

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DE)

EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY SCREENING

FOR

EVERY CHILD: DE CORPORATE PLAN 2023-2028

[Updated following public consultation]

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PART ONE

BACKGROUND

1.1 Title of strategy

Every CHILD: DE Corporate Plan 2023-2028

1.2 Type of strategy

New strategy

1.3 Description of the strategy including:

- Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?
- What is the policy trying to achieve? (aim/outcomes)
- How will this be achieved?

The Corporate Plan will set the strategic focus and direction of the Department for the next five years and, working in partnership with stakeholders, it will support the Department as it works to improve outcomes for children and young people.

It will do this through identifying a set of strategic priorities (and corresponding actions), which are to be aligned with the outcomes within the draft Programme for Government, as well as the outcomes within the [Children & Young People's Strategy](#). One of the outcomes of the CYPS is “children and young people live in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted”.

That way, we are ensuring that our priorities are right and our resources and efforts are focused on making the greatest difference to our children and young people.

The Corporate Plan will be subject to public consultation before it is published.

1.4 What factors could contribute to the intended aim/outcome of the strategy?

- Development of a Programme for Government, bringing a clearer focus for the Department's contribution to its outcomes

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- Final reports from Reviews including SEN and Independent Review of Education
- Financial i.e. budget uncertainty

1.5 Main stakeholders affected

Pupils (Actual or Potential)

Parents

Teaching Staff

Trade Unions

Other Public Sector Organisations

Departmental Staff

Others (please specify) – non-teaching staff; voluntary & community sector; business sector (public and private)

1.6 Who is responsible for?

(a) Devising the plan

DE is responsible for devising the Plan.

In developing this Plan, we engaged with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders to learn their views on the outcomes the Department should focus attention on for the next five years. We also considered the wide range of commitments the Department has across strategies such as the draft Programme for Government; the Consolidated Covid-19 Recovery Plan; the Children and Young People Strategy; A Fair Start; and New Decade, New Approach.

Following this engagement, a series of workshops were then held with policy leads across the Department to inform which multi-year, strategic actions should be within the Corporate Plan in support of the strategic priorities. Further engagement was also held with internal and external stakeholders in advance of the publication of the consultation.

(b) Implementing it

DE, in collaboration with its delivery partners (other Departments, its Arms' Length Bodies etc.) will be responsible for delivering the actions and outcomes contained within the Corporate Plan.

(c) Explain the relationship?

DE is responsible for setting the strategic policy direction in respect of improving the educational and well-being outcomes for children and young people in Northern Ireland on behalf of the NI Executive.

While DE will lead on delivery of all actions in the Corporate Plan, many will require cooperation and joint working with other Departments.

DE will work closely with its Arm's Length Bodies and a range of other partners in order to deliver on the Corporate Plan commitments.

1.7 Other policies or objectives with a bearing on this strategy

- What are they? (e.g. draft Programme for Government, Public Service Agreement targets etc.)
- Who owns them?
- Are there any links to other NI Departments/NDPBs?

The Corporate Plan is wide ranging and, as such, a range of DE policies are involved.

The Corporate Plan is intended to support outcomes within the draft Programme for Government and the Children & Young People's Strategy (CYPS). Subsequently, many of the priorities and actions identified within the Corporate Plan will be directly aligned to policies/projects/programmes identified within (i) CYPS Delivery Plan (ii) Consolidated Covid-19 Recovery Strategy (iii) 'A Fair Start' and cross-departmental strategies such as the NI Executive's Green Growth Strategy.

EVIDENCE

- 1.8 What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this strategy in respect of each of the categories?

Religious Belief

In the [Annual enrolments at schools and funded pre-school education in Northern Ireland 2021-22](#) the composition by religion for all funded pre-school, Nursery, Primary, Post-Primary, Special Schools and Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Centres was:

Protestant	109,481
Catholic	177,856
Other Christian / Non-Christian / No religion / Not recorded	66,509
TOTAL	353,846

In 2020/21, 47.9% (465) of Protestant boys entitled to free school meals achieved at least five GCSEs at grades A* - C or equivalent including GCSE English and math's compared with 58.3% (895) of Catholic boys entitled to free school meals and 49.3% (177) of other boys entitled to free school meals 59.9% (516) of Protestant girls entitled to free school meals achieved at least five GCSEs at grades A* - C or equivalent including GCSE English and math's compared with 70.8% (1042) of Catholic girls entitled to free school meals and 64.1% (221) of other girls entitled to free school meals. Source: [Qualifications and Destinations of Northern Ireland School Leavers - 2020-2021](#)

Of the 2,069 respondents to the [Young Life and Times \(YLT\) survey 2020-21](#), 59% regarded themselves as belonging to a particular religion - 34% were Catholic, 21% Protestant, while 2% belonged to another religion. 40% of respondents indicated that they belonged to no religion.

Political Opinion

Religious belief is often used as a proxy for political opinion.

Racial Group

In the [Annual enrolments at schools 2021-22](#) the number of children and young people designed as Newcomers was 18,356 – equating to 5.2% of all pupils.

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Ethnicity of Pupils by school type 2021-22

Funded pre-school, Primary, Post-primary and Special schools

School and Management Type	White (excluding Irish Traveller)	Chinese	Irish Traveller	Indian/ Sri Lankan	Pakistani	Black	Other ethnic group	Mixed ethnic group	Total
Voluntary & Pre-school centres (funded children only)	6,977	14	19	40	8	43	117	109	7,327
Nursery Schools	5,426	18	13	41	12	75	95	115	5,795
Nursery Classes and Reception	9,137	37	31	103	20	110	170	209	9,817
Primary schools and Preparatory Departments (Years 1-7)	162,159	684	717	1,142	280	1,498	2,667	3,178	172,325
Secondary (non-Grammar) schools	82,321	169	271	176	89	816	1,394	1,352	86,588
Grammar Schools	61,874	538	15	724	97	316	667	1,082	65,313
Special Schools	6,252	29	62	29	10	#	117	#	6,653
EOTAS Centres	25	0	0	0	0	*	0	*	28
All funded Pre-school, Nursery, Primary, Post-primary, Special and EOTAS	334,171	1,489	1,128	2,255	516	2,908	5,227	6,152	353,846

Source: [annual-enrolments-at-schools-and-in-funded-pre-school-education-in-northern-ireland-2020-21 \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/annual-enrolments-at-schools-and-in-funded-pre-school-education-in-northern-ireland-2020-21)

* fewer than 5 cases
numbers suppressed

Age

The [Annual enrolments at schools 2021-22 identified that](#) there were:

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- 172,325 pupils in primary schools (years 1-7), continuing the downward trend in primary enrolments over the last few years;
- 151,901 pupils enrolled in post-primary schools,- including approximately 29,400 pupils in sixth forms,(64% of all 16-17 year olds in Northern Ireland), continuing the recent trend of increasing numbers of post-primary pupils; and
- 22,939 pupils in funded pre-school education, a decrease of 173 compared to the previous year (mirroring the reduction in 3-year olds) and representing 91% of three year olds in the population.

Marital Status

In 2020 there were 3,090 marriages in Northern Ireland. Of those marriages in the age band 16-19, there were 28 males and 47 females. (Source: Registrar General Annual Report 2020)

Sexual Orientation

Of the 2,069 respondents to the [Young Life and Times \(YLT\) survey 2020-21](#) 56% were female, 43% were male and 1% had another gender identity.

Evidence from the Survey suggested that 11% of males and 28% of females had been sexually attracted to a person of the same sex at least once.

Men And Women Generally

[NI: IN PROFILE - Population \(NISRA. 2021\)](#) shows that there were 237,487 males aged 0-18 and 225,719 females aged 0-18. The percentages being 51% and 49% respectively.

Disability

Data gathered as part of the annual school census exercise in 2021 shows that 18.2% of pupils in schools were recorded as having special educational needs (stages 1-3); and that 6.3% had a statement of special educational needs.

School and management type	State-mented	Stage 1 - 2	Total SEN	Total Enrol-ment	% State-mented	%SEN stages 1-2	%SEN (Stage 1-3)
Voluntary and Private Pre-school education centres	109	542	651	7,327	1.5%	7.4%	8.9%

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Nursery schools	122	1,063	1,185	5,795	2.1%	18.3%	20.4%
Nursery class pupils	#	363	#	9,668	#	3.8%	#
Reception pupils	*	-	*	149	*	0.0%	*
Primary schools (year 1 - 7)	7,323	24,352	31,675	170,795	4.3%	14.3%	18.5%
Grammar school Prep. Depts.(year 1 - 7)	35	183	218	1,530	2.3%	12.0%	14.2%
Total Primary schools	7,513	24,898	32,411	182,142	4.1%	13.7%	17.8%
Secondary (non-grammar) schools	6,687	12,666	19,353	86,588	7.7%	14.6%	22.4%
Grammar Schools	1,334	2,899	4,233	65,313	2.0%	4.4%	6.5%
Total Post-primary schools	8,021	15,565	23,586	151,901	5.3%	10.2%	15.5%
Special schools	6,422	231	6,653	6,653	96.5%	3.5%	100.0%
EOTAS Centres	11	12	23	28	39.3%	42.9%	82.1%
TOTAL (All schools, Pre-school and EOTAS Centres)	22,198	42,311	64,509	353,846	6.3%	12.0%	18.2%

* Fewer than five cases

number suppressed

Notes:

1. From 2021, children with Special Education Needs are assessed under the 3 stages of the SEN Code of Practice.

2. Enrolments for special schools and EOTAS centres relate those where pupils are single registered to the school, or are dual registered and the special school/EOTAS centre is recorded as the main school.

Source: [Annual enrolments at schools and funded pre-school education \(NI\) 2020-21](#)

Dependants

In the 2020 YLT Survey (of 16 year old young people), 12% of respondents stated they had caring responsibilities. The December 2017 report by Barnardo's "[Still Hidden Still Ignored](#)", identified that the average age of a young carer was 12.

At 31 March 2021, there was 3,530 Children Looked After in Northern Ireland ([Children's Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland 2020/21 | Department of Health](#)).

NEEDS, EXPERIENCES AND PRIORITIES

1.9 Taking into account the evidence gathered at 1.8 what are the needs, experiences and priorities of each category in relation to this particular strategy?

In the early stages of developing the Corporate Plan, external engagement was undertaken with key stakeholders – school leaders, boards of governors, parents and pupils. As part of this, the Department worked to ensure that a representative sample of individuals was chosen, based on age; gender; socio-economic group; and location (urban/rural). Seven focus groups took place consisting of around 6-8 participants.

There was also a focus on ensuring a representative sample of school types that participated in the focus groups i.e. controlled, maintained, voluntary, as well wider education providers such as Early Years/Sure Start and Youth Services. This was supported through engagement with the Department's Analytical Services Unit (ASU) to identify a suitable sample via their school database.

Key themes raised by stakeholders included the need to:

- Prioritise early years to identify children's needs more quickly and enable all children to maximise their learning as early as possible;
- Update the curriculum with greater emphasis on meeting the holistic needs of children, preparing them for life in the modern world and recognising the importance of soft as well as hard outcomes;
- Continue to press for extra funding and manage budgets and other resources with greater efficiency to ensure that more funding gets through to schools and pupils;
- Support and motivate staff to raise levels of satisfaction, and support recruitment, retention and progression;
- Provide guidance, support, stability and funding to address the impacts of Covid-19;

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- Further develop communication processes to show that DE is a listening Department that responds with clarity and agility to changing educational needs; and
- Intensify efforts to tackle disadvantage and underachievement and further support diversity

Religious Belief

Key themes raised by children and young people on Segregated/Integrated/Shared Education during the consultation on the Children and Young People's Strategy included that educational segregation does not promote diversity and they needed opportunities to go to school with people of all different religions and beliefs.

Source: [Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027 Consultation Response Report](#)

Political Opinion

The political opinion of pupils is not known as it is not collected. Religious belief is often used as a proxy for political opinion

Racial Group

92% of stakeholders from the Children and Young People's Strategy consultation either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement:

"Children and young people can find themselves subject to direct or indirect discrimination or racism. It is important that these children and young people are aware of their rights and the support to which they are entitled. They require extra protection to prevent negative experiences resulting in negative outcomes".

Source: [Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027 Consultation Response Report](#)

The [Qualifications and Destinations of NI School Leavers \(2020-21\)](#) shows that a higher proportion of Minority Ethnic pupils (includes Irish Travellers) leave with no GSCE or no qualifications, compared to others.

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Qualifications of school leavers by ethnic origin 2020/2021⁽¹⁾

WHITE⁽⁵⁾	Number	%
3+ A-levels A*-C ⁽²⁾	11014	52.9
3+ A-levels A*-E ⁽²⁾	12064	57.9
2+ A-levels A*-E ⁽²⁾	12579	60.4
At least 5 GCSEs A*-C ⁽²⁾	19224	92.3
At least 5 GCSEs A*-C ⁽²⁾ incl. English and maths	16210	77.8
At least 5 GCSEs A*-G ⁽²⁾	20323	97.6
No GCSEs ⁽³⁾	144	0.7
No Formal Qualifications ⁽⁴⁾	120	0.6
Total White⁽⁵⁾	20826	100.0
MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS⁽⁵⁾	Number	%
3+ A-levels A*-C ⁽²⁾	413	52.7
3+ A-levels A*-E ⁽²⁾	471	60.1
2+ A-levels A*-E ⁽²⁾	489	62.4
At least 5 GCSEs A*-C ⁽²⁾	687	87.6
At least 5 GCSEs A*-C ⁽²⁾ incl. English and maths	571	72.8
At least 5 GCSEs A*-G ⁽²⁾	727	92.7
No GCSEs ⁽³⁾	20	2.6
No Formal Qualifications ⁽⁴⁾	19	2.4
Total Minority Ethnic Groups⁽⁵⁾	784	100.0

NOTES

1. Excludes special and independent schools.
2. Includes equivalent qualifications.
3. Includes those who undertook no GCSE examinations or obtained no graded results but who obtained other qualifications.
4. Includes only those with no qualifications of any kind.
5. 'Minority Ethnic Groups' includes Irish Travellers. 'White' does not include Irish Travellers.

Age

From the Children and Young People's Strategy consultation, Key points made in relation to rights included:

"The NI Executive needs to recognise its responsibility to raise awareness of children and young people's rights among adults, policy makers and service deliverers".

"More robust data is needed on the numbers of child carers; the number of incidents of racist/homophobic bullying or discrimination; the number of children and young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual; the number of children and young people who are transgender etc.".

Marital Status

From the Children and Young People’s Strategy consultation, In relation to Economic and Environmental Well-being a key point included, “..... understanding healthy relationships to prepare them for leaving education” and an additional comment included, “The need for some parents to work long hours means they miss out on spending time with their children which can impact on their development and family relationships”.

Source: [Children and Young People’s Strategy 2017-2027 Consultation Response Report](#)

Sexual Orientation

From the Children and Young People’s Strategy consultation, 83% of stakeholders either strongly agreed or agreed that, “Lesbian, gay or bisexual young people feel that their rights and awareness of their issues are largely ignored in their education, communities and wider society”.

Source: [Children and Young People’s Strategy 2017-2027 Consultation Response Report](#)

Men and Women Generally

From the Children and Young People’s Strategy consultation, Problems/gaps identified (under Safety and Stability):

neglect, domestic violence and abuse can have significant and long-lasting impacts on children and young people; gender based violence needs to be considered and addressed; and that refugee children can be particularly vulnerable – living in circumstances where they may be sharing accommodation with strangers.

83% of stakeholders either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, “Children and young people who identify as Transgender: Services need to be flexible in dealing with children and young people who identify as transgender and ensure they do not face discrimination, of any sort, based on their identity”.

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Source: [Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027 Consultation Response Report](#)

Disability

From the Children and Young People's Strategy consultation, in relation to the outcome on Physical and Mental Health, 96% of stakeholders either strongly agreed or agreed that, "We must ensure that disabilities are not a barrier to the realisation of this or other outcomes for these children and young people".

Source: [Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027 Consultation Response Report](#)

The National Children's Bureau 2021 report [Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Young People with SEND in NI](#) states, "School closures generally impacted negatively on children with SEND, not only due to a loss in learning, but also in terms of social and emotional development and in terms of missing out on valuable therapies.

Dependants

From the Children and Young People's Strategy consultation, 95% of stakeholders either strongly agreed or agreed that, "Children acting as carers: Children acting as carers are at risk of missing out on their childhood".

91% of stakeholders either strongly agreed or agreed that, "Children and young people leaving care are at greater risk of not transitioning to employment, education or training. It is important that they are supported during their education, and as they transition out of education and out of care, to ensure they experience positive outcomes".

Source: [Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027 Consultation Response Report](#)

PART TWO – SCREENING QUESTIONS

LIKELY IMPACT

2.1 What is the likely impact of this strategy on equality of opportunity for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

Religious Belief

Minor

The Corporate Plan will be central to the strategic framework which monitors how the Department is progressing agreed outcomes to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people. The societal outcomes (which the Corporate Plan contributes to) sit at PfG draft Outcomes and CYPS level, and as such will be measured using the agreed population indicators for these respective strategies. These indicators will show if progress is being made to improve the wellbeing of children and young people.

The outcomes within the Corporate Plan are set at a lower level, with a view to achieving positive change during the lifespan of the Corporate Plan (i.e. “where do we want to be in five years’ time?”). These outcomes will be measured using an agreed set of indicators, which sit at a lower level than the population indicators at PfG/CYPS level. These measures will provide evidence of impact on children and young people’s educational outcomes and wellbeing from the actions it contains, as well as feeding into the outcomes which sit at PfG/CYPS level.

Individual actions within the Corporate Plan will be subject to their own performance measuring, with the responsible policy areas asked to report on their progress towards implementation and delivery of the actions using Outcomes Based Accountability, i.e. How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?

Political Opinion

Minor

As outlined above under the heading Religious Belief

Racial Group

Minor

As outlined above under the heading Religious Belief

Age

Minor

As outlined above under the heading Religious Belief

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Marital Status Minor

As outlined above under the heading Religious Belief

Sexual Orientation Minor

As outlined above under the heading Religious Belief

Men And Women Generally Minor

As outlined above under the heading Religious Belief

Disability Minor

As outlined above under the heading Religious Belief

Dependants Minor

As outlined above under the heading Religious Belief

OPPORTUNITIES TO BETTER PROMOTE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

2.2 Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?

Religious Belief Yes

The Corporate Plan has been developed to enable us to achieve long lasting improved educational and wellbeing outcomes for all children and young people. The Corporate Plan will help provide a focus on recognised areas of concern where outcomes are poorer or specific groups of children and young people face particular barriers to achieving positive outcomes. As a five year plan it will be subject to annual update.

Political Opinion Yes As above.

Racial Group Yes As above.

Age Yes As above.

Marital Status Yes As above.

Sexual Orientation Yes As above.

Men And Women Generally Yes As above.

Disability Yes As above.

Dependants Yes As above.

LIKELY IMPACT ON GOOD RELATIONS

2.3 To what extent is the strategy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Religious belief	Minor
Political opinion	Minor
Racial group	Minor

One of the key outcomes DE wishes to achieve through the Corporate Plan (Every CHILD) is to “Encourage more children and young people from different backgrounds to engage together, building societal cohesion and learning to understand, respect and celebrate difference” (this sits underneath the “Inspiring” Strategic Priority). We will do this through the actions set out within Every CHILD.

2.4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Religious belief	Yes
Political opinion	Yes
Racial group	Yes

As above, one of the key outcomes DE wishes to achieve through the Corporate Plan (Every CHILD) is to “Encourage more children and young people from different backgrounds to engage together, building societal cohesion and learning to understand, respect and celebrate difference” (this sits underneath the “Inspiring” Strategic Priority). We will do this through the actions set out within Every CHILD.

The Corporate Plan is a key element of the monitoring and reporting arrangements which will assess the progress of the strategic priorities in improving the educational and wellbeing outcomes of children and young people.

The Corporate Plan will be reviewed annually and this will provide an opportunity to consider how departmental actions could be revised in order to better contribute to improving the education and well-being of children and young people, this approach will include consideration of

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those issues which contribute to the promotion of good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

- 2.5 Please provide details of data on the impact of the strategy on people with multiple identities and specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

When Equality Screening individual policies within the Corporate Plan, policy makers will be asked to particularly consider multiple impacts on pupils due to disability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation etc.

PART THREE

SCREENING DECISION

3.1 The decision is not to conduct a full equality impact assessment.

Reasons

The design process of the draft Corporate Plan was informed by opinions from a wide range of stakeholders and further public consultation will enable the Corporate Plan to be finalised. The Corporate Plan aims to achieve positive long-lasting educational and well-being outcomes for all children and young people and in doing so will promote equality of opportunity.

The Department has listened to the voice of children and young people, parents and guardians and stakeholders when consulting on the final draft Corporate Plan. The consultation utilised a number of channels including the DE website, Citizen Space (digital online platform) and downloadable documentation for email or postal submission (for those stakeholders without ready access to the internet/a computer, hard copies were made available on request).

The consultation received 72 responses representing a broad cross-section of stakeholders including organisations, parents/guardians, school leaders, the voluntary and community sector, members of the public, teaching staff, trade union representatives and pupils. As a proxy for political/religious belief, respondents were asked to identify which education sector they had an interest in – our analysis found a balanced representation of all sectoral types:

Sectoral Interest		
	No.	%
Other/General Interest	22	30.6%
Controlled	20	27.8%
Maintained	16	22.2%
Voluntary Sector	15	20.8%
Integrated	12	16.7%
Irish Medium	7	9.7%
TOTAL	92¹	

In addition, DE commissioned the Education Authority to engage directly with children and young people; 38 young people participated, from a range of age groups, geographical and

¹ Respondents could choose more than one sectoral interest, hence sum is greater than 72.

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educational settings. This approach is central to finalising the Corporate Plan, thereby respecting their rights.

The department will work to ensure stakeholders who have a role or interest in improving children's lives co-operate with each other.

Post-consultation

3.2 DE is fully committed to its Section 75 statutory duties and in adhering to our Equality Scheme with regard to revising and developing education policies; assessing any equality and good relations impacts, any adverse impacts and seeking opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations, alongside subsequent monitoring for any adverse impacts of policies adopted.

The Department has reviewed its decision not to conduct an equality impact assessment and, together with the data gained from consultation responses, considers that this decision remains appropriate, for the reasons outlined below.

The Corporate Plan (Draft) sets out the strategic priorities for education - in the medium to longer term, and as published this sets out the 'high level' objectives in terms of:

- CHAMPIONING all our children and young people and the positive impact of education on all aspects of life;
- HELPING all our children and young people where they need support for their learning and well-being;
- INSPIRING all our children and young people to make a positive contribution to society;
- Meeting the LEARNING needs of our children and young people and developing their knowledge and skills, enabling them to fulfil their potential; and
- DELIVERING an effective, child-focused, collaborative, high quality education system.

At its centre the Plan emphasises the concept of 'Every Child', and in turn provides a focus on 'inclusivity' for all children and young people – including those identified as falling under one or more of the S75 categories.

The public consultation on "Every CHILD - Department of Education's Corporate Plan 2023-28" outlined that it had been subject to an Equality Screening and that the documents indicated

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that were no adverse impacts in relation to the policy proposals. As part of this consultation, DE welcomed any comments on the Equality Screening.

Of the responses received to this question, the majority (20) agreed with the Equality Screening assessment, three respondents disagreed in principle with Equality Screenings, one respondent did not specify why they disagreed, on the basis of what they viewed as the segregated education system here, and one disagreed based on their view that there was an opportunity to address failures to comply with Human Rights Laws in the NI education system.

Additionally, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) disagreed with the assessment. They viewed not carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) as a missed opportunity to enable the Department to examine more thoroughly inequalities experienced by S75 groups (including multiple identity issues) and how they relate to disadvantage and under-attainment. In addition, they considered that the findings of an EQIA would in turn help inform the development of policies emanating from the corporate plan. They pointed to the evidence included in the screening assessment being, for the most part, generic and reliant mainly on quantitative data relating to pupil enrolments with some broad analysis in relation to attainment.

DE accepts that the current level of data (including against the S75 groups); to both evidence policy/decision making and assess the impact these are making, could be improved. DE is therefore committed to a data development agenda, which seeks to provide a comprehensive evidence base (“System Evaluation Framework”) to inform policy planning and improve educational processes and outcomes. This data development work will seek to include, but not be limited to, equality data.

A Mitigation section has been added to this Equality Screening (below), seeking to clarify how equality considerations will be integrated going forward and our continuing commitment to doing more on equality, including on measurement, but that these may be as a result of specific programmes and the wider development of data measures, rather than the wider aims outlined in the ‘Every Child Corporate Plan 2023-2028’.

MITIGATION

- 3.3 As set out at Section 2 the likely impact of this strategy on equality of opportunity for each of the Section 75 equality categories was assessed as minor.

The DE Corporate Plan ‘Every CHILD’ provides the strategic direction for the Department of Education, policy-makers, programme developers and service delivery partners to deliver improvements in the outcomes for all children and young people in Northern Ireland. The strategic intent is clearly one whose aims in relation to equality of opportunity and good relations are intended to be positive. As a five-year plan it will be subject to annual update, and where opportunities are identified to further enhance equality of opportunity and the promotion of good relations, these will be incorporated.

Individual projects and programmes within ‘Every CHILD’ are subject to their own performance measuring, with key performance measures reported against the annual Business Plan underpinning Every CHILD. As appropriate, Equality Screening (and as appropriate full Equality Impact Assessments) will be carried out when policies are being developed/revised in response to actions required in delivering against ‘Every CHILD’.

Furthermore, the majority of actions within ‘Every CHILD’ already appear within existing key strategies, such as the Children & Young People’s Strategy and ‘A Fair Start’, which themselves have been subject to equality screening.

As set out at 3.2 above, DE is committed to a data development agenda, which seeks to provide a comprehensive evidence base via the “System Evaluation Framework”, which will inform policy planning and improve educational processes and outcomes. This data development work will seek to include, but not be limited to, equality data.

PART FOUR MONITORING

Please detail what data you will collect in the future in order to monitor the effect of the strategy on any of Section 75 equality categories:

The Corporate Plan will use Outcomes Based Accountability in the same way as the draft Programme for Government and Children and Young People's Strategy. To determine whether and to what extent the outcomes have been achieved, a small number of high level population level indicators will be used to measure and report progress in improving the well-being of children and young people. These will be linked with all the relevant outcomes. While some indicators will be clearly associated with one particular outcome, other indicators will be cross-cutting and relevant across a number of outcomes.

A 'dashboard' will be published alongside the Corporate Plan on the DE website setting out the indicators and showing the current position of each as well as previous trends. The dashboard will be 'live, meaning that it will be continuously monitored and updated as the latest data becomes available.

There will be ongoing monitoring of the indicators to determine whether the actions we are taking are having an impact, how the outcomes are being achieved and whether children and young people are better off as a result. This will also be supplemented by a System Evaluation Framework (SEF), which is currently in the development stage. The SEF will also provide a 'live dashboard' of outcome measures including those identified for the Corporate Plan.

Individual actions within the Corporate Plan will be subject to their own monitoring arrangements, including the use of Report Cards where appropriate.

The annual Business Plans will contain Performance Measures aligned to each Strategic Priority. These will report more specifically on "how much did we do?", "how well did we do it?" and "is anyone better off?". The Performance Measures will be monitored on a quarterly basis and will be published as part of the mid- and end-year reporting on how DE has performed against the annual Business Plan on the DE website.

PART FIVE

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

5.1 Will the strategy in any way discourage persons with disabilities from participating in public life or fail to promote positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities?

No

5.2 Is there an opportunity to better promote positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities or encourage participation in public life by making changes to the strategy or introducing additional measures?

No

5.3 Please detail what data you will collect in the future in order to monitor the effect of the strategy with reference to the disability duties.

Please see section 4

PART SIX

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

6.1 Does the strategy affect anyone's Human Rights?

Particularly consider:

- [The Human Rights Act \(1998\)](#)
- [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#)

No – the impacts of the Corporate Plan are expected to be positive and monitoring and reporting processes will provide opportunities for stakeholders to exercise accountability by exercising their right to challenge outcomes.

6.2 If you have identified a negative impact; what Human Right is impacted, what is the nature of the impact and who is affected and how?

Not applicable

6.3 Outline any actions which could be taken to promote or raise awareness of human rights or to ensure compliance with the legislation in relation to the strategy.

Not applicable

PART SEVEN
RURAL NEEDS

The undertaking of a [Rural Needs Impact Assessment \(RNIA\)](#) is an integral part of the development, adoption, implementation or review of a policy, strategy or plan or the design or delivery of a public service.

Will a separate RNIA be completed? Yes

Completed RNIA's are published on the Department's Internet site and shown under [Rural Needs Impact Assessments](#).

PART EIGHT
APPROVAL AND AUTHORISATION

FOR COMPLETION BY POLICY TEAM

Screened by: Stuart Coulter Grade 7 Date: 4 September 2023

Approved by: Kim Martin Grade 6 Date: 4 September 2023

Kim Martin

FOR COMPLETION BY EQUALITY TEAM

Screening Decision Agreed.

Quality Assured by: Catherine Service Date 6 September 2023
Team Informed: EGT Date 6 September 2023

Placed on Internet by policy team Date 19 October 2023

As soon as possible, following quality assurance, you must publish a copy of the screening form in Microsoft Word (or other Open Document Format) on the Department's website: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications> with a link on the "Policy Screening" page: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/de-equality-screenings>