Education Authority

2026 - 2029



DERRY & STRABANE

LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF NEED

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Introduction

The Education Authority (EA) Youth Service Local Assessment of Need is a key document outlined in the Department of Education's (DE) Youth Work Policy *Priorities for Youth (2013)* as it requires the Education Authority to ensure *'Planning, funding and the delivery of youth work will be based on the EA composite (local and regional) assessment of need.'*

The wider requirements and purpose of undertaking the assessment of need process is outlined in detail within the Regional Assessment of Need 2026-2029. This regional document provides further detail on the EA's statutory duty, other policy requirements and links to Northern Ireland Government strategies. It also sets the context within which these documents are being completed as well as the key purpose and functions the effective youth provision provides for children and young people. The regional document can be found here.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Regional Assessment of Need. Its key objective is to establish the level of need for Youth Service provision for children and young people aged 4-25 years in Derry and Strabane. It brings together data, evidence and local insight to help identify the needs and barriers children and young people in Derry and Strabane face. Listening to, and understanding, the voices and opinions of children and young people is an important part of this process.

Methodology

Following on from the methodology of the Regional Assessment of Need process, there were six parts to developing the Local Assessment of Need for in Derry and Strabane. The tools used to gather essential information and data for the regional document had the ability to be filtered at a local level and this supplied EA with an excellent resource to listen to and understand the direct voices of children and young people. Details of how this was achieved are laid out in the regional document.

Part One – Children and Young People's Survey

A survey for all children and young people aged 4-25 years was designed and developed by a project team set up within the Education Authority Youth Service based on the eight strategic outcomes of the Children and Young Peoples' Strategy 2020-2030. A total of 5,451 children and young people responded to the survey. From those figures 461 young people were from the Derry and Strabane Area.

Part Two – Children and Young People's Focus Groups

The Education Authority Youth Service Participation team, working with young people from the Small Grants panel, designed a resource allowing facilitators to manage and record the focus group sessions. Focus groups with children and young people were facilitated by youth workers. These were based on the policy age group bands and including specific groups of young people, within the Section 75 grouping, or those who may be at greater risk of social exclusion, marginalisation or isolation because they experience a combination of barriers to learning. A total of 138 focus groups, involving 1,630 participants, were facilitated throughout Northern Ireland. 10 focus groups, involving 80 participants were completed in Derry and Strabane.

Part Three – The Development of Area Profiles

Area Profiles using all available statistical data and information about the needs of children and young people have been produced using a range of data and information from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. These reports focused on demographic information and reflected wider social, economic and environmental determinants which negatively impacted children and young people.
The Area profile Report for Derry and Strabane can be found here.

Part Four – Embedding Findings from Key Research

The Education Authority Youth Service's Information and Planning Team conducted a significant literature review under the key outcome areas used in the survey and focus group materials. They also had access to all research and stakeholder engagement event reports conducted by the Youth Service as well as other research completed by academics and youth organisations relevant to the assessment of need.

Part Five – Parents and Organisation Survey

A survey for parents and other relevant organisations was designed and developed by a project team set up within the EA Youth Service based on the eight strategic outcomes of the Children and Young Peoples' Strategy 2020-2030.

Part Six – Wider Stakeholder Engagement

In addition to the focus groups carried out to inform the Regional Assessment of Need there were also additional focus groups carried out with young people in Ballyarnett, Sperrin and Derg DEAs through the month of March to ensure that everyone had the chance to voice their opinion about what was needed in their area.

There was also engagement with the Local Advisory Group (LAG) in March to ascertain any additional needs that may be identified for young people throughout the Derry and Strabane Area.

The Senior Youth Officer for Derry and Strabane attends regular partnership meetings and through attendance at both PCSP and Derry Healthy Cities, stakeholders have highlighted potential needs of young people that have been included.

Council in Numbers

Derry City and Strabane LGD

The population of Derry City and Strabane local government district is 150,836 people.

49,927 children and young people are aged 0-25 years live in Derry City and Strabane.

42,621children and young people are aged 4-25 years live in Derry City and Strabane.

Age bands population

- 7,306 aged 0 – 3 years
- 10,090 aged 4 – 8 years
- 10,559 aged 9 – 13 years
- 9,742 aged 14 – 18 years
- 12,230 aged 19 – 25 years

In Derry City and Strabane 27,312 children and young people aged 0-25 years (54.7%) live in deprivation.

19,672 children and young people (39.4%) live in a rural community in Derry City and Strabane.

35.1% of children and young people aged 0-24 years old in Derry City and Strabane come from a lone parent family (census21).

582 Newcomers attend schools in Derry City and Strabane (1.8%) – NI Average 5%.

115 Irish Traveller children and young people.

11,020 (51%) of all pupils in Derry City and Strabane are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24 (NI average 28%).

5,775 pupils (19.9%) who attend school in Derry City and Strabane 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).

The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C (incl. equivalent qualifications) including GCSE English and Math in Derry City and Strabane in 2022/23 is 76.1% (NI average of 76.1%).

The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed and/or unknown in Derry City and Strabane in 2022/23 is 3.4% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

6% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification. (NI average 4.9%).

The proportion of Primary 1 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Derry City and Strabane in 2022/23 is 21.3% (NI average 20.4%).

The proportion of Year 8 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Derry City and Strabane in 2022/23 is 29.7% (NI average 26%). This represents 31% of girls (NI 26.2%) and 29% of boys (NI 25.8%).

Suicide rates in Derry City and Strabane recorded 21 suicides in 2023. This is a 62% increase from 13 suicides in 2022.

There were 162 incidents with a sectarian motivation in Derry City and Strabane in 2023/24.

There were 110 incidents with a racist motivation in Derry City and Strabane in 2023/24. This is a 39% increase from the previous year of 79 racial motivated incidents.

There has been a 10.8% (1,353) rise in incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24 to year 2022/23 (1,221) in Northern Ireland.

There was a total of 2,153 domestic abuse crimes in Derry City and Strabane in 2023/24. This is an 8% decrease from the previous year. The average rate for domestic abuse crimes in Derry City and Strabane DEAs is 307 (NI average 250).

There was a total of 3,776 anti-social behaviour incidents in Derry City and Strabane in 2023/24. This is the same figure as the previous year. The average rate for anti-social behaviour incidents in Derry City and Strabane DEAs is 540 (NI average 567).

Key Trends/Highlights

Economic Disadvantage and Deprivation

A large proportion of young people in the area face economic disadvantage, with 54.7% of children and young people living in deprived conditions. Additionally, the area has a high percentage of children living in rural areas (39.4%) and those from lone-parent families (35.1%). The high eligibility for Free School Meals (51%) also further reflects the economic challenges faced by families, which can impact the opportunities available to young people.

Educational Achievement and Employment Concerns

There is a notable need for educational support in the Derry and Strabane area as 19.9% of students have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities which is just above the NI average, highlighting the necessity for tailored educational resources. While 76.1% of school leavers achieve at least 5 GCSEs (including English and Math), indicating a steady educational outcome, there is still a gap in ensuring that young people aged 20-24 are not left without qualifications or employment opportunities (6% of this age group are neither in work nor education which is higher than the NI average of 4.9%).

Health and Well-being Challenges

Health concerns are becoming more pressing, especially for young people in Derry and Strabane. Obesity rates among Primary 1 and Year 8 pupils, both male and female, are notably high, surpassing the Northern Ireland averages. This is accompanied by an alarming rise in suicide rates, with 21 suicides in 2023, reflecting escalating mental health needs. These trends point to a need for increased mental and physical health support tailored to young people's specific needs.

Safety and Stability Concerns

The safety and stability of young people in Derry City and Strabane are of increasing concern. Sectarianism and racism incidents are on the rise, with 162 sectarian incidents and 110 racist incidents, marking a 39% increase in racial incidents compared to the previous year. Domestic abuse, while showing an 8% decrease, remains a significant issue, alongside high levels of anti-social behaviour.

Furthermore, young people are facing increasing violence in various forms. Almost one-fifth (19%) of 16-year-olds experienced online violence and 18% reported psychological violence. 11% had experienced sexual violence, while 7% had been subject to physical violence. Notably, online spaces are where most of these incidents occur, highlighting the need for improved digital safety and support systems.

Overall, these trends suggest that young people in Derry and Strabane face a range of socio-economic challenges which must be considered when assessing the needs of children and young people. Mental health, educational attainment and employment prospects, alongside rising community tensions and violence against women and girls are also key areas for consideration.

The Findings

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Key facts

5,775 pupils (19.9%) who attend school in Derry City and Strabane 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).

Approximately 9,985 children and young people aged 0-25 years have a mental health need.

1,946 children and young people aged 0-24 years have autism.

The proportion of Primary 1 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Derry City and Strabane in 2022/23 is 21.3% (NI average 20.4%).

The proportion of Year 8 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Derry City and Strabane in 2022/23 is 29.7% (NI average 26%). This represents 31% of girls (NI 26.2%) and 29% of boys (NI 25.8%).

19.4% of children and young people aged 0-24 years have a long-term health condition (NI 19.8%).

There was 4.99 births per 1,000 births to young mothers aged under 20 years (NI average 5.83%).

There was 0.59 births per 1,000 births to young mothers aged under 17 years (NI average 0.75%).

According to the most recent census, 716 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

Suicide rates in Derry City and Strabane recorded 21 suicides in 2023. This is a 62% increase from 13 suicides in 2022.

Stakeholder input/feedback

In Derry City and Strabane, emotional health and well-being amongst young people is an increasing concern, as reflected in the latest data. Around 9,985 children and young people aged 0-25 years are reported to have mental health needs, which highlights a significant portion of the youth population in need of support. Furthermore, 1,946 children and young people aged 0-24 years are diagnosed with autism and 19.4% of young people in the same age group have a long-term health condition, just slightly below the NI average of 19.8%.

Obesity is also an issue, with 21.3% of Primary 1 pupils identified as obese or overweight, higher than the NI average of 20.4%. This rate climbs to 29.7% among Year 8 pupils, compared to the NI average of 26%. These trends, particularly the higher obesity rates among girls (31% in Derry and Strabane vs. 26.2% in NI) and boys (29% vs. 25.8% in NI), are concerning as there can be a link to mental health issues such as low self-esteem. Furthermore, the area's suicide rates are worrying, with 21 suicides recorded in 2023, a 62% increase from 2022.

Young people in Derry and Strabane identify several factors affecting their health and well-being. Positive factors include access to healthy food, exercise, sufficient sleep and mental health support. However, challenges such as alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, bullying, family issues and excessive phone use are prevalent. Many young people report increasing levels of anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicide, with some expressing concerns about the rising suicide rates in their peer group. The phrase "Wealth is your health" was emphasised by young people, highlighting their awareness of the link between emotional well-being and overall quality of life.

However, a noticeable concern is that over 20% of young people, surveyed in the Regional Assessment of Need, who live in the Derry and Strabane area feel there are no opportunities in their area to participate in physical activities that support their health and well-being. Additionally, over a quarter of young people who responded to the Regional Assessment of Need survey report not knowing where to go or how to seek help for their emotional well-being, which highlights the lack of accessible support services or lack of awareness of services in the area.

For some SEND young people there are adequate opportunities to participate in physical activities and these are considered crucial for their well-being, however this is not reported by all young people who were surveyed in the Regional Assessment of Need. There are young people, for example, who have weekly access to activities like dance, hip-hop and music activity programmes, which promote physical engagement however many young people report spending significant time at home and on devices.

Additionally, according to the most recent census it is estimated that 716 aged 16-24 identify as LGBTQI+. Many LGBTQ+ young people experience isolation, especially if they face rejection from family, friends, or communities, which can lead to mental health challenges like anxiety, depression and self-harm. Supportive spaces where they feel accepted and understood are essential.

In conclusion, the emotional health and well-being needs of children and young people in Derry City and Strabane are important and is highlighted throughout all the research to be a significant need.

Access to play and Leisure

Key facts

According to Derry GAA, the area comprises more than 40 affiliated clubs, including 32 football clubs, 2 hurling clubs and 6 dual clubs.

Derry City and Strabane District Council operates 10 leisure facilities, offering a variety of indoor and outdoor sporting activities.

Derry City and Strabane District Council oversees numerous play parks across its urban and rural areas, providing safe and engaging spaces for children and families. However, specific data on the total number of play parks within the council's district is not readily available in public sources.

A 2020 audit revealed that out of 14 play areas in the Derg District Electoral Area (DEA), nine were considered to offer "low play value," and some areas lacked facilities entirely. This highlights a need for improvement and expansion of play facilities in certain regions.

Northern Ireland Data:

97% of teachers agree that outdoor play is critical for a child to reach his/her potential.

- 88% of teachers agree that children are happier after playing outdoors.
- 86% of teachers agree that playing outdoors gives children a better understanding of the environment.
- There were 22,715 pre-school placements in Northern Ireland in 2022/2023.
- 36,556 children aged 0-3 were registered with Sure Start projects in 2023-2024.
- There are more than 700 council registered playparks in Northern Ireland.
- There are 67 council-managed leisure and recreational centres in Northern Ireland.

Stakeholder input/feedback

Play and leisure are integral to the development of children and young people, providing them with the chance to find themselves in the world around them and develop essential life skills. These activities promote language, social skills and emotional stability. Every young person has the right to rest, engage in play and participate in recreational and cultural activities, including the arts.

Play and leisure are natural, enjoyable ways to stay active, maintain good physical and mental health and build happiness. The benefits of these activities extend to brain development, creativity, intellectual growth, physical health and emotional wellbeing.

Outdoor play and leisure are vital for children's and young people's development. Research from DE indicates that 97% of teachers agree outdoor play is key to a child's potential, with 88% noting that children are happier after playing outside and 86% believing it helps children better understand their environment. These activities support emotional, mental and social wellbeing.

Feedback from young people across Derry and Strabane emphasises the importance of play and leisure in promoting positive mental health, social connections and overall happiness.

For children aged 9-11feedback highlighted that outdoor play is an essential part of young people's daily routine. Many engage in activities like football, street games and visits to parks, forests and beaches. Youth clubs, school playgrounds and homes are also important spaces for socialising. This is important because these activities promote physical health, coordination and motor skills, while also providing opportunities for children to form friendships, develop teamwork and learn how to cooperate with peers. Additionally, outdoor play fosters creativity, problem-solving and independence as children explore different environments and navigate challenges on their own or with friends. Spaces like youth clubs, school playgrounds and homes are also key for socialising, allowing children to build relationships and learn important social skills in a safe, supportive environment. Overall, these activities help shape well-rounded individuals and contribute to their mental and emotional well-being by offering a balance of fun, learning and personal growth.

Across the older age groups feedback shows a clear need to be able to socialise and engage in fun activities with peers in a safe environment. They believe youth clubs offer the ideal environment to support this and need more access to these to ensure they can be supported with their emotional health and wellbeing. Some older teens are also keen on Irish-language extracurricular clubs, focusing on sports, arts and music, alongside workshops such as coding, filmmaking and crafts. This is important because engaging in Irish-language extracurricular activities helps older teens connect with their cultural heritage, fostering a sense of identity, pride and belonging.

Young adults with additional needs have expressed a need for more safe spaces where they can engage in social and recreational activities. Young adults with additional needs often face barriers to participating in social and recreational activities, which can limit their opportunities for personal growth, social connection and overall well-being. Safe spaces for this group are essential as they provide an environment where individuals can engage in activities that promote physical, emotional and social development without the fear of judgment, discrimination or exclusion.

Learning and achieving

Key facts

The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C (incl. equivalent qualifications) including GCSE English and Math in Derry City and Strabane in 2022/23 is 76.1% (NI average of 76.1%).

The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed and/or unknown in Derry City and Strabane in 2022/23 is 3.4% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

6% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification. (NI average 4.9%).

582 Newcomers attend schools in Derry City and Strabane (1.8%) – NI Average 5%.

115 Irish Traveller children and young people.

11,020 (51%) of all pupils in Derry City and Strabane are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24 (NI average 28%).

5,775 pupils (19.9%) who attend school in Derry City and Strabane 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).

570 children and young people were suspended from school in Derry and Strabane.

The attendance rate for post-primary schools was 93.4%. (NI average 96%).

According to the most recent census, 716 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

Stakeholder input/feedback

Education is a fundamental human right, as stated in Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It plays a crucial role in helping children and young people gain knowledge, develop skills and understand social norms, guiding them to reach their full potential and become valuable members of society.

Education offers numerous benefits, such as career success, social status and financial independence, while promoting higher aspirations. It also provides stability, promotes resilience and teaches young people how to integrate into society. Whilst the initial picture in terms of educational attainment in Derry and Strabane looks positive the 2022/23 academic year shows 76.1% of school leavers in Derry City and Strabane achieved at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, including English and Math, which matches the Northern Ireland (NI) average. There are areas for consideration, for example 6% of young people aged 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have qualifications and this is higher than the NI average of 4.9%. It is important also to consider that over half of young people attending school are experiencing economic deprivation (51%) which is higher than the NI average. This can have an impact on young people's academic achievement and therefore additional support is needed for those young people in areas of deprivation.

Many children face challenges that hinder their educational success. Vulnerable groups, such as those with special educational needs or disabilities can often struggle to fit in, make friends or keep wup with learning. The amount of young people who have a Special Educational Need or Disability stage 1 to 3 in Derry and Strabane is slightly above the NI average at 19.9% and these young people may need extra support. This is similar those young people who are missing educational opportunities due to lower participation levels. The attendance rate for post-primary pupils in Derry and Strabane is 93.4% and this is lower than the NI average of 96% highlighting a need to support young people to increase their attendance levels.

Feedback from stakeholders highlighted that young people need to develop key skills such as teamwork, communication and listening to improve their overall development. These are essential for personal growth and academic success, particularly in securing higher qualifications. The need for qualifications to help support young people to stay on in education is evident. Young Irish speakers have indicated that is important that their education is available to them in their native language.

Young people were keen to identify several barriers to their education, including anxiety, learning struggles and varying paces of academic progress. Other challenges included mental health issues, long commutes and relationships with teachers in school. A lack of sleep and uncertainty about future goals were also mentioned. Young people noted that these external pressures impact their academic performance, making it harder to focus and succeed.

There is a clear need to address the identified barriers to education and young people need more support to improve their chances of succeeding in school. The young people surveyed in the Regional Assessment of Need feel that school is not always supportive to how they learn and therefore they need help from elsewhere. The transition from primary school to secondary school was highlighted as a big moment in young people's lives however they were also concerned about the transition to Year 11 with exam stress and choosing the right subjects so that they can pick the career they choose. Many young

people reported the need to talk to someone outside of the school setting so that they can feel more supported.

Living in safety and stability

Key facts

In Derry City and Strabane 27,312 children and young people aged 0-25 years (54.7%) live in deprivation.

19,672 children and young people (39.4%) live in a rural community in Derry City and Strabane.

According to the most recent census, 716 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

35.1% of children and young people aged 0-24 years old in Derry City and Strabane come from a lone parent family.

There were 162 incidents with a sectarian motivation in Derry City and Strabane in 2023/24.

There were 110 incidents with a racist motivation in Derry City and Strabane in 2023/24. This is a 39% increase from the previous year of 79 racial motivated incidents.

There has been a 10.8% (1,353) rise in incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24 to year 2022/23 (1,221) in Northern Ireland.

There was a total of 2,153 domestic abuse crimes in Derry City and Strabane in 2023/24. This is an 8% decrease from the previous year. The average rate for domestic abuse crimes in Derry City and Strabane DEAs is 307 (NI average 250).

There was a total of 3,776 anti-social behaviour incidents in Derry City and Strabane in 2023/24. This is the same figure as the previous year. The average rate for anti-social behaviour incidents in Derry City and Strabane DEAs is 540 (NI average 567).

There has been a total of 1937 male on male assaults in the Derry City and Strabane Area for the period January 2022 – February 2025.

In almost 40% of male-on-male assaults alcohol had been consumed.

Almost 30% of all incidents were of a domestic nature (family member or partner involved).

Suicide rates in Derry City and Strabane recorded 21 suicides in 2023. This is a 62% increase from 13 suicides in 2022.

Stakeholder input/feedback

The safety and stability of children and young people in Derry City and Strabane are crucial for their emotional and physical development. Relationships with parents, guardians and trusted adults provide a sense of security, which is essential for healthy growth. However, instability or abuse in these relationships can have a negative impact on a young person's well-being. Research consistently shows that children thrive in environments where they feel safe, secure and nurtured and where routines are established to protect their health and safety.

In Derry City and Strabane, 27,312 children and young people (54.7%) live in deprivation. This can lead to limited access to resources, opportunities and support, impacting their educational outcomes. Moreover, 19,672 children (39.4%) live in rural communities, where access to services and support may be more limited. 35.1% of children and young people aged 0-24 years come from lone-parent families, which can also impact their stability and security. Young people often identify family support, friendships and a sense of belonging as key elements in feeling safe. Concerns such as "stranger danger" and peer pressure are significant risks for younger children aged 9-11. Additionally, some young people, particularly those with additional needs, feel more secure in their local youth clubs, where they are welcomed and supported.

Safety remains a pressing concern, as evidenced by incidents of hate and violence. In 2023/24, 162 incidents with a sectarian motivation and 110 incidents with a racist motivation were recorded, marking a 39% increase in racial incidents from the previous year. Additionally, the area saw 2,153 domestic abuse crimes in 2023/24, a decrease of 8% from the previous year but still notably higher than the NI average. There were 3,776 anti-social behaviour incidents that occurred in the same period, with rates slightly lower than the regional average. Furthermore, the troubling increase in suicide rates, with 21 suicides recorded in 2023, reflects a growing mental health crisis in the area, marking a 62% rise from the previous year. These statistics highlight the ongoing challenges young people in Derry City and Strabane face, with a need for improved safety and access to safe spaces.

Feedback from stakeholders has highlighted concerns related to safety in the area, and this is corroborated by statistics confirming 162 sectarian incidents and 110 racist incidents recorded in 2023/24. This represents a 39% increase from the previous year. Anti-social behaviour was another key issue, with 3,776 incidents, while domestic abuse crimes totalled 2,153, showing a slight decrease from the previous year. Suicide rates in Derry City and Strabane saw a 62% increase, with 21 suicides in 2023, up from 13 in 2022. Male-on-male assaults, especially those involving alcohol, have been a concern, with 1,937 assaults recorded from January 2022 to February 2025.

Economic and environmental stability

Key facts

In Derry City and Strabane 27,312 children and young people aged 0-25 years (54.7%) live in deprivation.

19,672 children and young people (39.4%) live in a rural community in Derry City and Strabane.

The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed and/or unknown in Derry City and Strabane in 2022/23 is 3.4% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

6% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification. (NI average 4.9%).

11,020 (51%) of all pupils in Derry City and Strabane are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24 (NI average 28%).

Stakeholder input/feedback

Economic well-being refers to the overall standard of living and quality of life, which includes factors such as income, employment, access to essential services, social support and general happiness. There is a direct link between parents' earnings and their children's educational, health and social outcomes. Children from poorer backgrounds often experience worse cognitive, social, behavioural and health outcomes, particularly when long-term poverty is involved.

There are genuine concerns about the future among young people in Derry City and Strabane, particularly regarding economic challenges and opportunities. 27,312 children and young people (54.7%) live in deprivation, which directly impacts their ability to access opportunities and support. 51% of pupils in the area are eligible for Free School Meals, much higher than the NI average of 28%, underscoring the financial difficulties faced by many families. Poverty affects young people's mental and physical health and it strains family relationships. It can lead to stress and mental health issues, making it harder for young people to focus and succeed academically. Poverty also restricts access to opportunities, such as training and higher education, which can impact future career prospects. This creates a cycle of disadvantage, making it more difficult for young people to break free from it.

While some feel hopeful about their prospects, citing potential employment and future opportunities, others express uncertainty, worried about limited options due to factors such as poor academic performance, lack of motivation and financial constraints. Furthermore, 6% of young people aged 20-24 are not in employment and lack qualifications which is much higher compared to the NI average of 4.9%, indicating that many young people are struggling to access meaningful employment.

Feedback young people indicated that some felt confident in their money management skills and ability to provide for themselves, while others feared that their low grades would limit future options, meaning they would be unable to secure a job that would allow them to support themselves. The financial challenges of living independently were also noted, with concerns about the ever-increasing housing costs and high cost of living, especially bills and the difficulty of balancing full-time work with education. 19,672 children and young people (39.4%) live in rural communities, where these issues may be more pronounced due to limited access to services and opportunities.

Poverty significantly impacts young people's potential, with many highlighting an inability to pursue activities that could enhance their prospects, such as arts or music, as they are often expensive. Stakeholders noted that mental health issues and poor education were also highlighted as barriers to achieving full potential. Additionally, transport limitations and the challenges of finding employment were seen as obstacles. One young person highlighted the effect on self-confidence and self-image on their ability to succeed.

For young people with disabilities, future opportunities also appear limited. Many in the 19+ age group expressed concerns about their ability to socialise and integrate into their communities due to their disabilities, with some feeling disconnected from their local areas. They described their club as their "community," where they feel supported, but they were uncertain about their ability to live independently or achieve future goals.

Many young people also expressed concerns about climate change, “particularly the impact of litter, factory emissions and the loss of polar bear habitats due to melting ice.” Some felt that not enough is being done to prevent climate change. There is a fear that young people have no control over what is happening around them and stakeholders have expressed a need for action to be taken to ensure that they can reverse the damage done so far.

Making a positive contribution

Key facts

The attendance rate for post-primary schools was 93.4%. (NI average 96%).

582 Newcomers attend schools in Derry City and Strabane (1.8%) – NI Average 5%.

115 Irish Traveller children and young people.

570 children and young people were suspended from school in Derry and Strabane.

In Derry City and Strabane 27,312 children and young people aged 0-25 years (54.7%) live in deprivation.

19,672 children and young people (39.4%) live in a rural community in Derry City and Strabane.

According to the most recent census, 716 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

Stakeholder input/feedback

Active participation nurtures a positive outlook, which is essential for thriving in communities and society. To do well, children and young people need to feel that they belong. They must feel that their contributions are valued, respected and listened to and they should be able to express their views freely in school, youth centres, at home and in the wider community. Encouraging active citizenship boosts young people's confidence, empowering them to engage with and contribute to discussions about issues that matter to them. This involvement could be through school activities, youth clubs, or local community events, all of which help to make a positive difference.

It is important to look at young people's engagement with school to consider how young people can make a positive contribution as they need somewhere to facilitate this. The attendance rate for post-primary schools in Derry City and Strabane is 93.4%, which is below the Northern Ireland (NI) average of 96%. 582 newcomers (1.8%) attend schools in the area, compared to the NI average of 5%. In 2023/24, 570 children and young people were suspended from school, so this, coupled with the feeling among some young people that their voices are not heard in schools, presents a challenge for young people to overcome. Feedback from some young people suggests that school is not the right environment for them to learn and they require further support to ensure that their voices are heard. It is important to note that 27,312 children and young people (54.7%) live in deprivation in Derry City and Strabane, and this may contribute to young people feeling excluded or having a lack of opportunity.

Youth Services have been highlighted for their willingness to listen to young people's ideas and make them feel heard. This reinforces the importance of providing spaces where young people feel valued and listened to. Social involvement outside of school is crucial for the development of children and young people, helping them to become confident, independent and resilient individuals. However, there are concerns about the lack of recognition of young people's rights, particularly for Irish-language speakers aged 14-18.

Overall feedback from young people in Derry and Strabane would indicate that they are eager to contribute positively to their communities but often feel excluded from decision-making, particularly in schools. There is a need for young people to be provided with the tools to actively participate in their local communities and feel supported to challenge decisions that affect their future. It is important to also look at the needs of young people in rural communities and how they make a positive contribution. There are19,672 children and young people (39.4%) living in rural communities and this can also create barriers to participation and access to services, further emphasising the need for inclusive and supportive environments. Additionally, approximately 716 young people aged 16-24 identify as LGBTQI+, underlining the importance of creating safe spaces where all young people feel represented and heard.

Respect for young people's rights

Key facts

According to the most recent census, 716 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

Approximately 9,985 children and young people aged 0-25 years have a mental health need.

In Derry City and Strabane 27,312 children and young people aged 0-25 years (54.7%) live in deprivation.

19,672 children and young people (39.4%) live in a rural community in Derry City and Strabane.

582 Newcomers attend schools in Derry City and Strabane (1.8%) – NI Average 5%.

115 Irish Traveller children and young people.

11,020 (51%) of all pupils in Derry City and Strabane are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24 (NI average 28%).

5,775 pupils (19.9%) who attend school in Derry City and Strabane 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).

Stakeholder input/feedback

All children and young people have fundamental rights, as outlined in Article 4 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This article requires parties to take appropriate measures to implement these rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, to the fullest extent of their resources and through international cooperation. It ensures that every child, regardless of race, religion, sexual or gender identity, or disability, has rights that must be valued and protected. Children must be made aware of their rights so they can defend and assert them.

It may not always be the case that young people, who are marginalised have their rights protected, as they are among section 75 groupings. In Derry City and Strabane, according to the census report (2021) approximately 716 young people aged 16-24 identify as LGBTQI+ and approximately 9,985 children and young people aged 0-25 have a mental health need. With such a large percentage of young people facing challenges related to identity and mental health, it is crucial that their rights are upheld, so they feel included and supported within their communities. Additionally, 27,312 children and young people (54.7%) live in deprivation and 19,672 children and young people (39.4%) live in rural communities, where access to essential services may be more difficult. These barriers can limit their ability to fully realise their rights and participate fully in society.

There are 582 newcomers (1.8%) attending schools in Derry City and Strabane, which is below the Northern Ireland average of 5% and 115 Irish Traveller children and young people who may face unique cultural challenges in accessing services and education. Meanwhile, 51% of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals, which is significantly higher than the Northern Ireland average of 28%, further illustrating the economic challenges faced by many children and young people in the area. Additionally, 5,775 pupils (19.9%) have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), aligning with the Northern Ireland average of 19%.

Feedback from young people aged 14-18 in the area shows a mixed understanding of their rights. Some feel well-informed about their rights: “I think I am relatively well educated on most of my rights, but I could learn more about them.” However, others feel less confident “I don’t know my rights and I think you could find info on the internet.” This indicates that there is a need for greater education on rights and access to information, particularly for young people living in areas of deprivation or those within section 75 groupings facing challenges related to disability, cultural background, or mental health.

Regarding whether their rights are respected, some young people feel their rights are upheld, especially in Youth Services, where they feel free to express themselves. However, in schools, there are concerns about restrictions on personal freedoms. This is an important issue in Derry City and Strabane, where 27,312 children and young people live in deprivation and their right to a supportive, accessible education is crucial for overcoming the barriers they face. Living in deprivation can also have an impact on young people’s rights as they may not have the same access to services and this can have an impact on their holistic development.

In terms of confidence in standing up for their rights, some young people expressed confidence, saying, “I do feel confident since if my rights are being disrespected, I can explain how they are being disrespected and how to fix it.” However, others expressed uncertainty for example “I am unaware of my rights and feel that if I stand up for them, I’m being disrespectful to the adult.” This highlights a gap in confidence and understanding, particularly for young people who may face additional challenges,

such as those with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, LGBTQI+ identities, or from disadvantaged backgrounds. This lack of confidence in asserting their rights suggests that young people in Derry City and Strabane would benefit from increased support and education about their rights.

While some young people in Derry City and Strabane feel informed and confident about their rights, there is a clear need for greater education and support across the community. Ensuring all children and young people are aware of their rights, particularly those from minority groups, disadvantaged backgrounds, or with disabilities, will empower them to better advocate for themselves. With approximately 9,985 children and young people facing mental health needs and a significant portion of the population living in deprivation, ensuring their rights are fully respected and supported should be a priority to foster an inclusive and equal society.

Good Relations and equality

Key facts

There are 2 interface areas in Derry and Strabane.

19,672 children and young people (39.4%) live in a rural community in Derry City and Strabane.

582 Newcomers attend schools in Derry City and Strabane (1.8%) – NI Average 5%.

115 Irish Traveller children and young people.

11,020 (51%) of all pupils in Derry City and Strabane are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24 (NI average 28%).

5,775 pupils (19.9%) who attend school in Derry City and Strabane 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).

In Derry City and Strabane 27,312 children and young people aged 0-25 years (54.7%) live in deprivation.

According to the most recent census, 716 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

Stakeholder input/feedback

An equal society acknowledges people's differing needs and situations, working to remove barriers that limit potential. Good relations thrive when there is mutual respect, dignity and understanding, free from prejudice, hostility, or harassment. There is recognition of a society's religious, social, political and racial context, aiming to promote respect, equity and trust while embracing diversity in all its forms. Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms that all children and young people should be treated equally, without discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, language, religion, political opinion, family background, abilities, or other status. In Derry City and Strabane, 27,312 children and young people (54.7%) live in deprivation, highlighting the importance of addressing inequality from an early age to support vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged, marginalised and minority ethnic communities. The local diversity is reflected in the 582 newcomers (1.8%) attending schools in the area, with a significantly lower percentage than the NI average of 5%.

Young people aged 14-18 in the area share mixed views on equality. Some feel there are divides, particularly due to religion and background. One noted, "Some young people can sometimes be subconsciously treated differently, e.g., excluded by others." Others said, "Prejudice is often witnessed in my area and some young people experience discrimination based on religion, race, or disabilities." 115 Irish Traveller children and young people also face unique challenges in their educational and social experiences. Discrimination and exclusion are known to impact young people's mental health, with many sharing concerns such as feeling "excluded and isolated, which can lead to depression" or "feeling self-worthless, leading to isolation." The data on 51% of pupils eligible for Free School Meals in 2023/24, which is double the NI average of 28%, further underscores the role of economic inequality in fostering exclusion and mental health challenges as these young people are less likely to have access to experiences that could alleviate the stress associated.

Fostering equality has a positive impact, helping young people "grow up in a less prejudiced world." However, challenges remain. When it comes to respecting differences, some young people treat others with respect, but others noted unintended exclusion. One young person said, "Young people can subconsciously exclude people that are different because they are used to their surroundings." The presence of 5,775 pupils (19.9%) with Special Education Needs or Disabilities (Stage 1-3) in Derry and Strabane's schools highlights the need for greater inclusion. Young people aged 19+ also highlighted inequalities, particularly for those with disabilities, as some must travel 10 to 20 miles for services that meet their needs. While young people feel included in their clubs, they expressed a lack of safety in attending other services. "I feel included in BUD club, but I don't feel safe attending other services," one participant said.

The importance of fostering good relations is underscored by the approximately 716 young people aged 16-24 who identify as LGBTQI+ however this is likely to be much higher given the fact that some young people might not have wanted to declare this during the census. These young people, like others, need spaces that are inclusive and respectful of their identities. The need for more cross-community initiatives is clear, as young people expressed a desire for better awareness of diversity, more inclusive Youth Services and multi-language services to ensure no one feels excluded. Young people have highlighted the need for age-appropriate youth clubs and greater collaborative working between communities to help foster equality and reduce discrimination. The challenges related to economic

deprivation, rural living and minority status call for a concerted effort to ensure that all young people in Derry and Strabane feel heard, respected and included.

Summary Conclusion of Needs across Strategic Themes

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

- Young people are experiencing increasing mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and self-harm.
- Rates of suicide among young people continue to rise, creating deep concern across communities.
- Many young people face difficulties accessing appropriate support for their emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- Issues such as obesity, alcohol abuse, and drug use are contributing to poor emotional and physical health outcomes.
- Bullying, both online and offline, continues to impact young people's confidence and sense of safety.
- Excessive screen time is affecting sleep, social skills, and overall wellbeing.
- There is a need to improve access to mental health services and reduce waiting times for support.
- Encouraging participation in physical activities can help promote better mental and emotional health.
- Education programmes should focus on building resilience and promoting wellbeing.
- Providing support in both English and Irish will help ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all young people.

Access to Play and Leisure

- Young people need more structured and diverse options for play, recreation, and leisure activities.
- Safe and supervised environments are essential to allow young people to enjoy activities confidently.
- There is a need to expand opportunities in sports, arts, and cultural activities across communities.
- Irish language extracurricular clubs and skills development opportunities should be increased.
- More accessible leisure spaces are needed to support young adults with additional needs.

Learning and Achieving

- Anxiety, learning difficulties, and mental health struggles are affecting young people's ability to learn effectively.
- Limited subject options, particularly in Irish language schools, restrict young people's learning opportunities.
- Young people need greater access to career exploration opportunities to help plan their futures.
- Mentorship programmes could help support personal and educational development.
- Targeted support is needed during key transitions, such as moving from school to further education or employment.
- Exam stress is a major concern and can negatively affect motivation and performance.

- Confidence-building activities can help young people reach their potential and believe in their abilities.

Safety and Stability

- Young people have expressed concerns about safety in their local areas, including exposure to risk and peer pressure.
- Access to safe spaces is essential to support wellbeing and positive development.
- Strong family support and friendships are vital in providing stability and a sense of belonging.
- Self-defence classes could help young people feel more confident and secure.
- Additional support is required for vulnerable groups who may face higher risks.
- Better transport options would improve access to safe and supportive environments.
- Tailored initiatives should be developed for young people with additional needs to ensure inclusion and safety.

Economic and Environmental Factors

- Many young people face limited opportunities for education, training, and employment.
- Financial strain and the rising cost of living are major barriers to participation and wellbeing.
- Concerns about their future contribute to stress and uncertainty among young people.
- Poor academic performance can often be linked to lack of resources and economic disadvantage.
- The high cost of living and housing continues to place additional pressure on families and young people.
- Climate change is a growing concern, and young people want more opportunities to engage in environmental action and community initiatives.
- There is a need for Youth Services to help young people build skills and access sustainable career opportunities.
- Young people with disabilities often face a lack of social and employment opportunities, leading to isolation.
- Expanding inclusive services and creating more supportive spaces would help young people feel valued and empowered.

Making a Positive Contribution to Society

- Many young people feel excluded from decision-making, particularly within schools where academic outcomes take priority.
- Youth Services are viewed as spaces where young people feel listened to and supported.
- Involving young people in planning and leadership roles helps build confidence, resilience, and responsibility.
- Young people have expressed a desire for greater recognition of their rights, especially among Irish-language speakers.
- Collaboration between communities can help foster mutual understanding and respect.
- Providing platforms for young people to contribute and educating them about their rights can help them feel valued and capable of making a positive impact.

Respect for Rights

- Young people need greater support to fully understand and assert their rights.
- Those facing challenges such as deprivation, disability, or social exclusion require targeted guidance to ensure their voices are heard.
- Empowering young people with knowledge and advocacy skills enables them to participate fully in society.

Good Relations and Equality

- Some young people feel excluded based on religion, race, or disability, highlighting the need for more inclusive opportunities.
- Services should be offered in multiple languages to ensure accessibility and equality.
- Programmes must address the specific needs of different communities to promote inclusion.
- Discrimination and exclusion have serious negative impacts on young people's mental health and wellbeing.
- Young people have expressed a strong desire for more cross-community initiatives that bring people together.
- There is a need to increase awareness and understanding of diversity among young people and communities.

The findings – Identification of priorities/DEA profiles

Ballyarnett

Key facts

There are 9,414 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Ballyarnet DEA.

4,007 of young people in Ballyarnett DEA fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

8.1% of young people 20-24 years old in Ballyarnett DEA are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).

The percentage of school leavers in Ballyarnett DEA who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 3.4% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

The percentage of school leavers in Ballyarnett DEA achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and Math in 2022/23 is 74.2% (NI average 76.1%).

34 newcomer pupils in Ballyarnet DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.

Ballyarnett DEA has the 5th highest number of Irish Traveller children and young people aged between 0 -24 years old in NI DEAs with 78 children and young people.

There were 16 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24 in Ballyarnett DEA. This is a 45.5% increase from the previous year of 11 racial motivated incidents.

Ballyarnett Stakeholder input/feedback

The data from Ballyarnett DEA as well as feedback from young people and stakeholders highlights several key challenges faced by young people. The fact that a higher percentage of young people aged 20-24 who are not in employment and do not have qualifications (8.1% compared to the NI average of 4.9%) indicates a need for targeted employment and educational support programmes. With 3.4% of school leavers being unemployed or their status unknown and 74.2% achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C (slightly below the NI average), there is a need for initiatives to improve educational outcomes and support transitions to employment or further education.

The presence of 34 newcomer pupils and 78 Irish Traveller children highlights the need for inclusive educational practices and support services tailored to these groups. The increase in racially motivated incidents (45.5% increase) is worrying, and stakeholders have expressed a need for opportunities to promote diversity, inclusion and anti-racism education.

Young people value safe spaces for socialising and engaging in leisure activities. Ensuring access to parks, youth clubs and community centres is crucial for their wellbeing. Stakeholders note the importance of lifestyle choices, stress management and access to facilities for physical health and the role of friendships, support networks and family for emotional health. There is a need for more access to facilities, equipment and health-related programmes. Deprivation is a key barrier with to accessing these services so there is a genuine need to make them more accessible.

Young people feel valued and listened to when involved in decision-making processes. There is a need for more opportunities for them to contribute positively to their communities and have a say in matters affecting them. Promoting awareness of rights and ensuring inclusive environments where young people feel respected and accepted is essential.

Some young people feel disconnected from their communities and lack opportunities to socialise. Young people with disabilities feel excluded or ignored outside of supportive services and feel there needs to be more accessible and inclusive services.

Concerns about bullying and lack of friends in some Youth Services indicate a need for creating safer and more inclusive environments.

Overall, young people in Ballyarnett DEA have articulated the need for improving educational and employment outcomes, promoting inclusion and support for diverse groups, enhancing wellbeing through safe and engaging spaces. They also feel need to be empowered through participation, addressing disconnection and isolation and ensuring safety in their communities.

Ballyarnett Summary

Needs of Young People in Ballyarnett DEA in no particular order:

- Educational Support
- Employment Support
- Inclusion and Diversity
- Safe and Engaging Social Spaces
- Health and Wellbeing
- Participation and Empowerment
- Addressing Disconnection and Isolation
- Safety and Support in Youth Services

Derg

Key facts

There are 5,897 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Derg DEA.

2,440 young people in Derf DEA fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

5.9% of young people in Derg DEA aged 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).

The percentage of school leavers in Derg DEA who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 4.5% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

The percentage of school leavers in Derg DEA achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and Math in 2022/23 is 79% (NI average 76.1%).

46 newcomer pupils in Derg DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.

There was 1 incident with a racist motivation in Derg DEA in 2023/24. This is a 50% decrease from the previous year of 2 racial motivated incidents.

Derg Stakeholder input/feedback

The data reveals several key needs and challenges faced by young people in Derg DEA which is situated in a rural setting. A significant concern is the employment and qualification status of young people, especially those aged 20-24, with 5.9% of them neither employed nor qualified, higher than the Northern Ireland (NI) average of 4.9%. While the percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, including English and Math (79%), is higher than the NI average, some young people feel that more tailored programmes would better suit their needs along with skills development and employment support.

Mental health is another issue particularly among young males, with many indicating a need to express their feelings more openly. Although some young people feel confident in seeking help for emotional needs, they have identified a gap in mental health support and programmes that encourage open dialogue and emotional support. In terms of physical health, while over 50% of young people report feeling active and vigorous, they also express a desire for more opportunities to engage in physical activities within their community.

Although young people in Derg DEA feel safe, there are ongoing concerns about the safety of women and girls, as well as the impact of crime. Despite feeling that they are not pressured into dangerous activities, there is a noticeable concern regarding dangerous driving, with many having witnessed or heard of peers suffering serious injuries or fatalities in crashes. They have highlighted the need for educational programmes focused on road safety and responsible driving.

There is also a strong desire among young people for more opportunities to make a difference in their communities. Many feel their voices are not heard or valued and they believe their opinions are not taken seriously. They have asked to be engaged more in initiatives that empower young people, ensure they have a role in decision-making and develop a sense of belonging and respect. Additionally, while there is a belief that youth work programmes are accessible, there is a perceived lack of respect for those who are different.

Social and recreational activities also emerge as a concern, with over 50% of young people believing there are not enough fun activities in their area and 38% stating they have safe spaces to socialise. This indicates a need for more community-based programmes that provide opportunities for both social interaction and safety. Furthermore, there is a significant concern about poverty, with many young people agreeing that it is affecting more children and young people in their area. A need for targeted support to address financial challenges and ensure that youth programmes are accessible to all, regardless of economic background, is a key ask of stakeholders as they are aware of the deprivation that exists in the local community.

Climate change is another major worry, with young people expressing a desire for more action on the issue. While they feel there are opportunities to learn about it, they believe more needs to be done. They have articulated the importance of environmental education and programmes to tackle climate change. Regarding the transition from school to work, while some young people feel prepared, others have mixed responses, proposing a need for more career support and guidance to ensure they feel equipped for the future.

The data and feedback from stakeholders highlights the need for increased mental health support, more tailored educational opportunities, greater youth engagement, accessible recreational activities and initiatives that empower young people to have their voices heard and respected.

Derg Summary

Needs of Young People in Derg DEA in no particular order:

- Employment and Skills Support
- Tailored Educational Opportunities
- Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Support
- Physical Health and Active Lifestyle Opportunities
- Safety and Road Awareness
- Youth Empowerment and Participation
- Inclusion and Respect for Diversity
- Social and Recreational Activities
- Support for Young People Affected by Poverty
- Environmental Education and Climate Action
- Career Support and Transition Guidance

Faughan

Key facts

There are 6,304 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Faughan DEA.

2,726 people in Faughan DEA fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

3.4% of young people 20-24 years old in Faughan DEA are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).

The percentage of school leavers in Faughan DEA who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 0% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

The percentage of school leavers in Faughan DEA achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and Math in 2022/23 is 78% (NI average 76.1%).

24 newcomer pupils in Faughan DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.

There were 8 incidents with a racist motivation in Faughan DEA 2023/24. This is the same as the previous year.

Faughan Stakeholder input/feedback

The data and feedback from stakeholders in Faughan DEA highlights several key needs and issues. There are 6,304 children and young people aged 0-25 years old in Faughan DEA, with 2,726 falling within the key Youth Service priority age bands of 9-13 and 14-18 years. The unemployment rate among young people aged 20-24 is 3.4%, whilst better than the NI average of 4.9% the figure suggests that there is still a need for targeted support to help those who are neither employed nor qualified. Additionally, the percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or whose status is unknown stands at 0%, outperforming the NI average of 4.7%. This indicates strong post-school outcomes, but continuous support is necessary to maintain these levels. In terms of academic achievement, 78% of school leavers achieved at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, including English and Maths, slightly above the NI average of 76.1%. This suggests that academic support and resources are effective but should be sustained.

Whilst the educational outlook for young people is positive many young people in Faughan DEA feel there are limited opportunities for play and leisure. While some enjoy activities like football, hockey, netball and attending clubs such as drama school, cadets and band, others report of feeling isolated. Safe spaces to socialise are a concern, with some young people acknowledging availability of some services, others feel they have nowhere to go. Play and leisure activities are crucial for well-being, with many young people stating that physical activities help improve mental health. They have identified a need for more of a variety of activities to be offered in their local area.

Physical health is influenced by lifestyle choices, stress management, access to facilities and healthy food. Friendships, support networks, family and school shape emotional health. Support is found through friends, family and youth clubs, with many noting that physical activities improve well-being. Young people have noted that the lack of access to gyms and the pressure of schoolwork negatively affects physical health. There is a need for more trips, group activities and time for exercise.

Young people in Faughan DEA are involved in school or community activities such as student councils, junior forums and eco-groups which help them address issues that are important to them. One such issue is climate change and over 50% of young people believe not enough is being done to combat it. They feel that making a positive contribution in this area especially is important as it will help others, give them a voice and allow them to tackle the issues. They need more opportunities to get involved in volunteering, helping people in need and organising activities to empower them. The fact that a lot of young people feel they are not listened to or valued, especially in school has led them to request the opportunity to be able to do this elsewhere. There is a desire among young people to be included in decision making processes and to feel as if they have a voice.

There were 8 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24, the same as the previous year. Although there has been no increase it still indicates a need for young people to be concerned about safety and inclusion. Prejudice and discrimination still exists in the area, with some young people feeling excluded due to their background or religion. While some believe people are treated equally, others disagree, pointing out that young people from different backgrounds face exclusion. Young people have highlighted a need for more cross-community programmes, providing information in multiple languages and focusing on equality education.

Poverty remains a significant concern. Financial limitations prevent many from accessing extracurricular activities, hindering prospects. Mental health struggles and lack of motivation in education were also cited as barriers to achieving full potential. Young people have said there is a need for career advice, money management information and development of life skills. Young people feel unsure about their rights, with many not knowing where to find information. While some feel their rights are respected in school and the community, others believe there is a lack of respect, particularly in educational settings. There is a need for young people to be made more aware of their rights and feel empowered to be able to advocate for themselves and other young people.

Faughan Summary

Needs of Young People in Faughan DEA in no particular order:

- Employment and Qualification Support
- Access to Play and Leisure Opportunities
- Physical and Emotional Health Support
- Empowerment Through Volunteering and Participation
- Climate Action and Environmental Engagement
- Inclusion in Decision-Making and respect for rights
- Promotion of Safety, Equality and Anti-Discrimination
- Cross-Community and Multilingual Programmes
- Support for Young People Affected by Poverty
- Life Skills Development

Foyleside

Key facts

There are 5,612 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Foyleside DEA.

1,909 young people in Foyleside DEA fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

4.8% of young people 20-24 years old in Foyleside DEA are not in employment and do not have a qualification. (NI average 4.9%).

The percentage of school leavers in Foyleside DEA who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 4.3% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

The percentage of school leavers in Foyleside DEA achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and Math in 2022/23 is 73.1% (NI average 76.1%).

82 newcomer pupils in Foyleside DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.

There were 18 incidents with a racist motivation in Foyleside DEA in 2023/24. This is a 6% increase from the previous year of 17 racial motivated incidents.

Foyleside Stakeholder input/feedback

The feedback and data from Foyleside DEA highlight several key needs and areas for development for young people in the area. With 5,612 children and young people aged 0-25 years and 1,909 of them falling within the critical Youth Service age bands of 9-13 and 14-18 years, the challenges faced by this demographic are diverse and complex. There is a need to support their emotional, educational and social wellbeing. Stakeholders have emphasised that mental health issues, such as panic disorders, anxiety and emotional stress are a concern to them.

In terms of education, 73.1% of school leavers in Foyleside achieved at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, including English and Maths, in 2022/23, which is below the Northern Ireland average of 76.1%. Stakeholders have indicated that barriers such as low educational achievement, disengagement and lack of access to necessary technology are still significant issues. Although 4.8% of young people aged 20-24 in Foyleside are not in employment or do not have qualifications and this is slightly better than the Northern Ireland average of 4.9% there is still a feeling that there is no scope for complacency. Stakeholders have called for more flexible and accessible learning spaces, as well as greater access to technology to ensure that young people can complete their homework.

The physical environment is another area of concern, with many young people facing poor conditions in their neighbourhoods, such as broken glass and the aftermath of fires. There is a need for safer, cleaner spaces and more outdoor learning opportunities to connect young people with their environment and develop a connection and sense of belonging to the local community.

There were 82 newcomer pupils in Foyleside in 2023/24, and stakeholders identified a need to ensure that services are inclusive, cater to diverse backgrounds and offer welcoming, safe spaces. They also highlighted a need for extended opening hours to accommodate the busy and varied schedules of these young people. This flexibility they believe, combined with the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes, would give the newcomer young people a sense of ownership and responsibility within the local community. The safety of these newcomer young people is also a concern for stakeholders and as there were 18 incidents of racist motivation in 2023/24, marking a 6% increase from the previous year, this highlights the ongoing need to challenge prejudice and discrimination.

Ensuring safety and stability for young people is paramount. Many are exposed to risk factors such as substance misuse, anti-community behaviour, toxic masculinity and harmful content like pornography. To address these risks stakeholders have identified the need for early intervention particularly to help challenge stereotypes and tackle issues such as ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG), which has been identified as a key priority.

The data and feedback collectively emphasise the need for an integrated approach that addresses mental health, education, inclusivity and safety, helping young people in Foyleside to build resilience, develop essential life skills and navigate the challenges they face.

Foyleside Summary

Needs of Young People in Foyleside DEA in no particular order:

- Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Support
- Improved Educational Achievement and Engagement
- Access to Technology and Flexible Learning Spaces
- Leadership, Training and Skills Development
- Safer and Cleaner Physical Environments
- Outdoor Learning and community connection
- Inclusion and Support for Newcomer Young People
- Flexible opening hours and Accessible Programmes
- Participation in Decision-Making
- Early Intervention to Address risk taking behaviours
- Programmes to Tackle Toxic Masculinity and EVAWG (Ending Violence Against Women and Girls)
- Holistic Support for Building Resilience and Life Skills

Sperrin

Key facts

There are 8,093 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Sperrin DEA.

3,305 of young people in Sperrin DEA fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

5.4% of young people 20-24 years old in Sperrin DEA are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).

The percentage of school leavers in Sperrin DEA who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 0% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

The percentage of school leavers in Sperrin DEA achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and Math in 2022/23 is 75% (NI average 76.1%).

278 newcomer pupils in Sperrin DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.

There were 9 incidents with a racist motivation in Sperrin DEA in 2023/24. This is a 18% decrease from the previous year of 11 racial motivated incidents.

Sperrin Stakeholder input/feedback

Young people in Sperrin DEA have made it clear that there is a strong need for more facilities and opportunities in their area. A major priority is the establishment of a consistent, designated youth centre where young people can come together, feel safe and socialise with their peers. Currently, the absence of such a space in Strabane, combined with a lack of capital funding, is seen as a significant barrier to meeting young people's needs. The issue of poor public transport connectivity adds to their sense of isolation, limiting their access to existing services and opportunities.

Encouragingly, school leaver outcomes in Sperrin DEA are strong, with 0% recorded as unemployed or unknown, outperforming the NI average of 4.7%. However, a slightly higher percentage (5.4%) of 20–24-year-olds are not in employment and lack qualifications, highlighting a gap in post-school support. Stakeholders feel there is a need to support young people in this category to bridge the gap between leaving school and entering the labour market.

Economic and environmental stability emerged as key themes. Young people recognise the importance of community well-being and the role that personal development and social interaction play in achieving this. They seek more chances to engage in activities that build life skills. Youth groups are seen as essential for developing friendships and bringing people from different backgrounds together.

There is a clear interest among young people in contributing positively to their community. They want to be involved in local decision-making, participate in campaigns for change and have more opportunities to express their views. This sense of community is linked to a desire for their voices to be heard and respected.

Safety is also a core concern. Young people identify that they need tools and equipment to keep safe. They want to see more proactive intervention on issues such as violence against women, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse (including alcohol, vaping and gambling) and mental health. Although racist incidents have decreased from 11 to 9 in the past year, young people still see a need for awareness-raising and stronger community relations to ensure everyone feels safe and included.

Emotional health and well-being were consistently highlighted as important. Young people value environments that support positive relationships, self-expression and mental health to help them cope with stress and offer safe spaces to talk about their feelings. Youth workers were identified as crucial figures in providing this support.

Equality and inclusion are central to young people’s vision for a better community. They want to strengthen relationships across the wider community and tackle all forms of discrimination. Gender equality, cross-community engagement and respect for religious and cultural differences are considered essential. With 278 newcomer pupils in the area’s schools, they see the promotion of understanding and inclusion is more important than ever.

Finally, young people in Sperrin DEA are passionate about having their rights respected and protected. They want child- and youth-friendly policies, spaces where they can freely express themselves and have highlighted initiatives such as a “Child/Youth Friendly City” campaign and a “Human Rights Board” to ensure their voices are heard and valued in decision-making processes.

Sperrin Summary

The needs of young people in Sperrin DEA listed in no particular order:

- Designated Youth Centre and Safe Social Spaces
- Improved Public Transport and Connectivity
- Personal and Academic Development Opportunities and Life skills support
- Post-School Employment and Qualification Support
- Youth Participation in Local Decision-Making
- Programmes Addressing Violence, Anti Community Behaviour, Substance Misuse and Mental Health
- Emotional Health and Mental Wellbeing Support
- Inclusive, Cross-Community and Anti-Discrimination Initiatives
- Support for Newcomer Pupils and Cultural Integration
- Respect for Youth Rights and Youth-Friendly Policies

Moor

Key facts

There are 5,467 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in The Moor DEA.

2,231 of young people in The Moor DEA fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

9.4% of young people 20-24 years old in The Moor DEA are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).

The percentage of school leavers in The Moor DEA who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 8.9% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

The percentage of school leavers in The Moor DEA achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and Math in 2022/23 is 64.3% (NI average 76.1%).

63 newcomer pupils in The Moor DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.

There were 38 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24 in The Moor DEA. This is a 124% increase from the previous year of 17 racial motivated incidents.

Moor Stakeholder input/feedback

Young people in The Moor DEA are facing a complex and challenging set of circumstances that impact their well-being, development and future opportunities. Among the 5,467 children and young people aged 0–25 living in the area, 2,231 fall within the key Youth Service priority age bands of 9–13 and 14–18 years. Many are struggling with issues such as stress and anxiety, substance misuse, social isolation, family difficulties, cyberbullying, peer pressure, poor diet and a lack of physical activity. These challenges point to the need for comprehensive emotional, mental and physical health support, alongside more accessible social and recreational opportunities.

Education is another major area of concern. Educational underachievement and limited access to resources that could support learning are affecting young people's confidence and raising anxieties about their prospects. The data shows that only 64.3% of school leavers achieved at least five GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and maths, which is significantly below the Northern Ireland average of 76.1% and is the lowest across all the DEAs in Derry and Strabane. Moreover, 8.9% of school leavers were either unemployed or had an unknown destination in 2022/23, compared to the NI average of 4.7%. The situation becomes even more concerning for young adults aged 20–24, where 9.4% are not in employment and have no qualifications—almost double the national average. This highlights a pressing need for targeted support to improve educational attainment and employability pathways.

Environmental and community concerns also weigh heavily on young people's minds. They have raised issues related to bonfires, litter, graffiti and the negative use of vacant land, which are often linked to anti-social behaviour. Toxic fumes from heavy traffic along main routes also contribute to a sense of environmental neglect. Young people want to be actively involved in addressing these issues through young people led initiatives that empower them to take part in shaping their environment. They have also expressed the need for more safe, warm and inclusive spaces where they can meet, socialise and take part in less structured forms of learning and engagement.

Local participative structures must be improved to ensure all young people’s voices are connected to decision-making processes. Stakeholders have articulated the need for increased access to welcoming and equitable youth centres to improve participation and inclusion across all groups.

A particular area of concern is the rise in racially motivated incidents in The Moor DEA. There were 38 such incidents recorded in 2023/24, more than double the 17 incidents reported the previous year—an alarming 124% increase. With 63 newcomer pupils now enrolled in local schools, this rise underscores the urgent need for improved community relations and inclusion. Young people are calling for spaces and services that develop understanding and celebrate diversity. They also see the importance of embedding CRED (Community Relations, Equality and Diversity) in youth work to promote mutual respect and reduce racism and prejudice.

Cultural identity and language also play an important role in how young people relate to their community. The promotion and support of the Irish language is a key priority for many. This not only helps promote inclusivity but also strengthens a sense of belonging and cultural pride among Irish-speaking youth.

The voices of young people in The Moor DEA highlight a deep need for better mental health support, improved educational and employment opportunities, inclusive spaces for social connection and stronger youth involvement in local community and environmental issues. They want to live in a place

where diversity is respected, cultural identity is celebrated and their potential is recognised and supported.

Moor Summary

The needs of young people in The Moor DEA listed in no particular order:

- Emotional, Mental and Physical Health Support
- Accessible Social and Recreational Opportunities
- Improved Educational Attainment and Learning Support
- Targeted Employability Pathways for School Leavers and Young Adults
- Programmes Addressing Substance Misuse, Peer Pressure and Cyberbullying
- Safe, Warm and Inclusive Youth Spaces
- Youth-Led Environmental and Community Improvement Initiatives
- Better Support for Young People with Additional Needs and Section 75 Categories
- Inclusive Youth Participation in Decision-Making Structures
- Community Relations and Inclusion for Newcomer Young People
- Promotion and Support of Irish Language and Cultural Identity

Waterside

Key facts

There are 9,134 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Waterside DEA.

3,683 of young people in Waterside DEA fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

5% of young people 20-24 years old in Waterside DEA are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).

The percentage of school leavers in Waterside DEA who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 2.6% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

The percentage of school leavers in Waterside DEA achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and Math in 2022/23 is 77.6% (NI average 76.1%).

37 newcomer pupils in Waterside DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.

There were 20 incidents in Waterside DEA with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 54% increase from the previous year of 13 racial motivated incidents.

Waterside Stakeholder input/feedback

Young people in the Waterside District Electoral Area face a range of challenges that impact their overall wellbeing, education and safety. Mental health is a significant concern, with many young people reporting anxiety, school-related pressures, online safety issues and substance misuse. Feelings of isolation are common and there is a clear need for improved emotional wellbeing support.

According to stakeholders and young people a major gap exists in the development of essential life skills, such as budgeting, cooking, personal care and conflict resolution. While some young people feel confident about living independently, many experience anxiety when faced with basic household tasks. This highlights the need for life skills training within youth programmes to build confidence and support independent living.

Although Waterside DEA has seen strong academic performance, with 77.6% of school leavers achieving at least five GCSEs including English and Maths—higher than the Northern Ireland average—underachievement remains an issue for some. A key barrier to education is the ongoing digital divide; many young people lack access to the digital equipment needed for both formal education and Youth Services. There is a clear need for more accessible, non-formal learning opportunities with relevant accreditations to support young people who may not thrive in traditional school environments.

Inclusion and diversity are also growing concerns. There has been a 54% increase in racially motivated incidents in the area and with 37 newcomer pupils attending local schools, there is a pressing need for inclusive, culturally sensitive support. Initiatives like the Horizons programme have been identified as making positive strides in promoting inclusion, but there is still a feeling that more needs to be done to ensure Youth Services are accessible to young people with additional needs or from marginalised backgrounds.

Despite these challenges, many young people are actively participating in social action, environmental campaigns and youth voice initiatives. These platforms allow them to express their views and demonstrate that, when given the opportunity, young people are eager to advocate for change. There is a belief among stakeholders that there is a need to continue creating spaces where young people can lead and influence decision-making processes.

Safety also remains a significant concern in Waterside DEA. Young people are at risk of domestic abuse, coercion by criminal gangs and online harm. Early intervention has proven effective in addressing these risks, but more consistent and widespread support is needed to prevent harmful behaviours and protect vulnerable individuals.

Finally, Youth Services in Waterside DEA must become more accessible, inclusive and responsive to the evolving needs of young people. Barriers such as underachievement, digital exclusion and lack of safe, inclusive environments need to be addressed through targeted support and the development of flexible service delivery models. There is a strong desire among young people for services that help them develop life skills, build confidence and prepare them for adulthood.

Waterside Summary

Needs of young people in Waterside DEA listed in no particular order:

- Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Support
- Life Skills Training (e.g. budgeting, cooking, conflict resolution, personal care)
- Bridging the Digital Divide (Access to Digital Equipment and Internet)
- Non-Formal and Flexible Learning Opportunities with Accreditation
- Promotion of Inclusion and Cultural Diversity
- Support for Newcomer Pupils and Marginalised Young People (Inclusive Spaces)
- Youth Participation and Leadership in Decision-Making
- Programmes Addressing Domestic Abuse, Criminal Exploitation and Online Harm
- Healthy Lifestyle and Physical Activity Programmes
- Targeted Support to Address Underachievement in Education