or “tick-box” expectations, emphasising the need for competences to be practical, streamlined and supportive of professional growth.

**Question 6: The strategy proposes introducing distinct Leadership Standards for Northern Ireland. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?**

| Option                     | Total | Percent |
|----------------------------|-------|---------|
| Strongly Agree             | 46    | 36.80%  |
| Agree                      | 53    | 42.40%  |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | 16    | 12.80%  |
| Disagree                   | 7     | 5.60%   |
| Strongly disagree          | 3     | 2.40%   |
| Not Answered               | 0     | 0.00%   |
| Number of responses        | 125   | 100.00% |

**79.20% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed this proposal.** Of these:

- 74.69% of teaching staff / tutors / lecturers strongly agreed or agreed.
- 83.87% of leaders of a school or education and training establishment strongly agreed or agreed.

Respondents were generally supportive of the introduction of distinct Leadership Standards for Northern Ireland, recognising their potential to provide greater clarity, consistency and structure for leadership development, recruitment and succession planning.

Many highlighted the value of clear leadership pathways, enhanced professional learning opportunities, and the possible reintroduction of qualifications such as the PQH to support aspiring and existing leaders.

There was strong consensus that any standards should be developed in consultation with current school leaders, remain flexible enough to reflect different educational contexts, and be accompanied by adequate time, funding and support. Respondents also emphasised the increasing complexity of school leadership and the need for standards that are practical, developmental and reflective of the realities facing leaders across the education system.

**Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to make induction mandatory for all newly qualified teachers in Northern Ireland.**

| Option                     | Total | Percent |
|----------------------------|-------|---------|
| Strongly Agree             | 74    | 59.20%  |
| Agree                      | 33    | 26.40%  |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | 9     | 7.20%   |
| Disagree                   | 4     | 3.20%   |
| Strongly disagree          | 5     | 4.00%   |
| Not Answered               | 0     | 0.00%   |
| Number of responses        | 125   | 100.00% |

**85.60% of respondents Strongly Agreed or agreed this proposal.** Of these:

- 82.28% of teaching staff / tutors / lecturers strongly agreed or agreed.
- 93.55% of leaders of a school or education and training establishment strongly agreed or agreed.

Respondents were strongly supportive of the proposal and emphasised the importance of high-quality induction for newly qualified teachers as a vital stage in developing confident, reflective practitioners. Many highlighted the benefits of a consistent and structured induction experience in supporting professional growth, improving retention, maintaining standards, and helping teachers bridge the gap between Initial Teacher Education and the realities of classroom practice.

There was support for induction that promotes mentoring, collaboration, professional networks and access to practical classroom-focused learning, with respondents noting the positive impact such support can have on early career development.

Respondents also emphasised that effective induction should be meaningful, well-resourced and accessible to all early career teachers, including those working in substitute, temporary, special school and Irish-medium settings. Many called for sufficient time, funding and mentor support to ensure induction is a valuable developmental experience.

Overall, there was strong agreement that a strengthened induction programme has the potential to enhance consistency across the system, support teacher wellbeing

and retention, and foster a culture of career-long professional learning from the outset of a teacher's car

**Question 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree that Early Professional Development beyond induction should be strengthened and more clearly defined as a distinct career phase?**

| Option                     | Total | Percent |
|----------------------------|-------|---------|
| Strongly Agree             | 61    | 48.80%  |
| Agree                      | 40    | 32.00%  |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | 11    | 8.80%   |
| Disagree                   | 10    | 8.00%   |
| Strongly disagree          | 3     | 2.40%   |
| Not Answered               | 0     | 0.00%   |
| Number of responses        | 125   | 100.00% |

**80.80% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed this proposal.** Of these:

- 74.68% of teaching staff / tutors / lecturers strongly agreed or agreed.
- 96.77% of leaders of a school or education and training establishment strongly agreed or agreed.

Respondents were strongly supportive of strengthening Early Professional Development and recognising it as a distinct stage within a teacher's professional journey.

Many highlighted the importance of providing structured support in the years immediately following induction, helping teachers build confidence, develop expertise, embed reflective practice and establish the foundations for long-term professional growth. There was broad agreement that Early Professional Development should form part of a coherent continuum of professional learning that extends throughout a teacher's career, while also recognising and valuing experienced classroom practitioners as well as those seeking leadership roles.

Overall, respondents viewed a strengthened Early Professional Development phase as an important opportunity to improve teacher retention, wellbeing and effectiveness, while fostering a culture of career-long learning and continuous improvement across the profession.

**Question 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the strategy's proposal to establish a Northern Ireland Centre for Educational Excellence and Improvement as a central agency to work with the education system to improve learning, teaching, curriculum, leadership and professional learning?**

| Option                     | Total | Percent |
|----------------------------|-------|---------|
| Strongly Agree             | 33    | 26.40%  |
| Agree                      | 41    | 32.80%  |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | 25    | 20.00%  |
| Disagree                   | 15    | 12.00%  |
| Strongly disagree          | 11    | 8.80%   |
| Not Answered               | 0     | 0.00%   |
| Number of responses        | 125   | 100.00% |

**59.20% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed this proposal.** Of these:

- 55.69% of teaching staff / tutors / lecturers strongly agreed or agreed.
- 64.52% of Leaders of a school or education and training establishment strongly agreed or agreed.

Most respondents supported this proposal with only 21% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the proposal.

Many respondents recognised the potential benefits of a central body to provide greater coherence, coordination and quality assurance across professional learning, curriculum development, leadership support and school improvement. Respondents noted that a well-designed centre could act as a trusted source of evidence-informed practice, reduce fragmentation across the system, support collaboration between schools, and strengthen access to high-quality professional learning and educational research.

However, respondents also raised questions about implementation. The most common concerns related to funding, with many highlighting the financial pressures currently facing schools. There was also concern about potential duplication of functions already undertaken by organisations such as the Education Authority and other sectoral bodies.



A recurring theme was the importance of ensuring that any new centre remains firmly connected to the realities of classroom practice. Respondents stressed that leadership and governance should involve practising educators and school leaders, with support and resources shaped by those working directly with children and young people. Many emphasised that the centre should be seen as a supportive rather than compliance-driven body, focused on improving practice rather than increasing accountability or bureaucracy.

Overall, respondents supported the ambition of improving coherence and educational excellence across the system, but emphasised that success will depend on clear purpose, effective collaboration with existing bodies, meaningful engagement with practitioners, adequate resourcing, and a strong focus on practical support that delivers tangible benefits for schools, teachers and learners.

**Question 10: Is there anything else you would like to share that could strengthen the strategy or its implementation?**

**Commentary from respondents**

A strong theme throughout the responses was the need for adequate funding, time and practical support to underpin the successful implementation of the strategy. Many respondents welcomed the ambition of the proposals, but a number stressed that meaningful professional learning can only be achieved if teachers are given time during working hours to participate, with appropriate cover, resources and sustained investment. A number also highlighted issues around workload and teacher wellbeing.

Respondents consistently highlighted the importance of high-quality, relevant and practical professional learning. There were calls for greater access to subject-specific training, leadership development, SEN-focused learning, and evidence-informed practice. Several respondents emphasised the need for stronger support at all career stages, including coordinators, middle leaders, senior leaders and principals, with a number advocating for the reintroduction of recognised leadership qualifications and more structured professional learning pathways.

Many comments stressed the importance of ensuring the strategy is teacher-led, clearly communicated and responsive to the realities of schools. There was support for reducing bureaucracy, with a preference for professional learning that demonstrates tangible impact on classroom practice rather than compliance or paperwork.

Several respondents highlighted the need for the strategy to be inclusive of all sectors and contexts, including special schools, Irish-medium education, substitute teachers, classroom assistants and teachers entering the profession through different routes.

Overall, respondents were supportive of the vision of a more coherent, career-long professional learning system. However, they emphasised that success will depend on effective resourcing, reduced workload pressures, strong leadership support, meaningful collaboration with the profession, and a sustained focus on improving outcomes for both educators and learners.

## Part 2. Detailed submissions received from other organisations

Eleven organisations provided more substantial submissions via email. Five of the eleven organisations answered the consultation questions. The other six organisations provided detailed submissions of the draft Strategy and consultation.

The organisations and a summary of their key comments are provided below.

- **Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)**

ASCL broadly supports the Department of Education's *Leading Together for Excellence* strategy, agreeing that teacher professional learning should be a career-long continuum that supports teachers and leaders at every stage of their professional journey. The response welcomes proposals to strengthen consistency across ITE, modernise teacher competencies, introduce leadership standards, and make induction mandatory for newly qualified teachers. ASCL also supports stronger early professional development and recognises the value of clear, high-quality learning opportunities that help build an expert, confident, and motivated workforce.

ASCL highlights several areas requiring further consideration. It identifies further gaps in current professional learning provision, including behaviour management, handling parental complaints, and media training. The association also cautions that mentoring and supporting new teachers could increase workload pressures on existing staff.

While supportive of the proposed Northern Ireland Centre for Educational Excellence and Improvement in principle, ASCL raises concerns about funding pressures, potential bureaucracy, and duplication of work with existing organisations. It concludes that successful implementation will require meaningful consultation with teachers and school leaders and careful consideration of resource implications.

- **British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children (BATOD) and Young People and the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)**

BATOD and NDCS strongly support the proposed Teacher Professional Learning Strategy and its vision of career-long professional learning. Their response emphasises that all teachers and school leaders should have a stronger understanding of deafness, speech, language and communication needs and inclusive practice.

A key theme of the response is the need for greater awareness of the barriers faced by deaf children and young people, particularly in mainstream schools. BATOD and NDCS call for explicit training on deaf awareness, communication access and inclusive teaching strategies, alongside stronger involvement of specialist professionals such as Qualified Teachers of the Deaf. They support the proposed Centre for Educational Excellence and Improvement but stress that inclusion, specialist expertise and equitable access to support across Northern Ireland must be central to implementation.

- **Catholic Schools' Trustee Service (CSTS)**

The CSTS strongly supports the proposed Teacher Professional Learning Strategy, particularly its vision of career-long professional learning linked to improved teaching and school outcomes. It emphasises that professional learning should be strategically connected to school development priorities and supports stronger pathways for leadership development, subject expertise, and advanced academic study.

CSTS highlights gaps in current provision, particularly in SEN, leadership training, and the effective use of technology and AI. It supports updating teacher competencies, introducing leadership standards, strengthening induction and early career support, and establishing a Northern Ireland Centre for Educational Excellence and Improvement. The CSTS also stresses the need for flexibility so that schools can access training that reflects their specific needs and ethos

- **CCMS**

CCMS strongly supports the proposed Teacher Professional Learning Strategy and its vision of career-long professional learning as a foundation for educational excellence. It advocates for a coherent, well-resourced framework that supports teachers throughout their careers, from initial teacher education to leadership, and highlights the importance of addressing key priorities such as SEN, wellbeing, digital learning, AI, and research-informed practice

CCMS also supports the introduction of updated teacher competencies, leadership standards, mandatory induction, a strengthened early professional development phase, and the creation of a Northern Ireland Centre for Educational Excellence and Improvement. It emphasises the need for protected time, sustainable funding, clear governance arrangements, and sufficient flexibility for schools to meet local needs while maintaining system-wide coherence and high standards.

- **Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC)**

CSSC strongly supports the vision of the Teacher Professional Learning Strategy and agrees that professional learning should be a career-long continuum supported by sustained investment, system-wide coordination and high-quality professional development. It emphasises the importance of supporting all those involved in education, including non-teaching staff, and highlights ongoing gaps in provision, particularly in SEN, leadership development, access to specialist expertise and the time available for staff to meaningfully engage with professional learning.

CSSC supports the introduction of a revised Initial Teacher Education framework, mandatory induction, updated teacher competencies, leadership standards and the proposed Northern Ireland Centre for Educational Excellence and Improvement.

It stresses the need for adequate funding, protected time, school autonomy, collaborative partnerships with higher education institutions, and meaningful involvement of practitioners in the development and implementation of reforms to ensure they improve outcomes for learners and support schools through a period of significant educational change

- **Governing Bodies Association (GBA)**

The GBA supports the overall vision of the Teacher Professional Learning Strategy and welcomes its ambition to create a coherent, career-long approach to professional development. However, it stresses that success will depend on sustained investment, protected funding for teacher release time and substitute cover, and sufficient time within teachers' workloads to engage meaningfully with professional learning.

The GBA also highlights the importance of teacher engagement, equitable access to training across different school contexts, and strong support for school leaders during implementation. While it views the strategy as well designed and aligned with wider curriculum reform, it argues that greater emphasis is needed on protected professional learning time, teacher ownership of development, and embedding professional learning as a normal part of teaching practice rather than an additional requirement.

- **GTCNI**

GTCNI strongly supports the TransformED Teacher Professional Learning Strategy, welcoming its vision of a coherent, career-long professional learning pathway from ITE through to leadership. It endorses the development of new teacher competences and leadership standards, a unified digital learning platform, and the proposed Centre for Education Excellence and Improvement, while emphasising the need for collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and avoiding duplication across the education system.

GTCNI highlights the importance of strengthening ITE, providing robust induction and early career support, protecting time for mentors and teachers, and creating clear leadership progression pathways. It also stresses the need for mandatory professional learning in key regulatory areas, flexible support for new and returning teachers, and ongoing evaluation to ensure the strategy is implemented effectively and delivers a confident, skilled, and high-quality teaching workforce.

- **NASUWT**

NASUWT broadly supports the vision of the Teacher Professional Learning Strategy but raises significant concerns about its implementation. It argues that greater clarity is needed on governance, funding, timelines, workload implications and the role of the proposed Centre for Educational Excellence and Improvement. It also stresses the importance of meaningful teacher and trade union involvement in shaping professional standards and professional learning provision.

NASUWT emphasises that the strategy must address wider workforce issues, including teacher recruitment, retention, workload and educational inequality. While supporting stronger induction and leadership development, it warns against increased bureaucracy and additional demands on teachers without adequate resources, protected time and professional autonomy.

- **Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) NI**

RCSLT NI strongly supports the proposed Teacher Professional Learning Strategy and its emphasis on career-long, evidence-informed professional learning. A central theme of its response is that speech, language and communication should be recognised as a fundamental aspect of teaching, learning, inclusion and educational attainment. RCSLT NI highlights the growing prevalence of speech, language and communication needs among children and young people and argues that all teachers should develop knowledge and skills in communication-supportive practice throughout their

careers. RCSLT NI recommends embedding speech, language and communication across all elements of the strategy,

- **Sport NI**

Sport NI strongly supports the strategy and its focus on coherent, system-wide teacher professional learning, but emphasises the need for recognition of physical education (PE) and physical literacy. It recommends embedding physical literacy across teacher standards, initial teacher education and continuing professional development, strengthening PE training and support for teachers, rebuilding subject-specific expertise, and ensuring inclusive approaches that address participation inequalities.

- **Teachers' Research Exchange (T-REX) platform**

T-REX supports the aims of the Teacher Professional Learning Strategy and highlights the value of evidence-informed, collaborative professional learning that connects research with classroom practice. T-REX emphasises the need for greater professional learning on educational disadvantage, stronger engagement with educational research, and opportunities for teachers to collaborate through North-South communities of practice.



## Part 3. Conclusion, Departmental Response and Next Steps

The consultation generated 120 responses. The Department would like to thank all those who took the time to respond to the consultation and particularly those who provided detailed submissions. Whilst this is only a small proportion of the workforce, the comments are extremely helpful and will inform the final strategy.

The consultation has demonstrated very strong support for the vision and direction of *Leading Together for Excellence: A TransformED NI Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning*. Across both the online consultation responses and the detailed submissions received from representative organisations, most respondents supported the Department's proposals and agreed that Northern Ireland requires a more coherent, high-quality and career-long approach to teacher professional learning.

Respondents consistently endorsed the principle that professional learning should extend across the entirety of a teacher's career, from ITE through to system leadership, and welcomed the ambition to create a more coordinated and evidence-informed system.

There was particularly strong support for strengthening induction and Early Professional Development, modernising teacher competences, introducing distinct leadership standards, strengthening subject and curriculum-focused professional learning, and providing clearer progression pathways for teachers and school leaders.

Stakeholders broadly recognised that these reforms have the potential to enhance professional confidence, improve teaching quality, strengthen leadership capacity and ultimately improve outcomes for children and young people. The responses also reinforced the case for addressing long-standing issues within the current system, including fragmentation of provision, inconsistent access to professional learning, and the absence of a coherent framework supporting development across all career stages.

The Department also notes the consistent messages received regarding implementation. While respondents were supportive of the proposals, many

emphasised the importance of adequate funding, sustainable delivery arrangements and meaningful engagement with the profession. The Department agrees that successful implementation will require careful consideration of both funding and delivery, and these issues will be central to implementation. The Department is committed to ensuring that the strategy is implemented in a sustainable manner, supported by prioritised funding through TransformED and working closely with schools, teachers, school leaders, representative organisations and system partners.

A recurring theme throughout the consultation was the challenge of providing teachers with sufficient time to engage meaningfully in professional learning. Teachers will continue to benefit from ten professional development days annually, alongside three additional TransformED professional development days specifically designed to support educational reform and improvement. In addition, the Department will ensure that the proposed mandatory induction programme for newly qualified teachers is accommodated within directed time arrangements, helping to support both new teachers and those responsible for mentoring and induction.

The consultation also demonstrated broad support for the establishment of a Northern Ireland Centre for Educational Excellence and Improvement, whilst highlighting the need for a clear purpose and avoidance of unnecessary duplication. The Department remains firmly of the view that the Centre will be critical to the successful delivery of educational reform. The Centre will provide the infrastructure necessary to bring together policy development and delivery, ensuring greater coherence across curriculum, professional learning, leadership development and school improvement. It will act as a focal point for expertise, collaboration and implementation, helping to reduce fragmentation across the system and ensuring that professional learning is closely connected to classroom practice and the needs of children and young people.

Having carefully considered the feedback received, the Department remains strongly committed to the proposals set out within *Leading Together for Excellence*. The consultation has provided a clear endorsement of the overall direction of travel and has helped identify areas that will require particular attention during implementation. The final strategy will therefore be published over coming weeks with a renewed focus on effective delivery, sustainable resourcing, meaningful practitioner engagement and ensuring that teachers and leaders are supported to access high-quality professional

learning throughout their careers. It will be accompanied with a detailed Delivery Plan. The Department believes that these reforms will play a vital role in achieving the ambitions of TransformED and in building an expert, confident and highly skilled teaching profession for Northern Ireland