Education Authority

2026 - 2029



MID & EAST ANTRIM

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 Mid & East Antrim. It brings together data, evidence and local insight to help identify the needs and barriers children and young people in Mid & East Antrim face. Listening to, and understanding, the voices and opinions of children and young people is an important part of this process.

When asked about the most important theme of provision was for them, the children and young people, through the survey, ranked the themes by importance to them as follows:

a) Economic and Environmental Stability – 33%
b) Access to Play and Leisure – 21%
c) Living in Safety and Stability – 16%
d) Emotional Health and Wellbeing – 13%
e) Respect for Young People's Rights – 9%
f) Learning and Achieving – 4%
g) Good Relations and Equality – 4%
h) Making a Positive Contribution to Society – 0%

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 Mid & East Antrim. 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 180 young people from Mid & East Antrim completed the survey.

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 with 6 focus groups completed in Antrim & Newtownabbey.

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 Mid & East Antrim 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

Consultations with youth workers and representatives of funded youth organisations through the Local Advisory Group were carried out. Local Voice surveys with young people who access youth provisions and wider consultations with young people in each DEA were also used in compiling this Local Assessment of need for Mid & East Antrim. In total 11 youth workers, 5 youth providers and 276 young people were engaged in this process.

Council in Numbers

The population of Mid and East Antrim local government district is 139,200 people.

40,845 children and young people are aged 0-25 years live in Mid and East Antrim.

34,962 children and young people are aged 4-25 years live in Mid and East Antrim.

Age bands population

- 5,883 aged 0 – 3 years
- 8,136 aged 4 – 8 years
- 8,487 aged 9 – 13 years
- 8,320 aged 14 – 18 years
- 10,019 aged 19 – 25 years

In Mid and East Antrim 6,659 children and young people aged 0-25 years (16.3%) live in deprivation.

14,500 children and young people (35.5%) live in a rural community in Mid and East Antrim.

25.77% of children and young people aged 0-24 years old in Mid and East Antrim come from a lone parent family (census21).

1,224 Newcomers attend schools in Mid and East Antrim (5.7%) – NI Average 5%.

55 Irish Traveller children and young people.

5,418 (30.6%) of all pupils in Mid and East Antrim are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24 (NI average 28%).

3,845 pupils (16.9%) who attend school in Mid and East Antrim 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 maths in Mid and East Antrim in 2022/23 is 74.8% compared to the NI average of 76.1%.

The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed and/or unknown in Mid and East Antrim in 2022/23 is 7.4% (NI average of 4.7%).

5.4% 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 Mid and East Antrim in 2022/23 is 20.6% (NI average 20.4%).

The proportion of Year 8 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Mid and East Antrim in 2022/23 is 25% (NI average 26%).

Suicide rates in Mid and East Antrim recorded 17 suicides in 2023. This is an 70% increase from the previous years with 10 suicides.

There were 38 incidents with a sectarian motivation in Mid and East Antrim in 2023/24.

There were 61 incidents with a racist motivation in Mid and East Antrim in 2023/24. This is a 7.6% decrease from the previous year of 66 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 1,386 domestic abuse crimes in Mid and East Antrim in 2023/24. This is a 11% decrease from the previous year. The average rate for domestic abuse crimes in Mid and East Antrim DEAs is 198 (NI average 250).

There was a total of 3,121 anti-social behaviour incidents in Mid and East Antrim in 2023/24. This is an 8% decrease from the previous year. The average rate for anti-social behaviour incidents in Mid and East Antrim DEAs is 446 (NI average 567).

Key Trends/Highlights

Falling Youth Population: Mid & East Antrim's youth population has declined by 6.5% since the 2011 census which is over double the Northern Ireland decrease of 3.1%. This downward trend is projected to continue over the next decade. This is reflective of the declining birthrate in Northern Ireland.

The current population broken down into age bands shows that on census day 2021 around 9,000 young people were aged 19-25, just under 6,000 aged 14-18, around 8,500 ages 9-13 and just over 8,000 aged 4-8 years old. It is worth noting that we are 4 years on from census day so these age bands need adjusted accordingly.

Ballymena and Braid DEAs have the largest youth populations with over 7,300 each followed by Bannside with just over 6,000, then Carrick Castle, Knockagh and Larne Lough with between 5,000 and 5,150 young people each, Coast Road is the smallest DEA with just 4,800 young people. The gap between the top two DEAs and the remainder is set to widen.

Economic Disadvantage and Deprivation: Around 35.5% of young people live in a rural area, compared to the Northern Ireland average of 34.5%, this amounts to around 6,000 young people in Mid & East Antrim. Bannside, Braid and Coast Road DEAs account for most of those rural young people although significant numbers live in Larne Lough.

MEA has slightly higher than average numbers of young people living in lone parent households. Four DEAs, Ballymena (29.9%), Carrick Castle (27.5%), Coast Road (33.3%) and Knockagh (28.6%), have significantly higher than the Northern Ireland average (25.7%). Children and young people from lone parent families are deprived because they often face lower household incomes and reduced access to resources due to the absence of a second earning parent.

The number of young people living in deprived areas across Mid & East Antrim is below the Northern Ireland average, 16.3% compared to 25.2%.

Ballymena DEA has a much higher than average numbers of households who have no car or van availability (19.3% compared to the NI average of 12%). This impacts on young people's access to services as they are more reliant on public transport which limits where and when they can travel.

Educational Achievement and Employment Concerns: Across Mid & East Antrim a much higher than average number of school leavers are moving on to unemployment or an unknown destination (7.4% compared to the NI average of 4.7%). This peaks in Coast Road DEA (11.5%) at almost 2.5 times the NI average. The numbers of young people not in employment and without a qualification is also higher than the NI average. These young people may be particularly vulnerable as their ability to access services and move onto independent living is curtailed. Fewer young people inMid & East Antrim achieve 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C compared to the NI average.

Health Concerns: Obesity levels amongst Year 1 pupils is higher than the NI average; this is a key indicator linked to poor diet and levels of activity. This can have significant effects on long term physical and mental health. The increase in suicide rates is concerning as well as being an indicator of poor mental health there is also the wider impact on family and friends.

Hate Crimes and Domestic Abuse: There is a significant number of incidents with a racist motivation. This is of concern to the areas within Mid & East Antrim which have much higher than average numbers

of young people whose main language is not English. Domestic Violence shows a fall in numbers however in 1 of the DEAs is still far higher than the NI average. The impact on the mental health and physical wellbeing of young people living in households where there is domestic violence is significant.

The Findings

This section combines the results from the Regional Assessment of Need survey conducted with children and young people across Antrim & Newtownabbey Area, NISRA statistical data, feedback from focus groups and engagement from wider key stakeholders.

When asked about the most important theme of provision was for them, the children and young people, through the survey, ranked the themes by importance to them as follows:

1. Economic and Environmental Stability
2. Access to Play and Leisure
3. Living in Safety and Stability
4. Emotional Health and Wellbeing
5. Respect for Young People's Rights
6. Learning and Achieving
7. Good Relations and Equality
8. Making a Positive Contribution to Society

Economic and Environmental Stability

Key facts

- In Mid and East Antrim 6,659 children and young people aged 0-25 years (16.3%) live in deprivation.
- 14,500 children and young people (35.5%) live in a rural community in Mid and East Antrim.
- The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed and/or unknown in Mid and East Antrim in 2022/23 is 7.4% (NI average of 4.7%).
- 5.4% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).
- 5,418 (30.6%) of all pupils in Mid and East Antrim are eligible for Free School Meals in 2023/24 (NI average 28%).

Stakeholder input/feedback

Economic well-being plays a significant role in determining the overall quality of life, including income, job opportunities, access to basic needs like food and housing and overall happiness. For children and young people, a family's financial situation directly impacts their educational performance, health and overall life satisfaction.

6659 children and young people (about 16%) live in areas of deprivation, which makes it more difficult for them to thrive. Stakeholders have agreed that certain areas face significant challenges in terms of economic stability, which affects children and young people's ability to succeed.

Most young people identified their future as their greatest concern. This included anxiety and stress around current world events and the threat of war. Issues around poverty and lack of career opportunities to alleviate their future economic wellbeing was a major worry.

70% feel that there will be plenty of career opportunities for them and a similar number feel equipped to apply for and get a job. A similar number feel their family are currently able to pay for things they want to do yet over 80% believe that poverty is affecting more young people. Statistics shows that a 30% of pupils in the area are eligible for free school meals, this suggests that many young people are not aware of the poverty status of their household.

Higher than average numbers of young people living in lone parent households. Children and young people from lone parent families are deprived because they often face lower household incomes and reduced access to resources due to the absence of a second earning parent.

Over a third of young people live in rural areas, this has a significant economic impact as they are more reliant on transport to access services.

Two-thirds are worried about climate change and that not enough is being done about it. Young people from rural backgrounds have concerns over the impact of climate change on their future which is more reliant on the agriculture industry.

Half of young people intend to leave their local community to study or work and not return. The importance of life skills for independent living was identified.

Stakeholders added that there was a need for relaxed informal learning environments for young people to explore these issues.

Access to Play and Leisure

Key facts

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.

Mid & East Antrim Data

- There are 5 council-managed leisure and recreational centres in Mid & East Antrim (3 leisure centres, 1 Urban Sports Park, 1 Golf Course).
- There are 12 outdoor gyms in Mid & East Antrim.
- Mid & East Antrim has 66 council registered Play Parks.
- 6 Public Parks/County Parks/Nature Reserves.

Stakeholder input/feedback

Play, leisure and fun are essential for children's growth, helping them develop skills, form social connections and understand the world. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees the right to rest, play, and engage in activities like sports or spending time with friends. Research shows play is essential for both physical and mental health, strengthening bodies, boosting happiness and developing lifelong skills. Research reveals that 97% of teachers agree outdoor play is essential for development, with 88% saying children are happier afterward and 86% believing it enhances their understanding of the environment.

The survey told us that less than a third of young people in Mid & East Antrim feel there are fun things for them to do in their area. This is particularly true in rural areas where the local sports club tends to be the main source of physical leisure. Young people are concerned about the safety of parks in the evening and the safety of equipment there. Young people in coastal areas do appreciate the access they have to the beaches and sea. Young people would like to make more use of outdoor spaces.

70% feel there are safe spaces to hang out in, these tend to be youth provisions, or friends' houses.

Young people feel that there is a lack of spaces and opportunities to be creative or engage in the arts.

Young people see Youth Services as a support to enhance play and leisure opportunities. Play and leisure activities are seen as vital to positive health and wellbeing. Affordability of leisure services was identified as a barrier for many young people as well as proximity to leisure services and lack of public transport to access these.

Play also helps develop life skills such as sharing and listening, while providing emotional benefits like building confidence and resilience. These activities are important not only for younger children but for all young people, regardless of age. Stakeholders identified the need for better access to play and leisure for SEND young people and the role for Youth Services in providing outdoor play and leisure needs alongside creative arts opportunities.

Living in Safety and Stability

Key facts

- In Mid and East Antrim 6,659 children and young people aged 0-25 years (16.3%) live in deprivation.
- 14,500 children and young people (35.5%) live in a rural community in Mid and East Antrim.
- According to the most recent census, 533 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.
- 25% of children and young people aged 0-24 years old in Mid and East Antrim come from a lone parent family.
- There were 38 incidents with a sectarian motivation in Mid and East Antrim in 2023/24.
- There were 61 incidents with a racist motivation in Mid and East Antrim in 2023/24. This is a 7.6% decrease from the previous year of 66 racial motivated incidents.
- There have 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 1,386 domestic abuse crimes in Mid and East Antrim in 2023/24. This is a 11% decrease from the previous year. The average rate for domestic abuse crimes in Mid and East Antrim DEAs is 198 (NI average 250).
- There was a total of 3,121 anti-social behaviour incidents in Mid and East Antrim in 2023/24. This is an 8% decrease from the previous year. The average rate for anti-social behaviour incidents in Mid and East Antrim DEAs is 446 (NI average 567).
- Suicide rates in Mid and East Antrim recorded 17 suicides in 2023. This is an 70% increase from the previous years with 10 suicides.

Stakeholder input/feedback

Children and young people learn a great deal from the relationships they have with their parents, guardians, and other trusted adults who care for them. When these relationships are safe, stable, and nurturing, they contribute to the healthy physical and emotional development of children. However, when these relationships are unstable or harmful, they can make a child or young person feel unsafe, which can negatively affect their health and happiness. Studies suggest that children thrive when they have a stable and loving home environment, where routines are in place, and they feel secure in their relationships and surroundings.

69% of young people reported feeling safe in their local area although 43% were also worried about crime in their area. This shows that whereas young people are concerned about crime in their area there are those that do not think they will be a victim of that crime.

Over a third of young people live in rural areas, moving around, particularly after dark increases fear of being a victim of crime. This is particularly true amongst young women.

Two thirds are concerned about the safety of young women and girls, and around a quarter are concerned abut getting involved in activities that might be dangerous. The 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls' report found that 19% of 16-year-olds had experienced online violence, while 18% reported psychological violence. The locations where these violent acts occurred most frequently were online (42%), at school (35%), and in public outdoor spaces (26%). These alarming statistics emphasise the importance of safe, secure environments where young people can grow and learn without fear of harm. These statistics highlight the importance of a safe and supportive environment both at home and in the community, where young people can learn, grow and thrive without fear of violence or abuse.

Over a third feel that social media has a negative impact on their safety, noting online bullying and fear of physical attack because of online threats.

Tensions between communities including sectarian conflict (especially in rural areas) was highlighted in the focus groups. Incidents with a racist motivation, whilst showing a decrease across the council area have seen significant increases in specific areas including Ballymena where almost 15% of young people have a first language other than English.

Young people feel there are limited safe spaces for them, and those spaces are not always available when they need them. Young people highlighted the influence of paramilitaries as having a negative effect on their safety.

Bullying, organised fight and walking after dark (particularly in rural areas) were also concerns raised in the focus groups.

Stakeholders identified lack of interaction with emergency services and knowledge of the consequence of young people’s action as a detriment to safety.

All identified a need for self-defence training as a need to enhance feelings of safety.

Suicide rates are on the increase; this is a worrying trend and feeling unsafe or under threat is a factor.

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Key facts

- 3,845 pupils (16.9%) who attend school in Mid and East Antrim 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).
- Approximately 8,000 children and young people aged 0-25 years have a mental health need.
- 2,400 children and young people aged 0-24 years have autism.
- The proportion of Primary 1 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Mid and East Antrim in 2022/23 is 20.6% (NI average 20.4%).
- The proportion of Year 8 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Mid and East Antrim in 2022/23 is 25% (NI average 26%).
- 19.3% of children and young people aged 0-24 years have a long-term health condition (NI 19.8%).
- There were 4.88 births per 1,000 births to young mothers aged under 20 years (NI average 5.83%).
- There were 0.67 births per 1,000 births to young mothers aged under 17 years (NI average 0.75%).
- According to the most recent census, 533 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.
- Suicide rates in Mid and East Antrim recorded 17 suicides in 2023. This is an 70% increase from the previous years with 10 suicides.

Stakeholder input/feedback

Being healthy is not only about physical fitness but also mental and emotional well-being. A healthy lifestyle boosts confidence, fights illness and improves happiness. When children and young people face mental health challenges, it can affect schoolwork, friendships and overall well-being. A balanced diet, regular exercise and enough sleep are essential for maintaining health and emotional resilience.

Young people recognise that having an active lifestyle, varied healthy diet and minimising screentime has a positive impact on their overall health and wellbeing. Young people need more opportunities to engage in a range of physical activities; cost can be a barrier to accessing these. This emphasises the need for comprehensive support systems, accessible facilities, and proactive engagement from Youth Services.

50% of young people reported that they wake up feeling fresh and rested less than half the time, there is a need for young people to get proper rest. The impact of sleep deprivation on ability to do multiple tasks through the day is well documented by health care professionals and researchers. Sleep deprivation impacts mood and the ability to engage effectively with others. Screen time late at night is responsible for many young people failing to get an effective night's sleep.

Over 70% feel they were active for more than half the time; 75% feel in good spirits and 60% feel calm and relaxed. That leaves a significant minority who are inactive and feeling low or tense and stressed.

Bullying including cyberbullying and the impact of social media on young people's emotional and physical health were highlighted through the focus groups. These are factors in suicide rates which are on the increase.

Young people recognised the impact of world affairs on their anxiety levels especially regarding their future.

Vaping and the unknown consequences of long-term use of vapes is a concern raise by almost all young people. The use of vapes to ingest illicit substances was highlighted. PCSP partners have noted the increase in vaping and use of alcohol and other illicit substances. The causes behind young people's misuse of these substances, especially those who use extreme amounts are varied and include escaping from the impact of domestic violence, abuse (including sexual), bullying and other adverse childhood experiences.

This highlights the importance of an integrated approach to supporting young people's emotional and physical wellbeing.

Youth providers and parents highlighted the multifaceted challenges young people face regarding their emotional health and wellbeing, they also emphasised the need for comprehensive support systems, safe spaces, and accessible services.

Respect for Young People's Rights

Key facts

- According to the most recent census, 533 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.
- Approximately 8,000 children and young people aged 0-25 years have a mental health need.
- In Mid and East Antrim 6,659 children and young people aged 0-25 years (16.3%) live in deprivation.
- 14,500 children and young people (35.5%) live in a rural community in Mid and East Antrim.
- 1,224 Newcomers attend schools in Mid and East Antrim (5.7%) – NI Average 5%.
- 55 Irish Traveller children and young people.
- 5,418 (30.6%) of all pupils in Mid and East Antrim are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24 (NI average 28%).
- 3,845 pupils (16.9%) who attend school in Mid and East Antrim 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).

Stakeholder input/feedback

Children and young people have rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ensuring protection and respect regardless of religion, race, gender, or disability. Just over half of young people feel they are valued, listened to and respected. Over three quarters know their rights and feel confident in fighting for them. Almost 90% feel their rights are respected within youth work programmes.

Young people expressed a desire for better education on their rights, greater freedom of expression, and more leadership opportunities. In Mid & East Antrim, 1,224 (5.7%) newcomers face unique challenges in having their rights fully recognised.

14- to 18-year-olds expressed the need to have more education on their rights as they move into work, and a safe space to explore those rights.

Young women feel their rights are not as respected as young men.

Rural young people felt they had less opportunity to express their rights than urban young people.

Other groups such as LGBTQIA+, ethnic minorities and SEND young people feel their rights are not always respected.

Youth workers and youth providers identified the need for better education on rights particularly around minority groupings such as LGBTQIA+, ethnic minorities and newcomers.

When young people's rights are upheld, it not only strengthens their confidence and self-worth but also encourages them to actively participate in their communities and society at large. Respecting these rights ensures that they have equal access to opportunities, education, and services, and are treated with fairness and justice, which are key factors in helping them reach their full potential. It also helps to protect them from exploitation and discrimination, contributing to a more inclusive society for all.

In summary young people in the area need greater freedom of expression, better leadership opportunities and increased awareness of their rights. Stakeholders agree that creating a society where young people's rights are respected is essential for promoting a sense of belonging, dignity and empowerment.

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 maths in Mid and East Antrim in 2022/23 is 74.8% compared to the NI average of 76.1%.
- The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed and/or unknown in Mid and East Antrim in 2022/23 is 7.4% (NI average of 4.7%).
- 5.4% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).
- 1,224 Newcomers attend schools in Mid and East Antrim (5.7%) – NI Average 5%.
- 55 Irish Traveller children and young people.
- 5,418 (30.6%) of all pupils in Mid and East Antrim are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24 (NI average 28%).
- 3,845 pupils (16.9%) who attend school in Mid and East Antrim 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).
- 360 children and young people were suspended from school in Mid and East Antrim.
- The attendance rate for post-primary schools was 94%. (NI average 96%).
- According to the most recent census, 533 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

Stakeholder input/feedback

Education is a fundamental right for all children, as outlined in Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It helps children and young people learn, develop life skills and understand right from wrong, preparing them to be active members of society. Education fosters success, job opportunities and personal achievement while also promoting important life skills like communication, problem-solving and emotional understanding.

44% of young people responded that they had barriers to learning; these barriers include lack of self-confidence and anxiety. Anti-Social Behaviour, along with drug use and vaping, within school were also identified as barriers. Stakeholders included bullying within school as a further barrier.

Over 80% of young people agreed they learn a lot through their youth work programmes and that they were able to get qualifications through those programmes. Over 70% feel supported through the big changes such as transitions from primary to post-primary school.

Young people feel they need more education around life skills, interview and CV skills that will help them gain employment and independent living.

Nutrition was identified as having a negative effect on learning, the quality of school meals and impact of food poverty were given as reasons for this. Over 30% of all pupils are eligible for free school meals, an indication of the financial pressures their family is under; educational underachievement and high levels of free school meal eligibility is a known correlation.

Young people fell there is a lack of support within school to help them achieve. 1,224 newcomers attend schools in Mid & East Antrim which represents a higher-than-average level; these young people need support to fit into an unfamiliar school system.

The numbers of school leavers who are unemployed or unknown is over 50% higher than the NI average. Higher than average numbers of 20-24 years olds are not in employment and do not have a qualification. There is a need for support for these young people as they transition to independence.

Attendance at Primary School is lower than the NI average; this limits the opportunity for children to develop the basic numeracy and literacy skills needed to succeed in the education system.

Stakeholders saw the benefit of homework clubs to give young people a space to learn that may not be available in the family home.

Good Relations and Equality

Key facts

- 14,500 children and young people (35.5%) live in a rural community in Mid and East Antrim.
- 1,224 Newcomers attend schools in Mid and East Antrim (5.7%) – NI Average 5%.
- 55 Irish Traveller children and young people.
- 5,418 (30.6%) of all pupils in Mid and East Antrim are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24 (NI average 28%).
- 3,845 pupils (16.9%) who attend school in Mid and East Antrim 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).
- In Mid and East Antrim 6,659 children and young people aged 0-25 years (16.3%) live in deprivation.
- According to the most recent census, 533 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

Stakeholder input/feedback

An equal society embraces diversity and people's different needs regardless of their background or identity. Good relations are built on kindness, respect and understanding, creating a space where everyone feels welcome. The United Nations highlights that all children should be treated equally, regardless of culture, language, or abilities, ensuring they have equal opportunities to succeed. In Northern Ireland, "Good Relations" aims to promote understanding and cooperation between people from different backgrounds, addressing issues such as racism, bullying, and disrespect. While progress has been made, stakeholders, including children and young people, note that challenges persist, particularly in areas where divisions remain within Mid & East Antrim.

Just over half of young people feel they are treated equally in their area, young women are less likely to feel this way than their male counterparts. A similar number feel that everyone is included, and no one feels left out, again young women are less likely to feel this way. Just over 40% believe that young people in their area respect those that are different. These figures show that there are a large number of young people who do not feel included and respected. There are many areas across Mid & East Antrim, particularly in rural districts, which continue to be single identity. Other areas, mainly urban, have become much more culturally diverse and racist hate crimes have become prevalent.

Young people in Mid & East Antrim feel that there is racism towards Romanian and Travellers. They feel there is a lack of understanding of newcomers and ethnic minorities.

Over 80% feel that youth work programmes are accessible for everyone and that those programmes support young people from other backgrounds. They also feel they get the chance to spend time with people who are different to them.

Discrimination towards LGBTQIA+ and young women is identified by stakeholders as being a key concern.

The education system is still largely segregated with most young people attending schools based on their perceived religion.

These findings highlight the importance of promoting better relationships between different communities, creating welcoming and inclusive environments, and addressing challenges faced by young people in rural areas.

Making a Positive Contribution to Society

Key facts

- The attendance rate for post-primary schools was 94%. (NI average 96%).
- 1,224 Newcomers attend schools in Mid and East Antrim (5.7%) – NI Average 5%.
- 55 Irish Traveller children and young people.
- 360 children and young people were suspended from school in Mid and East Antrim.
- In Mid and East Antrim 6,659 children and young people aged 0-25 years (16.3%) live in deprivation.
- 14,500 children and young people (35.5%) live in a rural community in Mid and East Antrim.
- According to the most recent census, 533 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

Stakeholder input/feedback

Children and young people who are socially active and participate in activities beyond school develop a positive outlook in life, this allows them to grow as a person and to become more confident, independent and resilient.

Children and young people need to feel that they belong. They need to believe that their contribution is listened to, valued and respected and that they can freely express their views in school, at a youth centre at home and within the wider community.

Around 60 % of young people can make a difference in their school or community. They feel they are listened to and taken seriously. These leaves a large number who have not this opportunity.

Over 70% say they can tell others what they think and 85% believe that young people can change things for the better.

Young people said that engaging in community activities helps them learn and grow, preparing them for future challenges. They explained that it helps them develop essential skills like leadership, communication and problem-solving.

For all young people to do this, they feel they need more opportunities in their school or community, to be given real responsibility to make change alongside expressing their views.

Young people want to be involved in making decisions that affect them and others. The opportunities that many have need to be extended and barriers such as language, ethnic backgrounds, disability, gender and sexuality need to be recognised and addressed. Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) may face additional challenges. It is important that every young person, regardless of their circumstances, can participate and make a difference. Stakeholders agree that support needs to be tailored to these challenges to ensure no one is excluded.

Stakeholders report the need to have more social action opportunities where young people can improve their communities. They need to feel valued through actively engaging in their communities.

Summary Conclusion of Needs across Strategic Themes per Council Area

Economic and Environmental Stability

Young people expressed concerns about their future and the need for life skills education, environmental awareness, and community engagement. The impact of poverty on young people's opportunities and future needs addressed. Rural young people's concerns over the environment is a key issue.

Access to Play and Leisure

There are significant barriers young people face in accessing play and leisure activities, particularly in rural areas, these include the need for more accessible, affordable, and safe recreational opportunities. Rural young people have an added disadvantage due to the proximity of these services.

Living in Safety and Stability

Young people identified the need to have safe spaces to socialise within, parks and outdoor areas are perceived to be dangerous after dark. Likewise walking in rural areas especially after dark is seen as unsafe. Online safety was a concern for many, especially cyberbullying.

Drugs and alcohol misuse have an impact on safety both for those using and those in the vicinity of the users. Young women are especially vulnerable.

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

There needs to be a more integrated approach to supporting young people's emotional and physical wellbeing, with a focus on accessible facilities, educational programmes, and strong support networks. Young people need safe spaces to destress and escape from the pressures they are experiencing.

Respect for Young People's Rights

There is the need for better education, support, and opportunities for young people to understand, advocate for, and exercise their rights, with a particular focus on gender equality, rural inclusion, ethnic diversity and LGBTQIA+ rights.

Learning and Achieving

Many young people feel that formal education does not give them the skill set to meet their future needs. Young people identify relevant life skills and accreditations that have practical value. Food poverty is seen as having a significant impact on their ability to learn along with anti-social behaviours in school settings. Support for school leavers who have been unable to gain employment and have low levels of qualifications is needed.

Good Relations and Equality

Young people need more opportunities to meet with those from other communities, rural isolation is a barrier to this along with fear of paramilitaries.

Young people identified a demonisation of other communities, particularly traveller and ethnic minorities. Racism, homophobia and sexism were identified as having a significant impact on young people targeted by these.

Making a Positive Contribution to Society

Young people need more structures to provide opportunities for volunteering and social action to enable them to be more active citizens. Leadership skills are key to helping young people attain active citizenship.

The findings – Identification of priorities/DEA profiles

Ballymena

Key facts

- There is 7,365 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Ballymena DEA.
- 2,863 fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.
- 8.7% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).
- 12.8% of young people aged 18-24 have never worked and have no/low levels of qualifications (NI average 5.6%).
- The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 7.2% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.
- The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and maths in 2022/23 is 63.5% (NI average 76.1%).
- 860 newcomer pupils in Ballymena DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.
- 29.9% of 0–24-year-olds live in lone parent families (NI Average 25.7%).
- 19.3% of 0–24-year-olds live in households with no access to a car or van (NI Average 12%).
- 18.2 per 1000 of 0–15-year-olds have an Emotional, Psychological or Mental health condition (NI average 13.9).
- 140 per 1000 of 16–24-year-olds have an Emotional, Psychological or Mental health condition (NI average 84.2).
- 68.8 per 1000 of 0–24-year-olds have a learning difficulty (NI average 53.2).
- 85.7 per 1000 of 0–24-year-olds have autism (NI average 49.0).
- There was an average of 380 domestic abuse crimes per year between 2020 and 2024 (NI average 260 per annum).
- There were 28 Youth Justice referrals in 2022/23 (NI average 17).
- There was an average of 1270 Anti Social Behaviour incidents per year between 2020 and 2024 (NI average 708 per annum).
- 14.9% of 0–24-year-olds have a main language other than English (NI average 4.1%).
- There were 27 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 10% decrease from the previous year of 30 racial motivated incidents.

Ballymena Stakeholder input/feedback

Ballymena DEA has the highest youth population in Mid & East Antrim.

The Regional Assessment of Needs survey, young people focus groups and stakeholder consultations identified that Living in Safety and Stability along with Your Future are joint top priorities for young people (both ranked at 24%).

Almost two thirds worry about the safety of young women. Referral levels to Youth Justice Agency are much higher than the NI average. Anti-Social Behaviour incidents are also very high compared to the NI average; young people are often most affected by ASB. Youth Justice Referrals are 60% higher than the NI average.

High numbers of young people have an Emotional, Psychological or Mental health condition particularly in the 16-24 age group. Levels of Autism and learning difficulties are also above average. This has an impact on young people's ability to achieve in school. The percentage of school leavers attaining 5 GCSEs at Grades A*-C is well below the NI average.

The impact of poverty is substantial. Large numbers of young people live in lone parent families. Children and young people from lone parent families are deprived because they often face lower household incomes and reduced access to resources due to the absence of a second earning parent.

High numbers of young people have a first language other than English; this is a barrier to fully participating in provision; their engagement with Youth Services is more limited. Lack of understanding of other cultures is identified by young people and stakeholders as an issue they would like to address through opportunities to meet with those from different back grounds.

Drugs and substance misuse particularly vaping and alcohol are having a major impact on young people's physical and mental health.

Consultations with young people identified isolation and lack of transport, struggling in school, violence against women, bullying, body shaming, not fitting in, self-confidence and family issues as being of concern. Domestic abuse crimes are almost 50% higher in Ballymena than the NI average. Young people experiencing domestic abuse within the home are more likely to spend more time out of the home and engaging in risk taking behaviours.

These concerns impact on their emotional health and wellbeing and their abilities to succeed within school.

Ballymena contains a Neighbourhood Renewal Area (NRA); young people living in NRAs, which are areas of severe multiple deprivation, tend to have lower educational outcomes compared to their peers.

Ballymena Summary

Ballymena DEA has a wide range of needs linked to poverty, educational attainment, criminality and language barriers. Safety is a major worry as many have experienced violence within their household and amongst peers, violence against women is a particular concern. The impact of vaping on health and educational attainment is a struggle for many young people leading to high levels of concerns around their future. Access to services for young people who do not have English as their main language leads to division and isolation with the accompanying impact on physical and mental health.

Bannside

Key facts

- There is 6,096 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Bannside DEA.
- 2,863 fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.
- 3.2% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).
- The percentage of school leavers 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 achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and maths in 2022/23 is 80.5% (NI average 76.1%).
- 36 newcomer pupils in Bannside DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.
- 57.3 per 1000 of 0–24-year-olds have a learning difficulty (NI average 53.2).
- 88.3 per 1000 of 0–24-year-olds have autism (NI average 49.0).
- There were 4 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 33.3% increase from the previous year of 3 racial motivated incidents.

Bannside Stakeholder input/feedback

Bannside is a rural DEA with several single identity settlements.

The Regional Assessment of Needs survey, young people focus groups and stakeholder consultations identified that Your Future is the top priority for young people.

89% worry about the safety of young women. Rural areas are perceived as being less safe after dark due to lack of street lighting and the need to walk to access services due to limited public transport.

High numbers of young people have been diagnosed with Autism and learning difficulties. This impacts on their ability to achieve in school and to engage in services.

Vaping, drugs and alcohol misuse have a negative impact on young people's lives.

Incidents of ASB around use of cars amongst young people aged 17+ (especially males) is a concern raised through PCSP partners. This is prevalent in some of the rural villages and tends to move around the DEA.

Young people identified health education as a need especially around physical health and nutrition.

Many see the benefits of engaging outdoors but lack the skills and opportunities to do this.

Bannside Summary

Bannside DEA data highlights key concerns around safety and access to services. High numbers of Autism and learning difficulties need to be considered. Health concerns around vaping, drug and alcohol use as well as access to spaces for leisure activities. Car ASB amongst older males is a significant issue.

Braid

Key facts

- There is 7,334 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Braid DEA.
- 3,071 fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.
- 5.1% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).
- The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 4.7% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.
- The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and maths in 2022/23 is 75.1% (NI average 76.1%).
- 43 newcomer pupils in Braid DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.
- 29.9% of 0–24-year-olds live in lone parent families (NI Average 25.7%).
- 19.3% of 0–24-year-olds live in households with no access to a car or van (NI Average 12%).
- 15.1 per 1000 of 0–15-year-olds have an Emotional, Psychological or Mental health condition (NI average 13.9).
- 121.9 per 1000 of 0–24-year-olds have autism (NI average 49.0).
- There was an average of 380 domestic abuse crimes per year between 2020 and 2024 (NI average 260 per annum).
- There were 29 Youth Justice referrals in 2022/23 (NI average 17).
- There were 3 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 73% decrease from the previous year of 11 racial motivated incidents.

Braid Stakeholder input/feedback

Braid has the second highest youth population amongst Mid & East Antrim DEAs; however, it has the highest number of young people falling into Youth Service priority age bands. Braid is a rural DEA with many large, single identity, villages.

The Regional Assessment of Needs survey, young people focus groups and stakeholder consultations identified that Play, Hobbies and Interests along with Your Future are the top priorities for young people. 86% of young people do not feel there are fun things to do in their area and over 40% feel there are not safe spaces for them to hang out with their friends.

Around two thirds worry about the safety of young women. Domestic Violence levels are 1.5 times the NI average. Rural areas are perceived as being less safe after dark due to lack of street lighting and the need to walk to access services due to limited public transport. Referrals to Youth Justice are also very high compared to the rest of NI.

A higher-than-average number of young people live in lone parent families which has a financial impact. Children and young people from lone parent families are deprived because they often face lower household incomes and reduced access to resources due to the absence of a second earning parent. Households without access to a car or van are well above the NI average which inhibits access to services in a rural area.

Numbers of young people with Autism are 2.5 times the NI average and high numbers of young people are diagnosed with a mental health condition. This has a significant impact on ability to achieve in formal education and participate in other services.

Vaping and healthy eating are identified as key health concerns for young people.

Young people have concerns over current world events and the possibility of wars spreading.

Exam stress and worries about future employment, especially impact of environmental changes on farmers. Environmental damage and pollution especially litter are seen as issues.

Young people feel the effects of rural isolation and lack of access to services.

School leavers achieving 5 or more GCSEs at Grades A*-C are lower than the NI average. School leavers moving into unemployment or unknown is higher than the NI average. Higher levels of 20–24-year-olds not in employment and without a qualification is higher than the NI average. This is a concern as these young people have limited abilities to become independent adults.

In Glenravel young people have limited access to safe place to socialise together. Travel to and from school from the rural area takes up considerable time and access to services in bigger town is limited as there is no public transport after 6pm. Road safety is a main worry for young people having to walk to provision. Life skills such as cooking and car maintenance were identified by young people and youth workers.

Braid Summary

Braid DEA has a wide range of needs linked to rural isolation, poverty, educational attainment, criminality and learning barriers. Safety is a major worry as many have experienced violence within their household and amongst peers, violence against women is a particular concern. The impact of vaping on health and educational attainment is a struggle for many young people leading to high levels of concerns around their future. Access to services for young people who are rurally isolated leads to division with the accompanying impact on physical and mental health. Single identity communities reduces opportunities to meet those from different backgrounds.

Carrick Castle

Key facts

- There is 5,146 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Carrick Castle.
- 2,094 fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.
- 5.2% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).
- The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 9.2% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.
- The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and maths in 2022/23 is 73.5% (NI average 76.1%).
- 132 newcomer pupils in Carrick Castle DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.
- 27.5% of 0–24-year-olds live in lone parent families (NI Average 25.7%).
- 12% of 0–24-year-olds live in households with no access to a car or van (NI Average 12%).
- 62.8 per 1000 of 0–24-year-olds have autism (NI average 49.0).
- 23.7% of 0–24-year-olds have one or more long term health conditions (NI average 19.8%).
- There were 23 Youth Justice referrals in 2022/23 (NI average 17).
- There were 11 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 27% decrease from the previous year of 15 racial motivated incidents.

Carrick Castle Stakeholder input/feedback

The Regional Assessment of Needs survey, young people focus groups and stakeholder consultations identified that Your Future is the top priority for young people. Two thirds of young people do not feel there are fun things to do in their area.

Above average numbers of young people live in lone parent households and access to a car or van is average for NI. Children and young people from lone parent families are because they often face lower household incomes and reduced access to resources due to the absence of a second earning parent. This has an impact on young people's ability to access services. Leisure services are outside the reach of many young people.

Above average numbers of young people live with a long-term health condition. High numbers of young people have an Autism diagnosis. This impacts on school attainment and ability to engage in other services.

Above average numbers of 20–24-year-olds are not in employment and have no qualifications. The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or unknown is double the NI average and the percentage of school leavers attaining 5 GCSEs at Grades A*-C is lower than the NI average. This is a worry as it affects a young person's ability to live independently.

Over two thirds of young people are worried about the safety of young women. Healthy relationships is a concern for young people. Youth Justice referrals are a third higher than the NI average.

Exam stress and bullying are having a large impact on young people emotional health.

Young people known to social services feel stigmatised.

Bullying was identified by many, especially around branded clothing which reflects the poverty many are living with.

PCSP partners identified concerns of high levels of Vaping, including vaping illicit substances, alcohol use and other drug use amongst significant numbers of young people. Some had identified their substance use as a means of escape from Domestic Violence in their household.

Carrick Castle Summary

Carrick Castle DEA has a wide range of needs linked to poverty, educational attainment, criminality and learning barriers. Safety is a major worry as many have experienced violence within their household and amongst peers, violence against women is a particular concern. The impact of vaping on health and educational attainment is a struggle for many young people leading to high levels of concerns around their future.

Coast Road

Key facts

- There is 4,800 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Coast Road DEA.
- 1,997 fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.
- 6.4% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).
- The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 11.5% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.
- 5.7% of young people aged 18-24 have never worked and have no/low levels of qualifications (NI average 5.6%).
- The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and maths in 2022/23 is 76% (NI average 76.1%).
- 61 newcomer pupils in Coast Road DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.
- 33.3% of 0–24-year-olds live in lone parent families (NI Average 25.7%).
- 12.9% of 0–24-year-olds live in households with no access to a car or van (NI Average 12%).
- 21.4% of 0–24-year-olds have one or more long term health conditions (NI average 19.8%).
- There were 3 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 50% increase from the previous year of 2 racial motivated incidents.

Coast Road Stakeholder input/feedback

Coast Road is a rural DEA with a range of single identity settlements.

The Regional Assessment of Needs survey, young people focus groups and stakeholder consultations identified that Your Future is the top priorities for young people. Two thirds of young people do not feel there are fun things to do in their area and over half feel there are not safe spaces for them to hang out with their friends.

A third of young people live in lone parent families. Children and young people from lone parent families are deprived because they often face lower household incomes and reduced access to resources due to the absence of a second earning parent. The financial impact is exacerbated by the rurality with limited access to public transport and restricted local services. The numbers of young people living in households with no access to a car or van is above the NI average. Poverty and cost of living featured highly in young peoples identified needs.

70% worry about the safety of young women. Rural areas are perceived as being less safe after dark due to lack of street lighting and the need to walk to access services due to limited public transport.

Above average numbers of young people are living with a long-term health condition.

Vaping, drugs and addiction along with healthy eating are identified as key health concerns by young people.

There is a much higher than average level of 20–24-year-olds who are unemployed and do not have a qualification. There are much fewer employment opportunities in rural areas, so these young people have added disadvantages. The percentage of school leavers moving onto unemployment or unknown is over 2.5 times the NI average. This is a significant concern as it is a major barrier to young people being able to live independently as they move into adulthood.

In Glenarm young people reported that it is hard to go anywhere, due to cost and limited timetables of public transport. GP services have closed meaning young people have to travel considerable distances to access health care. Some feel unsafe in their local area for several reasons: adults with additional needs who do not or cannot interact with young people in an appropriate manner, and influx of tourists at certain times of the year. MUGA is underused due to low fencing and balls being lost, so young people continue to use streets and roads for ballgames.

In Carnlough young people identified the lack of places for young people to hang out, public spaces are not considered welcoming.

Coast Road Summary

Coast Road DEA has a wide range of needs linked to rural isolation, poverty, educational attainment, health conditions and criminality. The impact of vaping on health and educational attainment is a struggle for many young people leading to high levels of concerns around their future. Access to services for young people who are rurally isolated leads to division with the accompanying impact on physical and mental health. Single identity communities reduce opportunities to meet those from different backgrounds.

Knockagh

Key facts

- There is 5,059 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Knockagh DEA.
- 2,130 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 are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).
- The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 8.5% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.
- The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and maths in 2022/23 is 75.9% (NI average 76.1%).
- 70 newcomer pupils in Knockagh DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.
- 28.6% of 0–24-year-olds live in lone parent families (NI Average 25.7%).
- 21.9% of 0–24-year-olds have one or more long term health conditions (NI average 19.8%).
- There were 9 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 125% increase from the previous year of 4 racial motivated incidents.

Knockagh Stakeholder input/feedback

Knockagh DEA covers the large village of Greenisland, Tropperslane and a large part of Carrickfergus Town. Whereas it has a large rural area the population is in this urban/suburban area.

The Regional Assessment of Needs survey, young people focus groups and stakeholder consultations identified that Your Future is the top priority for young people. Over half of young people do not feel there are fun things to do in their area.

Above average numbers of young people live in lone parent household. Children and young people from lone parent families are deprived because they often face lower household incomes and reduced access to resources due to the absence of a second earning parent. This has an impact on young people's ability to access services. Leisure services are outside the reach of many young people. Young people have identified poverty as being a concern for them.

Above average numbers of young people live with a long-term health condition.

70% of young people are worried about the safety of young women. Healthy relationships is a concern for young people. Over 40% of young people are concerned about crime in their area. Incidents with a racist motivation have increased significantly in recent years.

Bullying, school issues, and fitting in with peers are having a large impact on young people emotional health.

Young people are concerned about the impact of drugs, dealers and paramilitary influences. Paramilitary feuds are a concern within the area. Racially motivated incidents have increased significantly in recent years.

Higher than average numbers of 20-24 years old are unemployed and have no qualification; the percentage of school leavers going onto unemployment or unknown is 80% higher than the NI average. The percentage of school leavers with 5 or more GCSEs at Grades A*-c is below the NI average. This impacts on young people's ability to live independently.

Knockagh Summary

Knockagh DEA has a wide range of needs linked to, poverty, educational attainment, health conditions and criminality. The impact of vaping on health and drug use is a struggle for many young people leading to high levels of concerns around their future. Single identity communities reduce opportunities to meet those from different backgrounds. Intra community tensions and racially motivated incidents are a concern.

Larne Lough

Key facts

- There is 5,032 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Larne Lough DEA.
- 2,071 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 are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).
- The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 7.8% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.
- The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and maths in 2022/23 is 79.2% (NI average 76.1%).
- 22 newcomer pupils in Larne Lough DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.
- 66.3 per 1000 of 0–24-year-olds have autism (NI average 49.0).
- There were 4 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 300% increase from the previous year of 1 racial motivated incident.

Larne Lough Stakeholder input/feedback

Larne Lough is a rural DEA made up of single identity settlements; it also includes part of Larne town.

The Regional Assessment of Needs survey, young people focus groups and stakeholder consultations identified that Your Future is the top priority for young people. 90% of young people do not agree there are fun things to do in their area.

Leisure services are outside the reach of many young people due to proximity and cost. Young people have identified isolation as being a concern for them.

Above average numbers of young people have a diagnosis of Autism.

Over half of young people are worried about the safety of young women. Healthy relationships is a concern for young people. 45% of young people are concerned about crime in their area.

Coping with school issues, are having a large impact on young people emotional health.

Young people tend to come from single identity backgrounds and lack the opportunity to meet others from different communities or culture. Racially motivated incidents have seen a disturbing increase.

Alcohol misuse is seen as a concern; young people are worried about their mental health. Waiting times for CAMHS and other medical services is a concern.

Male teenagers have traditionally been hard-to-reach in working class communities in Larne and its environs, and post-Covid, it continues to be a challenge. Young men have grown up in a different way, and there seems to be an unwillingness to get involved in projects or group work. There is also evidence of young people feeling 'too old' for youth clubs aged 12 / 13, when previously this might have been the experience for 16 / 17-year-olds.

Stakeholders are concerned about the negative effects of social media on young women self-esteem and confidence. Many have unreal expectations of relationships leading to anxiety.

Likewise negative effects of social media on young men leads to an overly inflated sense of self-worth, misogyny & sexism. They lack an understanding of intimate relationships, and express racist and homophobic opinions.

There is widespread use of easily available drugs. Instances of drug use (in vapes) on way to school and during school day.

Paramilitary influence impacts on an unwillingness to engage in attempts to be diverse and celebrate diversity.

Within the rural communities of Whitehead and Islandmagee – young people felt unsafe during darker evenings due to lack of street lighting, lack of public transport and rurality. Expense of public transport to travel to neighbouring towns is prohibitive and a barrier to accessing services. Young people are wary of those from outside their area.

In Ballycarry some young people reluctant to go out after 7PM, especially to the local park, as groups of older teenagers gather. There are not enough activities for young people in the area, and they feel the need to travel to Larne or Carrick to access leisure facilities.

The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or unknown is over 50% higher than the NI average, this impacts on their ability to become independent adults.

Larne Lough Summary

Larne Lough DEA has a wide range of needs linked to poverty, educational attainment, autism and rural isolation. Safety is a major worry violence against women is a particular concern, toxic masculinity is a contributing factor. The impact of vaping on health and educational attainment is a struggle for many young people leading to high levels of concerns around their future. Access to services for young people arising from rural isolation with the accompanying impact on physical and mental health.