

ARMAGH, BANBRIDGE & CRAIGAVON

LOCAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2026 - 2029

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Introduction and Background

The Education Authority (EA) Local Youth Development Action Plan for 2026-2029 for Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon outlines the key targets to be achieved by the EA Youth Service, based on the Local Assessment of Need for 2026. This is delivered in accordance with the Department of Education (DE) Policy, 'Priorities for Youth.' The plan will be reviewed regularly, and progress will be reported in line with the Regional Youth Development Plan 2026-29 and the framework of the EA's Strategic Plan (2017-2027) and Corporate Business Plan. The resources provided to the Education Authority Youth Service by the Department of Education are deployed in accordance with the local plan to achieve specific, policy led objectives, outputs, and outcomes. Key actions within this Local Area Youth Development Plan are informed by the Local Assessment of Need, Local Statistical Profiles, Regional Assessment of Need and the Regional Youth Development Plan.

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

Since its establishment on 1st April 2015, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council (ABC Council) has grown into Northern Ireland's second largest council, with a population now estimated at 221,754. This diverse and expanding community is anchored by three major urban hubs Armagh City, Craigavon Urban Area (including Portadown, Central Craigavon and Lurgan) and Banbridge, alongside six smaller towns, 29 villages, and 66 small settlements.

Children and young people are a vital part of this community. With 72,476 residents aged 4 to 25, they represent 32.7% of the borough's population, living across both urban and rural settings, 52.8% in larger towns and city, and 47.2% in rural areas.

To support every young person, regardless of where they live, the Youth Work team across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon delivers a wide range of services, including centre-based provision, area youth workers, outreach programmes and through partnerships with voluntary sector organisations.

The Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Local Youth Development Plan 2026 – 2029 sets out how youth services will support children and young people over the next three years. Developed in collaboration with young people, local communities, youth workers and partner organisations, the plan is shaped by what young people have told us they need and the real challenges they face, such as emotional health, feeling safe, having places to go and support with education and employment.

Aligned with key regional policies such as Priorities for Youth, the Children and Young People's Strategy, and the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy, the plan places young people's voices and lived experiences at its core. It recognises the complex realities they navigate from emotional health pressures and social isolation to economic uncertainty and the impact of digital life.

These experiences are not just statistics; they are the everyday truths of young people navigating their way through adolescence and early adulthood in a changing world. By listening deeply and responding meaningfully, we aim to ensure youth services are not only accessible but relevant to their lives.

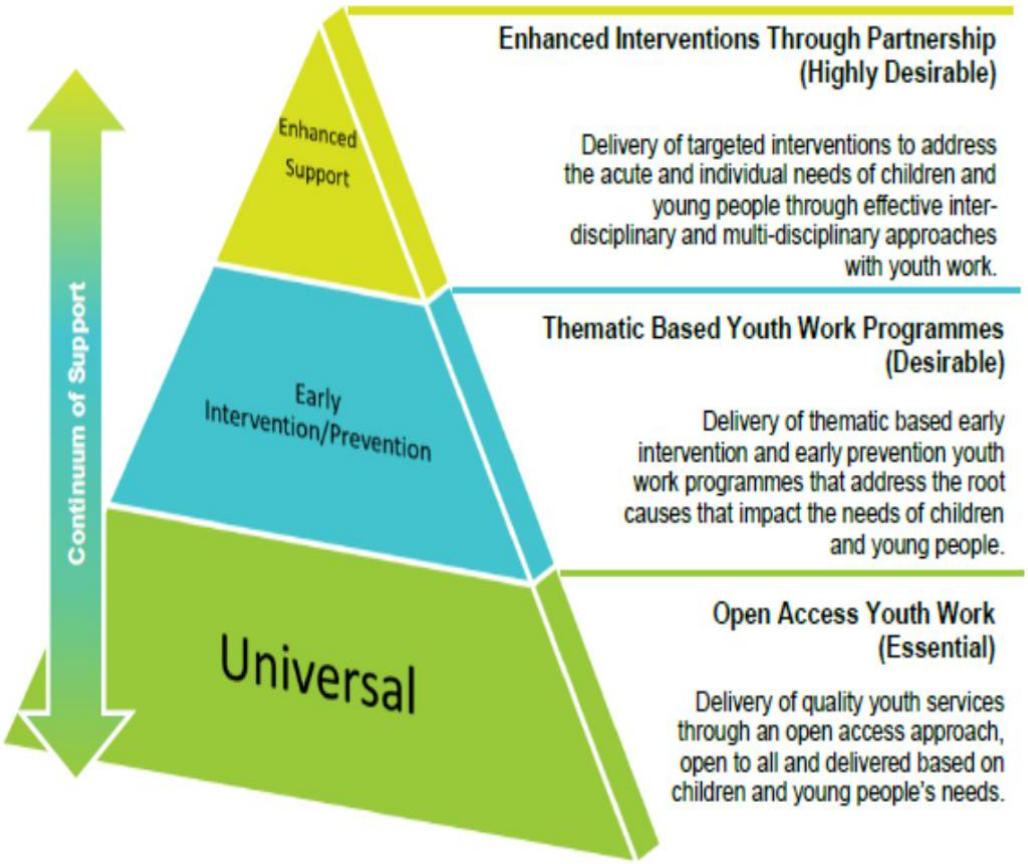
Led by the Senior Youth Officer and the Local Advisory Group, the plan will be regularly reviewed to remain responsive to young people's evolving needs.

Our vision is for youth services to be welcoming, inclusive spaces where young people feel safe, supported and inspired. Places where they can be themselves, connect with others and build the skills and confidence they need to thrive; personally, socially and emotionally. We are committed to creating opportunities for young people to lead, learn and feel proud of who they are. Through meaningful engagement, skill development and leadership roles, youth work will continue to bring communities together and ensure every young person feels valued and respected. Above all, we want every young person in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon to feel confident, connected and hopeful about their future, knowing that youth services are there to support them every step of the way.

Introduction to Youth Service Delivery Model Part 1a

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 (Part 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.



Stretch Goal Model Part 1b

STRETCH GOAL Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon		
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.	Providing ongoing **thematic based group work programmes and projects** to address the **root causes impacting the needs** of children and young people.	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.
How will we do it?		
• Providing adequate universal youth provision for children and young people in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, ensuring that statutory and voluntary 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 • Services are equipped with the resources to deliver a quality open access youth work programme of offer • Capacity of staff in Armagh, Banbridge and	• 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 Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon 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 staff in Armagh, Banbridge and	• Providing resources (curriculum, training and funding) to facilitate enhanced professional development • Working with partners and agencies to deliver bespoke support services at an individual and group level on the issues faced by young people who are under threat of paramilitary violence or at risk of recruitment into criminal groups – ENGAGE • Supporting young people who attend A&E offering emotional support and connecting them with services - CONNECT • 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

Craigavon is supported to meet the needs of children and young people presented through universal provision	Craigavon is supported to meet the needs through the delivery of early intervention and prevention programmes/projects	• Supporting young people to progress through early intervention and prevention programmes or connect with universal support
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 **BU5.** Number of young people gaining accreditation	**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 **BEI5.** Number of young people volunteering within the project **BEI6.** Number of referrals to external or	**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 **BES4.** Number of children and young people progressing against one or more of the youth work outcomes **BES5.** Number of training programmes

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	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	provided **BES6.** Number of staff participating in training

Voice of children and young people and other key stakeholders in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon

Children, young people and stakeholders across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon have spoken clearly about the issues that shape their lives and influence their futures. Many described the impact of socio-economic disadvantage, where financial hardship not only affects opportunities but also contributes to rising anxiety, poor mental health and limited belief in future possibilities. Young people living in rural areas highlighted how poverty can create isolation, reduce mobility and restrict access to the same opportunities enjoyed by others, leaving them feeling excluded. Alongside these challenges, there is a growing awareness of environmental concerns, with climate change and its long-term impact seen as an issue that directly affects their generation.

Play, leisure and fun were highlighted as central to healthy childhood and adolescence. Young people want safe, accessible spaces where they can relax, be active and enjoy themselves. They spoke about the importance of having opportunities for stimulation, physical activity and secure environments where they can express themselves freely, connect with others and develop confidence.

Emotional health and wellbeing were identified as some of the most pressing concerns. Many young people talked about experiencing anxiety and pressure linked to academic expectations. They highlighted the need for safe, inclusive spaces where they can find support, build resilience and feel accepted. Issues such as bullying, body shaming and low self-esteem were frequently mentioned, with young people acknowledging how these can damage confidence, relationships and mental health. A heavy reliance on screens and online activity was also raised, with some noting that it can limit physical activity and reduce opportunities for real connection.

Safety and stability remain a priority for young people across the area. They raised concerns about exposure to domestic abuse, substance misuse, anti-social behaviour and violence against women and girls. The negative impact of social media, including online violence and cyberbullying, was also strongly voiced. Poverty continues to restrict access to basic needs and opportunities, while young people from minority ethnic backgrounds reported experiences of racism and discrimination. Stakeholders also noted the persistence of community division and the ongoing need for peacebuilding, with road safety and exposure to unsafe driving behaviours emerging as further concerns.

Education and learning were described as both a challenge and an opportunity. Young people recognised the barriers created by educational underachievement, lack of access to inclusive support and the difficulty of staying engaged in formal education. They want education that is accessible and responsive, with early intervention to support vulnerable groups and clear pathways into employment. Opportunities to widen experiences, build skills, improve communication and be challenged in positive ways were all seen as vital to helping them achieve their full potential.

Young people also spoke about the importance of respect, equality and good relations. Many highlighted the ongoing impact of racism, discrimination and community division and called for more inclusive, respectful environments where diversity is celebrated. Safe spaces that encourage dialogue and promote peacebuilding were seen as essential for helping communities move forward together.

Finally, young people expressed a strong desire to make a positive contribution to society. They want to be respected, trusted and given the responsibility to take initiative. Having secure environments where they can share their feelings, explore opinions and engage in political and community life was highlighted as key. Young people are ready to play their part in shaping a better future, but they want their voices to be heard, valued and acted upon.

Meeting these diverse and interconnected needs requires a coordinated, inclusive and youth-centred approach. It requires strong partnerships between statutory services, voluntary sector organisation, schools, families and most importantly young people themselves. By listening to their voices, valuing their experiences and investing in their potential, we can create a future where every child and young person in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon feels safe, supported and empowered to thrive.

It is important to note the Regional Assessment of Need (RAON) and the Regional Youth Development Plan (RYDP) are key drivers of the Department of Education (DE) supported youth provision and the setting of Regional Priorities, whilst this is considered at a local level, the development of a Local Assessment of Need (LAON) and localised stakeholder engagement supports the development of relevant priorities for this Local Youth Development Plan (LYDP) outlined in the following sections.

Priorities for Delivery

Children and young people across Armagh, Banbridge, and Craigavon whether from rural or urban areas will have their needs met through a combination of Universal Youth Provision and Early Prevention Intervention youth work programmes. Guided by the Youth Work Curriculum and 'A Model for Effective Practice', these services are designed to be high quality, inclusive and focused on what young people actually need. This means supporting personal and social development while directly addressing local priorities identified in the Regional Assessment of Need.

At the heart of this approach is making sure there are safe, welcoming and supportive spaces that are easy to access, open to everyone and available at times that suit young people, such as evenings, weekends and holidays periods. Youth centres and community venues offer trusted environments where young people can get information on issues that matter to them, explore their interests and feel respected and included. There is a strong focus on reaching those who face barriers to participation, including section 75 groups and those interested in Irish-medium youth work.

Local youth services across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon are shaped by the voices of children and young people, who have identified priorities such as ending violence against women and girls, improving community relations, supporting emotional wellbeing, addressing risk-taking behaviours and preparing for education and employment. These priorities will continue to be reviewed and updated as needs change ensuring services remain relevant and accessible for all young people in Armagh, Banbridge, and Craigavon and supporting them every step of the way in their educational and personal and social development journey. (*These priorities are subject to ongoing review and will be dependent on resources available)*.

The Voices of Children and Young people across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon have highlighted in the first instance the following key priorities for Universal Youth Provision:

Economic and Environmental Stability

Children and young people in Armagh, Banbridge, and Craigavon have shared how financial pressures, rural isolation and environmental worries affect their wellbeing and limit their future opportunities. Universal Youth Provision can help address these challenges by offering mentoring, life skills workshops and outreach sessions that support inclusion and resilience. By also enabling young people to take part in local environmental projects like community gardening, recycling and youth-led clean ups, these programmes help young people feel empowered, connected and more hopeful about their future.

Access to Play & leisure

Young people emphasised the need for safe, accessible spaces to relax, be physically active, connect socially, and express themselves creatively. Universal Youth Provision can meet these needs by offering a wide range of opportunities, from sports, arts and music to outdoor challenges and creative projects. These activities can help young people explore interests, build friendships, develop teamwork skills and acquire confidence, while also encouraging positive choices and reducing engagement in risk-taking behaviours.

Emotional Health & Wellbeing

Emotional health and wellbeing are essential for all young people. In Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, many have shared experiences of anxiety, low self-esteem, bullying and pressure from school and

social media. Universal Youth Provision can support young people in building resilience, self-awareness and coping strategies through accessible peer support networks, mentoring and wellbeing-focused activities. By creating safe spaces and encouraging self-expression through creative outlets, it can help young people feel more confident, emotionally secure.

Living in Safety and Stability

Young people have raised concerns about domestic abuse, violence against women and girls, substance misuse, criminal exploitation, anti-social behaviour, bullying, online harm and discrimination. Universal Youth Provision can provide safe, inclusive spaces where young people feel protected, supported and treated equally. Through trusted relationships, positive role models and peer-led initiatives, it can offer guidance, help develop positive decision-making skills and promote safer communities. By supporting peer-led campaigns, road safety initiatives and enabling young people to take an active role in creating inclusive environments, Universal Provision can help them feel secure, respected and empowered to avoid risk-taking behaviours.

Learning and Achieving

Barriers to learning, underachievement, and limited engagement, especially among those at risk of disengagement, highlight the need for accessible and inclusive opportunities. Universal Youth Provision can address these challenges by offering a range of learning experiences, such as transition initiatives, study support sessions, creative and vocational projects and practical workshops. These activities help young people develop essential skills, build confidence and promote teamwork and leadership. By also providing pathways into employment, volunteering and further learning, Universal Provision supports young people to achieve their goals and reach their full potential.

Good Relations and Equality

Respect, equality and stronger community connections are important to young people and Universal Youth Provision can help achieve these by bringing diverse groups together through cultural awareness sessions, youth-led discussions and shared projects that promotes acceptance and understanding. By providing safe spaces for interaction, supporting initiatives that challenge prejudice including sectarianism and racism and enabling collaborative activities such as Good Relations group projects, Universal Provision promotes inclusion and helps build understanding, ultimately strengthening relationships across communities.

Making a Positive Contribution to Society

Young people want to be respected, trusted and actively involved in shaping their communities. Universal Youth Provision can support youth voice through councils, focus groups, consultations and campaigns, offering meaningful opportunities for young people to lead, share ideas and influence decisions that affect them. By promoting leadership, confidence and teamwork and enabling young people to take responsibility and contribute to local initiatives, Universal Provision helps them feel valued and empowered in their rights and roles within their community.

Universal Provision Early Intervention & Prevention Priorities

In Armagh, Banbridge, and Craigavon, early intervention and early prevention youth work will focus on supporting children and young people who are beginning to face challenges or show signs of vulnerability. By providing timely support, these efforts aim to stop issues from becoming more serious and to improve long-term outcomes. Early intervention youth work offers safe spaces, positive relationships and tailored support that help young people build resilience, develop coping strategies

and to resist negative peer pressure and stay connected to positive influences in their lives. The work will be shaped by the priorities identified by young people and delivered in partnership with other organisations where needed, ensuring an impactful response for those who need it most.

Within the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon thematic areas that should be delivered through Early Intervention and Prevention youth work will focus on the following:

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Young people across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon noted they are increasingly experiencing anxiety, emotional distress and low self-esteem, often without access to timely support. Contributing factors include academic pressure, bullying, body image concerns, and a lack of safe, supportive environments. Early intervention and early prevention youth work can provide a vital first line of support, offering a listening ear, emotional wellbeing programmes and activities that help young people understand and manage their feelings. This early support helps prevent issues from escalating and promotes positive mental health and resilience.

Addressing Barriers to Learning

Underachievement and disengagement from education remains a challenge for many children and young people across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon. For those facing additional barriers, such as special educational needs, language and cultural differences, or difficult personal circumstances, the risk of falling behind or disconnecting from learning is even greater. Early intervention youth work is a vital response to these challenges. By offering informal and accredited educational opportunities, youth work helps bridge the gap between young people and learning, especially for those who may not thrive in formal educational settings.

For those already disengaged from education, youth work can be a turning point rebuilding trust, boosting self-esteem and opening up alternative pathways to personal success and achievement. Through early intervention, we can help ensure that all young people in our area have the support they need to overcome barriers, re-engage with learning and realise their ambitions.

Schools are also a key setting for youth work, providing essential support during transitions, addressing barriers to learning and promoting emotional wellbeing. Young people have identified exam stress, relationship challenges, and educational inequality as areas where additional support is needed. By working in partnership with schools, youth workers help create more inclusive and supportive learning environments.

Safety and Stability

Early intervention and prevention youth work is a vital tool in tackling the complex challenges faced by young people across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, particularly in efforts to end violence against women and girls (EVAWG). It promotes respectful relationships, challenges harmful attitudes and creates safe, inclusive spaces where young people, especially girls, can speak out, feel heard and access support.

Equally important is engaging boys and young men in gender-based youth work that challenges harmful stereotypes and builds self-awareness, empathy and healthy relationship, empowering them to be positive role models and help create safer communities across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon.

Young people in this area are also increasingly exposed to online risks such as cyberbullying and exploitation. Many also face instability at home or within their communities, including exposure to

domestic abuse, antisocial behaviour, racism and criminal exploitation both online and offline. These issues are not isolated; they are everyday realities for many young people living in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon.

Early intervention youth work supports young people to navigate these risks, connect with support services and to build the skills and resilience needed to stay safe. For newcomer children and young people, who may be adjusting to unfamiliar systems, facing language barriers, or experiencing cultural isolation and discrimination, this support is especially important.

Through group work, outreach and informal education, youth work in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon can build safer peer networks and strengthen community connections. It prioritises safety, inclusion and wellbeing, empowering young people to challenge inequality, build resilience and contribute to a culture of respect and safety in their communities and online spaces.

Youth Participation and Voice

Young people across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon often feel excluded from decisions that affect their lives. Early intervention youth work creates inclusive spaces where their voices are heard and valued from the outset. By engaging young people in area-wide Youth Voice initiatives, local youth forums, creative projects and leadership opportunities, youth work builds confidence and ensures their perspectives help shape meaningful decisions.

Youth-led initiatives also play a vital role in promoting environmental awareness and sustainability through education, action and community engagement, empowering young people to take ownership of the issues that matter to them and their communities.

Good Relations and Inclusion

Experiences of racism, sectarianism, discrimination, and exclusion deeply affect young people's sense of identity and belonging across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon. Early intervention and early prevention youth work promotes inclusion by bringing diverse groups together at an early stage, challenging prejudice and celebrating cultural identity through initiatives like T:BUC. Programmes that focus on empathy and shared experiences help build understanding, break down barriers and promote stronger relationships within communities.

Widening Experiences - Expanding Aspirations and Access

Many young people across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon want to explore new experiences, develop skills, and plan for their future, but often face barriers to accessing opportunities. Early intervention youth work supports them to act on these interests by providing access to volunteering and career pathways, including local, national and international opportunities. These experiences help young people build confidence, broaden their horizons and gain valuable skills and networks for a positive future.

The Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Local Youth Development Action Plan 2026–2029 provides a clear pathway for youth services over the next three years. It combines Universal Provision for all children and young people with early intervention/prevention for those experiencing challenges.

To explore specific themes relevant to individual District Electoral Areas (DEAs), please refer to the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Local Assessment of Needs.

This plan is built on what children and young people have told us matters most to them: feeling safe, being supported, having access to opportunities and being respected as active participants in their

communities. It reflects both local needs and regional priorities, ensuring services are consistent, evidence-led and impactful.

Above all, this plan places young people at the centre. By investing in high-quality youth work, strengthening partnerships, we can ensure that every young person in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon feels confident, connected and hopeful about their future.

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 Armagh Banbridge Craigavon 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.

Enhanced Support

Within the scope of Enhanced Support, a range of targeted interventions are also being implemented in Armagh Banbridge Craigavon area which also involves working in partnership with other agencies to meet the acute needs of children and young people. These include:

Connect Hospital

This programme provides enhanced support to young people impacted by paramilitarism, criminality and violence at the Craigavon Area Hospital

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

Strategic Approach to Youth Services

Planning for youth services across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon is shaped by the four regional strategic themes emerging from the Regional Assessment of Need and the Regional Youth Development Plan. These themes provide the framework for local delivery and ensure that services are consistent with regional priorities while tailored to local need throughout the three-year planning period.

Youth services in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon will:

- Be youth centred and rights based: ensuring that children and young people's voices are at the heart of design, delivery and evaluation.
- Be inclusive and responsive: reaching across rural and urban communities and recognising the needs of vulnerable groups of children and young.
- Be informed by evidence and lived experience: using data, consultation and ongoing engagement to ensure provision stays relevant and impactful.
- Be delivered by a confident and supported workforce: ensuring youth workers are equipped with the skills, training and resources to respond effectively to evolving needs.



Child and Young Person Centred

In Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, youth services will be planned and delivered with a child and young person centred, rights-based approach.

Voices from across all seven DEAs will be heard, recognising diverse urban and rural experiences.

Priorities will be shaped through ongoing engagement, consultation and youth-led forums, with a clear feedback loop showing how young people's input will be reflected in decisions.



Delivering Services Based on Need and through Partnership

In Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, youth services will be accessible, inclusive and tailored to local needs, reflecting both the rural and urban character of the area and the diversity of its communities, especially vulnerable children.

Collaboration with local youth organisations, stakeholders and young people will be central, with partnerships driven by a shared commitment to improving outcomes and impact.

Every young person will be supported, heard and valued within their community.

Evidence Informed

In Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, we will listen to young people, parents/guardians, staff and partners to learn what's working and where we can do better.

By gathering feedback and the information that matters most, we'll see the real impact youth work has on young people's lives.

This insight will help us make informed decisions, improve what we offer, and ensure our services continue to meet the needs of children and young people.



Empowering All our Staff

In Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, we'll make sure everyone involved in the youth work sector has the right training, resources and support to help young people thrive.

We want staff and volunteers to feel confident and ready to meet the changing needs of young people, share new ideas and keep standards high across the area.

By supporting our youth workers and volunteers, we're creating spaces where young people feel safe, inspired and empowered to build their future with confidence.

2026-2029 Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon 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 Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Area will capture the views of children and young people to inform planning and delivery of services
	1.2 The Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon 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 is available at the right time and place across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, based on available resources.
	2.2 Based on available resources (Youth Service funding and other earmarked funding) universal & early intervention and prevention programmes will be delivered in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon based on the locally 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 Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon 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 RYDP research will be used to support the development of evaluation and measurement of impact for local youth services in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon area
	3.3 Pilots and tests of concepts will be used to evidence impact and inform future planning and delivery

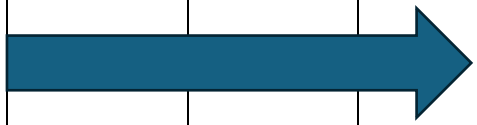
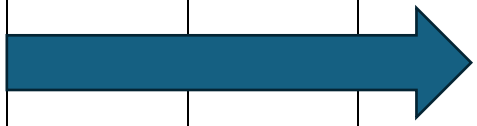
 **4. Empowering All Our Staff**	**4.1** Increase recruitment, improve retention and recognise and celebrate the role of volunteers in youth services in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon area in line with the EA Youth Work Volunteer Strategy 2023-2029
	4.2 A skilled local workforce will be developed and 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

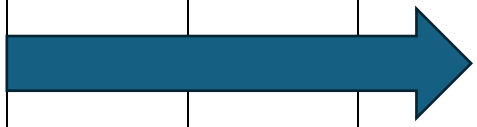
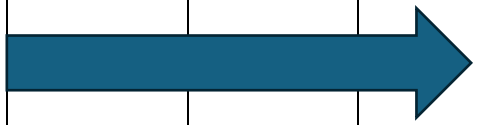
This action plan outlines how key actions, aligned with strategic themes and headline goals, will deliver meaningful impact for children and young people across youth services in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon. Young people's voices are central to the plan, helping shape the services that affect them. Actions are phased over three years, with clear goals, practical steps and ways to measure progress and impact. The plan ensures accountability, flexibility and a focus on real change for children and young people.

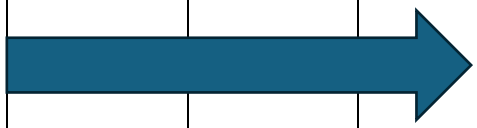
Strategic Theme	**1. Child and Young Person Centered**				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
1.1 Processes within the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Area will capture the views of children and young people to inform planning and 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, using consultations through LAG, Youth Voice, Local Voice and other relevant surveys				**Key Outputs:** Maintain a robust and responsive evidence base through continuous assessment of children and young people's needs and priorities, using mechanisms such as LAG, Youth Voice, Local Voice and relevant surveys to inform the planning and delivery of effective youth services Action Plans are revised based on youth input, with evidence of biannual reviews reflecting changing needs
	1.1.2 Consult children and young people to identify their needs on a particular theme through surveys and stakeholder engagement events to effectively inform the planning and delivery of services				**Key Outputs:** Engage children and young people in meaningful consultation on specific themes through surveys and stakeholder events, ensuring their insights directly shape the planning and delivery of relevant youth services Local consultation and stakeholder engagement events to test survey results and further capture the views of Children and Young People on how Youth Services can address their identified needs

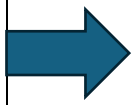
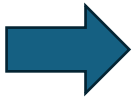
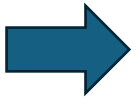
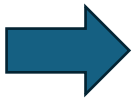
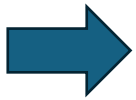
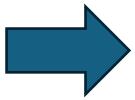
Strategic Theme	**1. Child and Young Person Centered**				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
	1.1.3 Ongoing review of the voices of children and young people and feedback on how Education Authority has used the information to inform its planning and delivery of services				**Key Output:** Children and young people's views are continuously reviewed and used to inform Education Authority youth service planning. Feedback is provided to demonstrate how their input has shaped decisions, ensuring transparency and accountability and continuous improvement.
1.2 The Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon 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				**Key Output:** 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				**Key Output:** Revision and update to the annual local action plans based on the assessed need

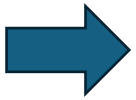
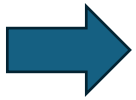
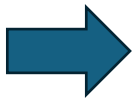
Strategic Theme	2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through enhanced Partnerships				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
2.1 Accessible, universal youth provision is available at the right time and place across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, based on available resources	2.1.1 Delivery of safe adequate universal open access youth services delivered through existing Statutory youth provision based on identified needs and available resources, aligned with A Model for Effective Practice, DE Policy and priority age bands				**Key Output:** The delivery of safe, inclusive adequate open-access youth services through Statutory Youth provision, where delivery reflects identified local needs **Key Benefit Indicators:** BU1, BU2, BU3, BU6
	2.1.2 Delivery of safe adequate universal open access youth services supported by Generic Non-Targeted funding through volunteer led organisations, aligned with A Model for Effective Practice, DE Policy and priority age bands				**Key Output:** The delivery of safe, adequate, and inclusive open-access youth services through volunteer-led organisations funded by Generic Non-Targeted Funding, ensuring provision reflects local needs **Key Benefit Indicators:** BU1, BU2, BU3, BU6
	2.1.3 Delivery of safe adequate universal open access youth services supported by Local Area Based Funding in the Voluntary Youth Sector based on identified needs and available resource, aligned with A Model for Effective Practice, DE Policy and priority age bands				**Key Output:** Deliver safe, adequate, and inclusive open-access youth services in the Voluntary Youth Sector, supported by Local Area Based Funding, where provision reflects identified local needs **Key Benefit Indicators:** BU1, BU2, BU3, BU6

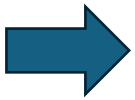
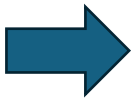
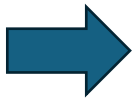
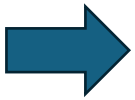
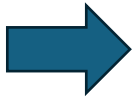
Strategic Theme	2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through enhanced Partnerships				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
	2.1.4 Promote and develop the voice of children and young people in all aspects of service planning and delivery				**Key Output:** Promote and embed the voice of children and young people in all aspects of service planning, delivery and evaluation, ensuring their views shape decisions, influence practice and lead to meaningful change **Key Benefit Indicators:** BU3, BU6, BEI9
	2.1.5 Encourage Healthy Play and Physical Activity Facilitate regular opportunities for fun, movement and creative play to support emotional regulation, social skills and physical wellbeing				**Key Output:** Youth work Programme that promotes healthy play and physical activity by providing regular, engaging opportunities for movement and creative play that enhances young people's emotional wellbeing, social interaction and physical development **Key Benefit Indicators:** BU1, BU2, BU3, BU6
	2.1.6 Youth work activities that build emotional resilience, reduce anxiety and strengthen coping skills				**Key Output:** Youth work programmes that promote emotional wellbeing and personal growth, with young people reporting reduced anxiety, improved stress management and increased confidence and self-esteem through supportive, engaging experiences **Key Benefit Indicators:** BU1, BU2, BU3, BU6

Strategic Theme	2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through enhanced Partnerships				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
	2.1.7 Youth work programmes that reduce screen dependency and educate young people on digital safety and digital resilience				**Key Output:** Youth work programmes that reduce screen dependency and build digital resilience, empowering young people to make safer, healthier choices online through engaging, educational experiences that promote balanced digital habits **Key Benefit Indicators:** BU1, BU2, BU3, BU6
	2.1.8 Youth work programmes that provide accessible pathways for learning and achievement				**Key Output:** Youth work programmes that create accessible pathways for learning and achievement, enabling young people to develop new skills, gain recognition for their progress and build confidence in their personal and educational journeys **Key Benefit Indicators:** BU1, BU2, BU3, BU5, BU6
	2.1.9 Delivery of life skills programmes that equip young people with practical tools for personal development, employability, independent living and transferable life skills				**Key Output:** Life skills programmes that equip young people with the practical tools needed for personal development, employability, independent living, and success in everyday life, fostering confidence, adaptability, and long-term resilience **Key Benefit Indicators:** BU1, BU2, BU3, BU6

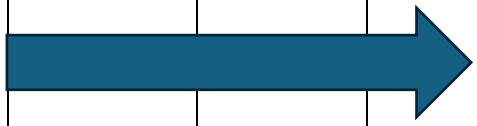
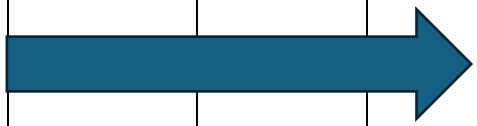
Strategic Theme	2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through enhanced Partnerships				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
	2.1.10 Youth work programmes focused on developing volunteering and leadership skills among young people				**Key Output:** Youth work programmes that nurture volunteering and leadership skills, empowering young people to take initiative, contribute to their communities and develop confidence, responsibility, and a sense of purpose **Key Benefit Indicators:** BU1, BU2, BU3, BU5 BU6
	2.1.11 Support young people to volunteer and lead youth-led initiatives, actively shaping their design and delivery				**Key Output:** Support young people to lead and shape youth-led initiatives, providing meaningful opportunities for them to design, deliver and evaluate programmes, while developing leadership, ownership, and active citizenship **Key Benefit Indicators:** BU1, BU2, B4, BU5 BU6
	2.1.12 Delivery of programmes that embed Community Relations, Equality & Diversity and Shared Education, promoting anti-racism, anti-sectarianism, and peacebuilding				**Key Output:** Programmes that embed Community Relations, Equality & Diversity and Shared Education, promoting anti-racism, anti-sectarianism and peacebuilding, while promoting mutual respect, inclusion and understanding among young people **Key Benefit Indicators:** BU1, BU2, BU3, BU5 BU6

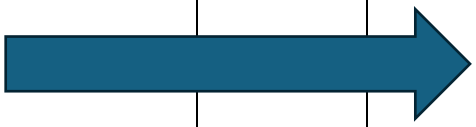
Strategic Theme	2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through enhanced Partnerships				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
2.2 Based on available resources (Youth Service funding and other earmarked funding), universal & early intervention and prevention programmes will be delivered in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon based on the locally assessed needs of children and young people	2.2.1 Youth work focuses on emotional health and wellbeing, helping young people understand and manage anxiety, challenge negative body image and respond to bullying				**Key Output:** Youth work programmes that support emotional health and wellbeing, helping young people to understand and manage anxiety, challenge negative body image, and respond effectively to bullying, while fostering resilience and self-worth **Key Benefit Indicators:** BEI1, BEI2, BEI4, BEI9, BES1, BES2, BES3
	2.2.2 Youth work focuses on addressing barriers to learning and increases young people's engagement and achievement by offering accessible non accredited and accredited pathways				**Key Output:** Youth work programmes that address barriers to learning by providing accessible accredited and non-accredited pathways, increasing young people's engagement, achievement, and confidence in their learning journey" **Key Benefit Indicators:** BEI1, BEI2, BEI4, BEI9
	2.2.3 Youth work that focuses on reducing risk-taking behaviours by increasing young people's awareness, resilience and capacity to make safer choices				**Key Output:** Youth work programmes that empower young people to reduce risk-taking behaviours by building awareness, strengthening resilience and supporting them to make informed, positive choices in challenging situations **Key Benefit Indicators:** BEI1, BEI2, BEI6, BEI9, BES2, BES3

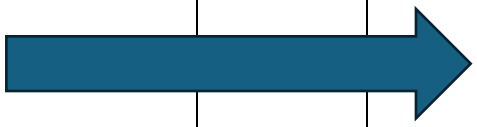
Strategic Theme	2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through enhanced Partnerships				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
	2.2.4 Youth work that supports initiatives to prevent violence against women and girls (EVAWG)				**Key Output:** Youth work programmes that support initiatives to prevent violence against women and girls (EVAWG), raising awareness, promoting respectful relationships, and empowering young people to challenge harmful attitudes and behaviours **Key Benefit Indicators:** BEI1, BEI2, BEI6, BEI9, BES2, BES3
	2.2.5 Youth work initiatives that educate and empower young people to recognise, resist and seek support around the risks of child criminal exploitation, through early intervention and ongoing support				**Key Output:** Youth work initiatives that educate and empower young people to recognise, resist, and seek support around the risks of child criminal exploitation, using early intervention and sustained support to build awareness, safety, and resilience" **Key Benefit Indicators:** BEI1, BEI2, BEI3, BEI6, BEI9 BES1, BES3
	2.2.6 Youth work initiatives that explore the impact of hate crime through early conversation and awareness raising activities that support understanding				**Key Output:** Youth work initiatives that explore the impact of hate crime through early conversations and awareness-raising activities, supporting young people to build empathy, challenge prejudice, and promote understanding and inclusion **Key Benefit Indicators:** BEI1, BEI2, BEI3, BEI5, BEI9

Strategic Theme	2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through enhanced Partnerships				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
	2.2.7 Youth work programmes that broaden young people's horizons through local, national, and international				**Key Output:** Youth work programmes that broaden young people's horizons through local, national and international opportunities, encouraging exploration, cultural exchange and a greater sense of global citizenship **Key Benefit Indicators:** BEI1, BEI2, BEI3, BEI4, BEI5, BEI6, BEI9
	2.2.8 Youth-led initiatives that promote environmental awareness and sustainability through education, action and community engagement				**Key Output:** Support youth-led initiatives that promote environmental awareness and sustainability through education, practical action and community engagement, empowering young people to become active citizens of their environment **Key Benefit Indicators:** BEI1, BEI2, BEI3, BEI4, BEI5, BEI6, BEI9
	2.2.9 Youth work programmes to strengthen and increase access for Section 75 groups – SEND, Travellers, Ethnic Minorities, Rural Youth and LGBTQIA+				**Key Output:** Youth work programmes that strengthen inclusion and increase access for Section 75 groups, including young people with SEND, Travellers, ethnic minorities, rural youth, and LGBTQIA+, ensuring equitable opportunities for participation, voice and achievement **Key Benefit Indicators:** BEI1, BEI2, BEI3, BEI4, BEI5, BEI6

Strategic Theme	2. Delivering Services Based on Need and through enhanced Partnerships				
Headline Goal	**Actions to Achieve Goal**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**How will we know it happened and worked?**
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 Armagh, Craigavon and Banbridge	2.3.1 Identify and establish partnerships and collaborative approaches to develop and deliver projects and programmes that address the assessed needs of children and young people				**Key Output:** Identify and establish strategic partnerships and collaborative approaches to co-design and deliver youth work projects that effectively respond to the assessed needs of children and young people **Key Benefit Indicators:** BES1, BES2, BES3, BES4, BES5, BES6
	2.3.2 Ongoing self-reflection and evaluation of youth work delivery in partnership to assess effectiveness and inform continuous improvement				**Key Output:** Embed ongoing self-reflection and collaborative evaluation in youth work delivery to assess effectiveness, strengthen partnerships and drive continuous improvement in meeting the needs of children and young people **Key Benefit Indicators:** 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	3.1.1 Implementation of the Benefits Framework outlined on page 6 & 7 for the delivery of EA statutory and EA voluntary funded youth work delivery				**Key Output:** 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				**Key Output:** Annual Reporting completed
3.2 RYDP research will be used to support the development of evaluation and measurement of impact for local youth services in the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon area	3.2.1 Supporting and contributing to research with academic institutions to map and evaluate benefits realisation data, including its impact				**Key Output:** Contribution to research paper that informs aspects of future youth work planning or delivery
3.3 Pilots and tests of concepts will be used to evidence impact and inform future planning and delivery	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				**Key Output:** Pilot initiatives completed and evaluated, with documented findings informing aspects of future youth work planning or delivery

Strategic Theme	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 Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon area in line with the EA Youth Work Volunteer Strategy 2023-2029	4.1.1Local 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)*				**Key Output:** Programme established and agreed by 1 May of each year and delivered during national volunteer week annually **Key Benefit Indicators:** BU4, BEI5
	4.1.2 Delivery of a programme of activities and actions for Education Authority statutory youth work volunteers in line with the EA Volunteer Strategy themes				**Key Output:** 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 **Key Benefit Indicators:** 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	4.2.1 Implement training to ensure a skilled workforce meets the evolving needs of children and young people, aligned with the EA Youth Service Workforce Development Strategy				**Key Output:** Staff trained through programmes aligned with the EA Youth Service Workforce Development Strategy **Key Benefit Indicators:** BU7, BU8, BEI7, BEI8
	4.2.2 Implement collaborative training with Voluntary sector partners to ensure a skilled workforce meets the evolving needs of children and young people				**Key Output:** Staff trained to ensure a skilled workforce to meet the new and emerging needs of children and young people **Key Benefit Indicators:** BU7, BU8, BEI7, BEI8

Workforce Development Strategy	4.2.3 Implement Training for part-time Staff to meet evolving needs of Children and Young People, aligned with Workforce Development Strategy				**Key Output:** Part time Staff trained annually through programmes aligned with the EA Youth Service Workforce Development Strategy **Key Benefit Indicators** BU7, BU8, BEI7, BEI8