

ARDS & NORTH DOWN

LOCAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2026 - 2029

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Contents

Introduction & Background 2

Vision Statement 2

Voice of children and young people and other key stakeholders in Ards North Down 4

Youth Service Delivery Model 6

Model 1a - Youth Service Delivery Model 6

Model 1b - Stretch Goal 7

Priorities for Delivery 10

Strategic Approach to Youth Services 14

2026-2029 Local Youth Development Plan 15

Introduction & Background

The Education Authority (EA) Local Youth Development Action Plan for 2026–2029 for Ards and North Down sets out the priorities and targets for youth work in the borough, shaped by the Local Assessment of Need for 2026 and delivered in line with the Department of Education (DE) policy, Priorities for Youth.

The Plan is rooted in partnership working and evidence, aligning not only with the EA's Strategic Plan (2017–2027) and the Regional Youth Development Plan (2026–2029), but also with the wider ambitions of the Big Plan for Ards and North Down (2017–2032). The Big Plan envisions a borough where *"all people… benefit from opportunities to fulfil their lifelong potential"* and highlights participation and co-design as central to improving services and community wellbeing.

This Local Youth Development Plan reflects those ambitions by committing to a rights-based approach that actively listens to the voices of young people and places their needs at the heart of planning and delivery. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to the Big Plan's outcomes by creating safe, inclusive and inspiring opportunities that enable young people across Ards and North Down, from coastal villages to busy towns, to be heard, supported and empowered to thrive.

The legislative and policy context for the Local Youth Development Plan is referenced within the Regional Youth Development Plan, which can be found here.

Vision Statement

Youth work in Ards and North Down will be inclusive, responsive, and ambitious, ensuring all young people, wherever they live and whatever their background, have equitable access to high-quality support and meaningful opportunities. In an area that combines busy towns with rural villages and coastal communities, we recognise the need to overcome barriers so that every young person can benefit from consistent, needs-led provision.

Our approach will be built on strong partnerships with voluntary and community organisations, statutory bodies, and schools, working together to deliver sustainable services shaped by the real needs of young people. We will harness the unique strengths of the area, its coastline, heritage, culture, and community spirit, to create opportunities that build pride, belonging, and aspiration.

The work of the EA Youth Service will be grounded in the values of equity, participation, innovation, accountability, and social action. By embedding youth voice at every level, we will ensure services remain relevant and trusted, empowering young people to play an active role in shaping their communities and their futures.

We are committed to investing in a skilled, motivated, and well-supported workforce. Through professional development, purposeful supervision, and strong leadership, youth workers and volunteers will be equipped to deliver creative, impactful, and youth-centred services that adapt to changing needs and contexts.

Young people will be supported to become confident leaders, volunteers, and active citizens through opportunities for participation, decision-making, and social action. Provision will be flexible to address both rural challenges such as transport and digital access, and urban issues including social isolation, mental health, and risk-taking behaviours.

Youth work in Ards and North Down will adopt trauma-informed and strength-based approaches that promote resilience, belonging, and progression for all young people.

Our vision is for youth work in Ards and North Down to create safe, supportive, and inspiring spaces where young people feel valued, connected, and empowered to thrive.

Voice of children and young people and other key stakeholders in Ards North Down

Children and young people across Ards and North Down have shared a clear and often urgent account of their experiences and needs. Through surveys, focus groups and stakeholder engagement, their voices paint a picture of communities where young people are striving to be heard, supported, and included, often in the face of significant personal and structural challenges.

A central theme emerging from the engagement is the increasing strain on the mental health and emotional wellbeing of young people. Many described feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or isolated, particularly in response to academic pressures, social media influences, family stress, and the lasting impacts of the pandemic. The data shows a worrying rise in suicide rates in the area which many stakeholders linked to a lack of early intervention and accessible support. Young people said they often don't know where to go for help, or fear being judged if they speak up. They called for more opportunities to connect with youth workers and trusted adults who can offer consistent, informal support. Stakeholders supported this, emphasising the vital role of preventative youth work in supporting emotional wellbeing and helping young people develop coping skills and resilience.

Another major concern raised by young people was their limited access to leisure, play, and positive activities. While there are some strong examples of provision, many participants reported that access is uneven across the council area, particularly for those living in rural communities or without access to private transport. Cost is also a barrier. Young people from lower-income families shared that they often cannot afford to take part in sports, creative arts or social activities. Young people with disabilities highlighted that some local provision is not accessible or inclusive, and that they often feel excluded from mainstream activities. Stakeholders echoed these points, noting that while services exist, they are not always joined up or responsive to the specific needs of marginalised groups.

In the area of education and achievement, young people expressed pride in doing well academically but also spoke about the intense pressure they feel to succeed. This pressure contributes to stress and low self-confidence, particularly among young people who feel they do not fit the traditional academic pathway. Although Ards and North Down has a higher-than-average rate of young people achieving five or more GCSEs, stakeholders stressed that this can mask deeper issues such as hidden disadvantage and a lack of alternative progression routes. There were calls for more youth work that supports skills development, motivation and positive aspirations beyond the classroom.

A strong thread across all engagement was the desire of young people to be included and involved in shaping the services and decisions that affect their lives. Many described current youth voice opportunities as limited, tokenistic, or poorly communicated. They want their ideas and lived experience to be valued and acted upon. This was particularly important for young people from marginalised groups, such as LGBTQIA+ young people and those with additional needs, who said they often feel invisible or misunderstood in mainstream spaces. Stakeholders agreed that more could be done to embed participation into local planning and delivery, and to build the confidence and capacity of young people to lead change.

Children and young people across the borough clearly understand the issues they face and the support they need. Their voices highlight both the strengths and the gaps in current provision, and they consistently call for services that are accessible, inclusive, youth-led, and grounded in empathy and trust. The evidence from Ards and North Down confirms that when young people are given space to speak and a platform to shape services, they offer practical, powerful insights that can drive more effective and equitable support across the region.

Youth Service Delivery Model

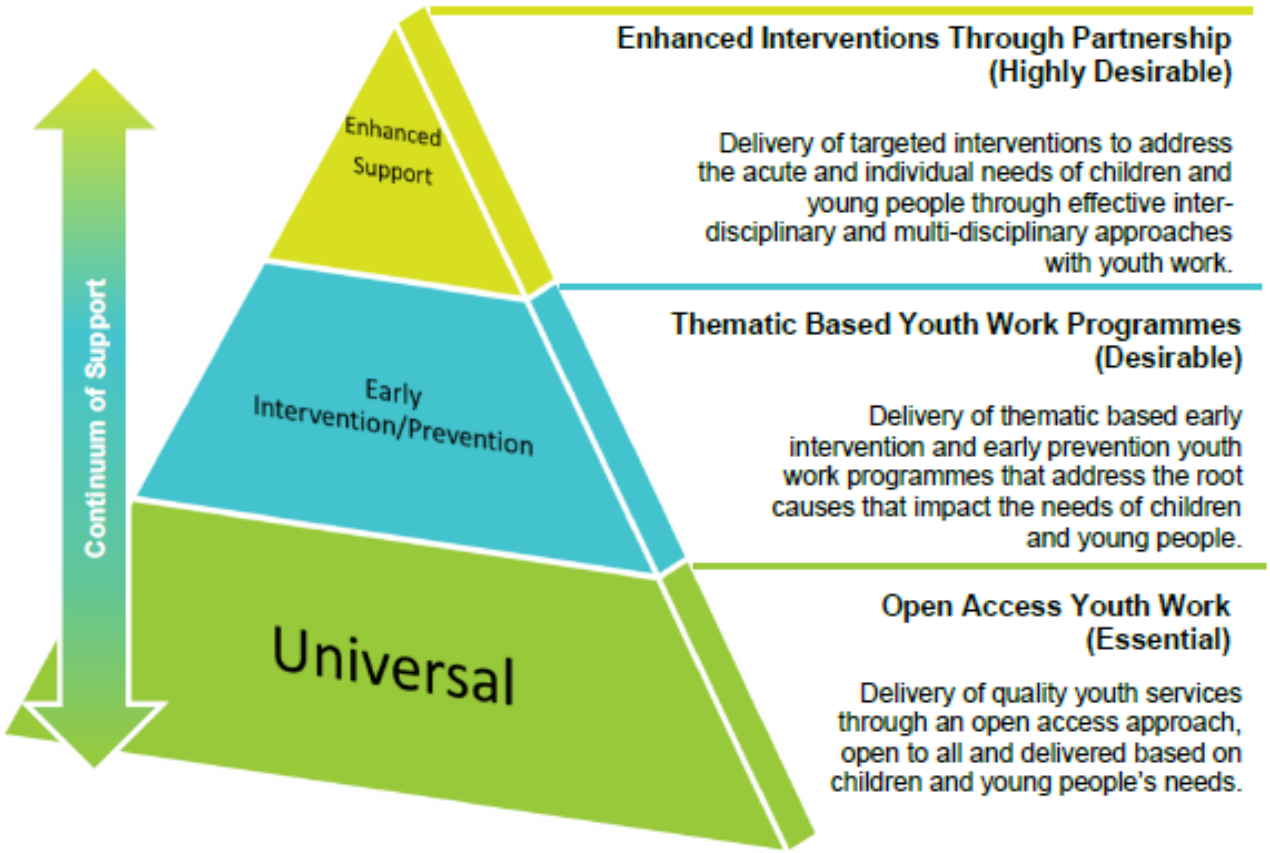
The Youth Service Delivery Model outlines how youth services will be developed through an adaptation of the Public Health approach that focuses on the provision of Universal, Early Intervention and Prevention and Enhanced Support services (Model 1a).

The provision of universal services in the first instance will be prioritised and where resources can be enhanced through collaboration, partnerships or additional funding acquisition further provision can be delivered at the Early Intervention/Prevention and Enhanced Support levels based on the needs of children and young people.

The delivery model recognises that there is overlap between the three tiers. Effective universal work will deliver youth work outcomes to children and young people that mitigate the need for specific or dedicated early intervention or prevention work. This model when accompanied with the stretch goal (Part 1b) provides how this overlap will be achieved.

Youth provision will ensure that young people are supported as they transition through the model. As a guide it is expected that Youth Services will take the lead at the Universal tier and act as key partners and actively support young people at the Early Intervention/Prevention and Enhanced Support tiers.

Model 1a - Youth Service Delivery Model



Model 1b - Stretch Goal

STRETCH GOAL		
Universal (Essential Goal)	**Early Intervention & Prevention (Desirable Goal)**	**Enhanced Support (The Stretch Goal)**
What is it?		
Providing open access youth provision that provides safe and welcoming space for all our children and young people in Ards & North Down	Providing ongoing thematic based group work programmes and projects to address the root causes impacting the needs of children and young people In Ards & North Down	Providing targeted interventions to address the acute needs of children and young people in partnership with other agencies to meet the needs of children and young people in Ards & North Down.
How will we do it?		
• Providing adequate universal youth provision for children and young people in Ards & North Down, ensuring that youth services are funded to prioritise the needs of children and young people who access them • Services are provided at the right times, in the right places based on what children and young people need • Services are informed with the participation of children and young people • Supporting children and young people who need early intervention/prevention to access programmes across the Ards & North Down area • Services are equipped with the resources to deliver a quality open access youth work programme of offer	• Providing resources (curriculum, training and funding) to facilitate youth work programmes prioritised against assessed need through formal and informal settings • Supporting families, formal education and communities to support the needs of the young person • Services are informed with the participation of children and young people • Supporting children and young people in Ards & North Down who need enhanced support to access programmes or connect with universal support • Services are equipped with the resources to deliver a quality early intervention and prevention programmes/projects • Capacity of Ards & North Down staff is supported to meet the needs through the	• Providing resources (curriculum, training and funding) to facilitate enhanced professional development • Working with partners and agencies in Ards & North Down to deliver bespoke support services at an individual and group level • Supporting young people to attend specialist support services • Reintegrating young people into appropriate youth work opportunities • Reconnecting young people within their family, formal education and community • Supporting children and young people to progress through early intervention and prevention programmes or connect with universal support

• Capacity of Ards & North Down staff is supported to meet the needs of children and young people presented through universal provision	delivery of early intervention and prevention programmes/projects	
How will we resource it?		
Focused use of the Department of Education Allocated Funding for Youth Work to the Education Authority.	Mixed funding model approach using the Department of Education Funding for Youth Work and other Earmarked Funding aligned to the theme.	Focused use of other earmarked funding supporting the delivery of youth work.
The Benefits		
Children and Young People will have: • Increased protective factors in their lives • Increased sense of belonging • Experience social and emotional skills development • Increased agency to make informed decisions • Improved social connectedness • Increased sense of power to change the world around them	**Children and Young People will have:** • Improved the resilience, skills and abilities to manage their own wellbeing • Increased agency to make informed decisions • Increased participation in, and focus on, their learning • Improved emotional health and wellbeing • Development of their thinking skills, life skills and work skills	**Children and Young People will have:** • Complex needs of individual children and young people are met • Increased connection between statutory, community and public services • Enhanced youth service capacity to meet the complex needs of children and young people • Facilitated de-escalation support pathways
Benefit Indicators		
BU1 Number of open access youth work sessions provided **BU2** Number of children and young people participating in open access youth provision **BU3** Percentage of young people satisfied with the service **BU4** Number of young people volunteering within the programme	**BEI1** Number of group work programmes delivered **BEI2** Number of children and young people participating in youth work programmes **BEI3** Percentage of young people satisfied with the programme **BEI4** Number of young people gaining accreditation	**BES1** Number of children and young people engaged in enhanced support youth work programmes **BES2** The numbers of children and young people referred to external agencies **BES3** Number of referrals to early intervention or universal services

BU5 Number of young people gaining accreditation **BU6** Status of children and young people's participation on the Engagement Framework **BU7** Number of training programmes provided **BU8** Number of staff participating in training	**BEI5** Number of young people volunteering within the project **BEI6** Number of referrals to external or enhanced support services or universal services **BEI7** Number of training programmes provided **BEI8** Number of staff participating in training **BEI9** Number of children and young people progressing against one or more of the youth work outcomes	**BES4** Number of children and young people progressing against one or more of the youth work outcomes **BES5** Number of training programmes provided **BES6** Number of staff participating in training

Priorities for Delivery

The needs of children and young people in Ards and North Down will be met through the delivery of Universal Services and Early Intervention and Prevention Initiatives, guided by A Model for Effective Practice.

These approaches ensure that all young people have access to safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces that promote personal development, wellbeing, and lifelong learning. Provision will reflect local needs and will be available at the times and in the places that matter most to young people, including evenings, weekends, and school holidays.

Based on the findings of the Local Assessment of Need 2026–2029, the following priority themes have been identified for delivery. They will be reviewed regularly and implemented in collaboration with voluntary, statutory, and community partners, depending on available resources.

Universal Services Priorities

- **Emotional Health and Wellbeing**
    - Young people across Ards and North Down identified emotional health as a key concern. Youth work will embed wellbeing in all aspects of delivery, helping young people build confidence, resilience, and positive coping skills.
    - Programmes will provide relational, non-clinical spaces where young people can talk openly, access peer support, and develop practical strategies to manage stress, anxiety, and emotional challenges.

- **Safe and Welcoming Spaces**
    - Youth work will provide safe, consistent, and inclusive spaces where young people feel respected, connected, and supported.
    - These settings will act as trusted environments that promote belonging and stability, especially for those who may feel isolated or face challenges at home or in school. Rural access will be strengthened through outreach and mobile provision.

- **Play, Leisure, and Creative Expression**
    - Access to play and leisure opportunities will be expanded to include a wide variety of experiences that reflect young people's interests.
    - Youth work will offer creative, cultural, and outdoor programmes that encourage fun, friendship, and personal growth. Affordability and transport barriers will be addressed through locally tailored initiatives to ensure equitable participation.

- **Learning, Achievement, and Life Skills**
    - Youth work will complement formal education by offering non-formal learning opportunities that recognise achievement beyond academic success.
    - Programmes will develop life skills such as budgeting, teamwork, communication, and employability, helping young people prepare for transitions in education, work, and adult life. Accreditation opportunities will be promoted across universal programmes.

- **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (CRED)**
    - Inclusive practice will be central to youth service delivery. Programmes will celebrate diversity, promote good relations, and challenge prejudice.

- Youth work will provide safe and respectful spaces for all young people, including those with disabilities, newcomer backgrounds, or who identify as LGBTQIA+, ensuring that every young person feels valued and visible in their community.

- **Environmental Awareness and Sustainability**
  - Young people are increasingly concerned about their environment. Universal programmes will incorporate sustainability and climate-focused activities that encourage local environmental action.
  - This will include youth-led projects on recycling, biodiversity, and outdoor learning, connecting environmental awareness to wellbeing and civic responsibility.

- **Youth Voice, Leadership, and Volunteering**
  - Participation will be embedded throughout youth service delivery. Local Voice, Youth Voice, advisory groups, and co-designed projects will ensure that young people have real influence over decisions affecting their lives.
  - Leadership and volunteering opportunities will enable young people to develop confidence, civic engagement, and skills for employment and community participation.

- **Digital Safety and Positive Online Engagement**
  - Youth work will support young people to use digital spaces safely and positively.
  - Programmes will explore online wellbeing, respectful communication, and managing digital pressures. Youth workers will model positive online behaviours and promote awareness of privacy, consent, and digital resilience.

Early Intervention and Prevention Themes

- **Living in Safety and Stability**
  - Youth work will provide early support to young people experiencing or at risk of instability at home, in relationships, or in their communities.
  - Programmes will focus on reducing bullying, promoting healthy relationships, preventing online harm, and increasing confidence in personal safety.
  - Youth workers will offer trusted relationships and restorative approaches to help reduce anti-social behaviour and promote stability.

- **Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Support**
  - Building on universal provision, targeted groupwork will be offered for young people showing early signs of anxiety, distress, or social withdrawal.
  - These programmes will focus on coping strategies, peer connection, and pathways to further support, ensuring that emotional wellbeing is addressed before crisis point.

- **Inclusion, Diversity, and Good Relations**
  - Youth services will deliver preventative programmes that address discrimination, prejudice, and inequality.
  - Young people will explore identity, difference, and belonging through shared education and cross-community projects that promote understanding and mutual respect.

- **Learning Support and Educational Transitions**
    - Targeted youth work will support young people facing barriers to learning, including those with additional needs, low confidence, or disrupted education.
    - Programmes will promote school engagement, build motivation, and support transitions to further education, training, or employment. Collaboration with schools and other agencies will ensure coordinated intervention.

- **Life Skills and Economic Stability**
    - Youth work will address early indicators of economic hardship by supporting young people to develop practical life skills such as budgeting, cooking, and planning for employment.
    - Programmes will focus on building financial literacy, independence, and confidence, while connecting young people with local employment and volunteering opportunities.

- **Digital Resilience and Online Safety**
    - Early intervention programmes will provide focused support on managing digital risk, addressing online bullying, and promoting positive digital citizenship.
    - These sessions will help young people understand consent, privacy, and the long-term impact of digital behaviour, empowering them to navigate online spaces safely.

- **Environmental and Community Action**
    - Targeted youth-led environmental projects will support young people to make a positive contribution to their local area.
    - These programmes will foster pride in place, teamwork, and a sense of ownership, while addressing sustainability and climate-related issues identified by young people.

- **Youth Voice and Participation in Decision Making**
    - Early intervention programmes will build confidence and advocacy skills among young people who may feel unheard or excluded.
    - Youth work will empower participants to contribute to local planning, policy discussions, and community initiatives, ensuring their perspectives inform decisions that shape their lives.

Alongside the delivery of Universal Services and thematic work focused on Early Intervention and Prevention, a range of targeted interventions are also being implemented in the Ards and North Down area working in partnership with other agencies to meet the specific needs of children and young people. These include:

- **ENGAGE**
    - This targeted programme is focused on tackling paramilitarism through groupwork, outreach and detached work, peer mentoring and peer support

- **REACH**
    - This targeted programme is focused on wellbeing for all and early intervention and prevention support under the joint Department of Education and Department of Health Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework provided in school settings

All targeted initiatives funded under Early Intervention and Enhanced Support are subject to annual funding being made available to EA.

Delivery across both Universal Services and Early Intervention/Prevention Initiatives will ensure that:

- Every young person in Ards and North Down has access to safe, inclusive, and engaging youth provision.
- Youth work addresses emotional wellbeing, social inclusion, learning, and community participation.
- Services remain flexible, evidence-informed, and responsive to local need, ensuring that prevention and participation are central to all practice.

Strategic Approach to Youth Services

When considering the delivery of local youth services, it is important to also consider the findings from the Regional Assessment of Need and the Regional Youth Development Plan. The Regional Assessment of Need has identified four emerging strategic themes which informed the Regional Youth Development Plan. These strategic themes should also provide a framework for local youth services to align common goals and achieve long-term objectives over the three-year planning period. The Strategic themes within the Regional Youth Development Plan are outlined below:

1. Child and Young Person Centred

In Ards North Down Youth Services will be delivered through a rights-based approach that places children and young people at the centre of all planning. We will actively listen to their voices, experiences, and aspirations, and use this insight to shape the services they need most, from wellbeing and education to leisure and safety.

We are committed to closing the feedback loop by showing young people how their input has influenced decisions. By building trust, accountability, and ownership in this way, we will ensure services remain relevant, responsive, and empowering for all young people.

2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through Partnership

In Ards and North Down, Youth Services will be guided by the needs of children and young people living in both urban centres and rural coastal communities. Provision will be delivered through statutory youth services and by supporting community and voluntary organisations with targeted grant aid.

Strong partnerships will underpin this work. By collaborating with statutory agencies, local groups, and young people themselves, services will be co-designed to reflect local priorities and challenges. This collective approach will ensure that all young people, regardless of where they live, have access to relevant opportunities and meaningful support to help them thrive.

3. Evidence Informed

In Ards and North Down, Youth Services will collect only the information needed to understand and demonstrate the real impact of youth work on children and young people. Data will be purposeful, focused on outcomes, and used to inform decisions that improve provision.

We will strengthen this by engaging in academic research and adopting evidence-informed practice. Working with partners and stakeholders will help us identify what works best in both urban and rural contexts. By minimising unnecessary bureaucracy, youth workers can dedicate more time to direct engagement, ensuring services remain effective, responsive, and centred on young people's needs.

4. Empowering All our Staff

In Ards and North Down, we will ensure that everyone delivering youth work has the curriculum resources, skills, and training needed to respond effectively to the needs of children and young people in both urban centres and rural coastal communities.

We will invest in professional development, provide access to up-to-date curriculum frameworks, and create opportunities for staff and volunteers to share best practice through local networks. By equipping the workforce in this way, we will enable them to deliver inclusive, high-quality, and impactful youth work that supports young people to thrive in every part of the area.

2026-2029 Local Youth Development Plan

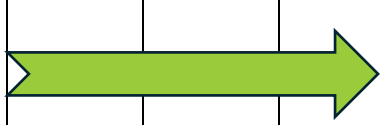
Success across the four key strategic themes in practice will look like:

1. Child and Young Person Centred	**1.1** Processes within the Ards and North Down Area will capture the views of children and young people to inform planning and delivery of services on a quarterly basis
	1.2 The Ards and North Down Action Plan will respond to the changing assessed needs of children and young people
2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through relevant Partnerships	**2.1** Accessible universal youth provision will be available for children and young people in the Ards and North Down Area at the right time and at the right place based on available resources
	2.2 Based on available resources (Youth Service funding and other earmarked funding) early intervention and prevention programmes will be delivered in Ards and North Down based on the assessed needs of children and young people
	2.3 Develop and deliver, in partnership with other agencies and government departments, enhanced support for children and young people to meet assessed need in the Ards and North Down area
3. Evidence Informed	**3.1** In line with the RYDP the LYDP will use a Benefits Realisation Framework for reporting on delivery
	3.2 Information Systems will be used to support the development of evaluation and measurement of impact for local youth services in the Ards & North Down area
	3.3 Dynamic planning processes will drive a flexible, responsive approach to service design and delivery that allows for continuous adaptation based on new evidence, feedback and changing needs.

 **4. Empowering All Our Staff**	**4.1** Increase recruitment, improve retention and recognise and celebrate the role of volunteers in youth services in the Ards and North Down area in line with the EA Youth Work Volunteer Strategy 2023-2029
	4.2 A skilled local workforce will be developed and supported to meet the needs of children and young people within universal and early intervention/prevention through a localised training programme in line with the EA Youth Service Workforce Development Strategy

Within the following youth development plan, a targeted coding system is applied to selected headline goals to establish clear links with the overarching Stretch Goal. This focused approach enables specific areas of the programme to be tracked more closely, ensuring that key developmental priorities remain connected to the wider strategic intent. By coding particular goals rather than every element, the plan maintains both structure and flexibility, allowing for responsive adaptation to emerging needs and opportunities.

Strategic Theme	**1. Child and Young Person Centred**				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
1.1 Processes within the Ards & North Down Area will capture the views of children and young people to inform planning and delivery of services	**1.1.1** Ongoing assessment of needs and priorities of children and young people to effectively inform the planning and delivery of services through consultations through LAG, Youth Voice, Local Voice and other relevant surveys/mechanisms.				Findings from consultations collated and published.
	1.1.2 Consult with children and young people to identify their needs against a particular theme to effectively inform the planning and delivery of services on a quarterly basis.				Findings from consultations collated and published.
	1.1.3 Ongoing review of feedback on the voices of children and young people and how EA has used the information to inform its decisions provided publicly for children and young people.				Young person friendly report published online annually for children and young people to access feedback on what they said and how EA used the information to inform its decisions.
1.2 The Ards & North Down Action Plan will respond to the changing assessed needs of children and young people	**1.2.1** Children and young people will be engaged to review data and to seek their views on how youth services can help address their changing needs.				Revision and update to the annual local action plans based on the assessed need
	1.2.2 Biannual review of Local Action Plan completed, with updates made based on the Assessed Needs of children and young people.				Revision and update to the local youth action plan based on the identified needs

Strategic Theme	2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through relevant Partnerships				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
2.1 Accessible universal youth provision will be available for children and young people in the Ards & North Down Area at the right time and at the right place based on available resources	**2.1.1 Deliver Statutory Universal Services:** Provide safe, warm, and welcoming open access youth services through existing statutory provision, guided by local needs and available resources				BU1, BU2, BU3 BEI9
	2.1.2 Support Volunteer Led Provision Allocate generic non targeted funding to volunteer led organisations to deliver inclusive, open access youth programmes.				BU1, BU2, BU3 BEI9
	2.1.3 Fund Voluntary Youth Organisations Universal Services: Use local area-based funding to support voluntary youth organisations in delivering universal youth work that reflects local priorities.				BU1, BU2, BU3 BEI9
	2.1.4 Implement Youth Work Curriculum: Deliver youth work in line with *A Model for Effective Practice*, Department of Education policy, and priority age bands to ensure consistency and quality.				BU1, BU2, BU3 BEI1, BEI2, BEI3, BEI9
	2.1.5 Support Learning and Achievement Create accessible pathways for learning, accreditation, and personal growth through youth work.				BU5, BU6, BEI1, BEI2, BEI4, BEI9

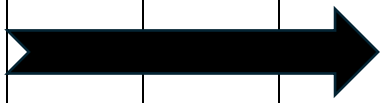
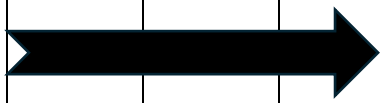
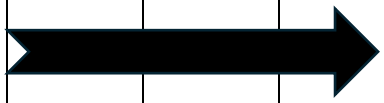
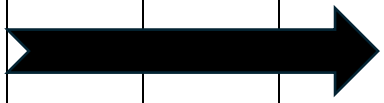
Strategic Theme	2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through relevant Partnerships				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
	2.1.6 Strengthen Youth Voice Structures: Support youth voice groups to ensure young people influence planning and delivery.				BU5, BU6, BEI9
	2.1.7 Support Emotional Health & Wellbeing: Incorporate wellbeing into youth work through activities that build resilience, confidence, and coping skills.				BU1, BU2, BU6, BEI1, BEI2, BEI6, BEI9
	2.1.8 Advance CRED & Shared Education: Deliver programmes that promote community relations, equality, diversity, and inclusion, and build connections across communities.				BU6, BEI1, BEI2, BEI3, BEI9
	2.1.9 Promote Healthy Play & Physical Activity: Facilitate regular opportunities for movement, fun, and creative play to support emotional regulation and physical wellbeing.				BU1, BU2, BU3, BU6, BEI1, BEI2, BEI9
	2.1.10 Enable Youth Volunteering & Leadership: Encourage young people to lead and contribute to youth led initiatives that build skills and confidence.				BU4, BU6, BEI5, BEI7, BEI9

Strategic Theme	2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through relevant Partnerships				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
	2.1.11 Enhance Outreach & Awareness: Increase visibility of youth services through outreach, especially in contested spaces and among minority communities.				BU2, BEI2, BEI6
	2.1.12 Integrate Environmental Awareness: Include sustainability and climate focused activities in youth programmes to reflect young people's environmental concerns.				BU6, BEI1, BEI2, BEI9
	2.1.13 Deliver Life Skills for Employment: Provide practical programmes focused on employability, financial literacy, and job readiness.				BU5, BU6, BEI4, BEI9
2.2 Based on available resources (Youth Service funding and other earmarked funding) early intervention and prevention programmes will be delivered in Ards & North Down based on the assessed needs of children and young people	**2.2.1 Tackle Barriers to Learning and Achievement:** Support vulnerable and marginalised young people through school based and community programmes that address educational inequality and promote positive transitions.				BEI1, BEI2, BEI4, BEI9, BES1
	2.2.2 Expand Horizons Locally and Globally: Facilitate youth work experiences at local, national, and international levels to build confidence, cultural awareness, and aspiration.				BEI1, BEI2, BEI3, BEI9.

Strategic Theme	2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through relevant Partnerships				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
	2.2.3 Prevent Violence and Harm: Implement youth work programmes that address violence against women and girls (EVAWG), hate crime, racism, and child criminal exploitation through education, peer support, and advocacy.				BEI1, BEI2, BEI6, BEI9, BES2, BES3.
	2.2.4 Work to reduce Cultural Tensions and Interface Issues: Deliver preventative youth work in areas and times of heightened cultural tension, including contested spaces and interfaces, to promote dialogue and reduce conflict.				BEI1, BEI2, BEI9, BES1, BES4
	2.2.5 Promote Equality and Inclusion: Strengthen access and participation for Section 75 groups through inclusive programming and community relations work.				BEI1, BEI2, BEI3, BEI9
	2.2.6 Address Risk Taking Behaviours: Provide preventative education and support around substance misuse, including drugs, alcohol, and vaping, with a focus on harm reduction and informed choices.				BEI1, BEI2, BEI6, BEI9, BES2, BES3

Strategic Theme	2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through relevant Partnerships				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
	2.2.7 Build Digital Resilience and Online Safety: Equip young people with the skills to navigate online spaces safely, manage digital risks, and build healthy digital habits.				BEI1, BEI2, BEI9
	2.2.8 Support Environmental Awareness and Action: Engage young people in youth led sustainability initiatives that promote environmental responsibility and community impact.				BEI1, BEI2, BEI9
	2.2.9 Strengthen Youth Participation and Voice: Create meaningful opportunities for young people to influence programme design, policy, and decision making at local and regional levels.				BU6, BEI4, BEI9
2.3 Develop and deliver, in partnership with other agencies and government departments, enhanced support for children and young people to meet assessed need in the Ards &	**2.3.1** Identification of partnership and Collaboration Projects/Programmes to support addressing the identified and ongoing needs of children and young people for this planning period (PCSP, school, CYPSP).				BES1, BES2, BES3, BES4, BES5, BES6

Strategic Theme	**2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through relevant Partnerships**				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
North Down area	**2.3.2** Ongoing critical self-reflection and evaluation of the effectiveness of processes and delivery of youth work in partnership				BES4, BES5, BES6

Strategic Theme	**3. Evidence Informed**				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
3.1 In line with the RYDP the LYDP will use a Benefits Realisation Framework for reporting on delivery In line with the RYDP the LYDP will use a Benefits Realisation Framework for reporting on delivery	**3.1.1** Implementation of the Benefits Framework outlined on page 6 for the delivery of EA statutory and EA voluntary funded youth work delivery				Benefits framework embedded into all youth service reporting
	3.1.2 Annual Reporting for EA Funded Youth Work, including an evaluation of the impact delivery is making on the lives of children and young people and any recommendations to change delivery approach based on evidence presented				Annual Reporting completed
3.2 Information Systems will be used to support the development of evaluation and measurement of impact for local youth services in the Ards & North Down area	**3.2.1** Supporting and contributing to research with academic institutions to map and evaluate benefits realisation data, including its impact				Contribution to research paper that informs aspects of future youth work planning or delivery
3.3 Dynamic planning processes will drive a flexible, responsive approach to service design and delivery that allows for continuous adaptation based on new evidence, feedback and changing needs.	**3.3.1** Endorsing and supporting pilot initiatives that assess the quality of youth work delivery through local universal open access and early intervention programmes.				Pilot initiatives completed and evaluated, with documented findings informing aspects of future youth work planning or delivery.

Strategic Theme	**4. Empowering All Our Staff**				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
4.1 Increase recruitment, improve retention and recognise and celebrate the role of volunteers in youth services in the Ards & North Down area in line with the EA Youth Work Volunteer Strategy 2023-2029 Increase recruitment, improve retention and recognise and celebrate the role of volunteers in youth services in the Ards & North Down area in line with the EA Youth Work Volunteer Strategy 2023-2029	**4.1.1** Local Volunteer Celebration and Recognition events programme aligned to the annual National Volunteer Week (1-7 June) (Volunteer Strategy Theme: Celebrating the contribution of Volunteers in Youth Work)				Programme established and agreed by 1 May 2026 and delivered over 1-7 June 2026 locally BU4, BEI5
	4.1.2 Delivery of a programme of activities and actions for EA statutory youth work volunteers in line with the EA Volunteer Strategy themes.				Delivery of activities and actions in support of the volunteer strategy in place and successfully delivered with the engagement of EA Statutory Youth Service volunteers BU4, BEI5, BEI7, BEI8
4.2 A skilled local workforce will be developed and supported to meet the needs of children and young people within universal and early intervention/ prevention through a localised training programme in line with the EA Youth Service Workforce Development Strategy	**4.2.1** Implement and support training to ensure a skilled workforce meets the evolving needs of children and young people, aligned with the Workforce Development Strategy.				Staff trained annually through programmes aligned with the EA Youth Service Workforce Development Strategy Staff feel knowledgeable around the need of children and young people Staff feel confident in addressing those needs BU7, BU8, BEI7, BEI8, BES5, BES6