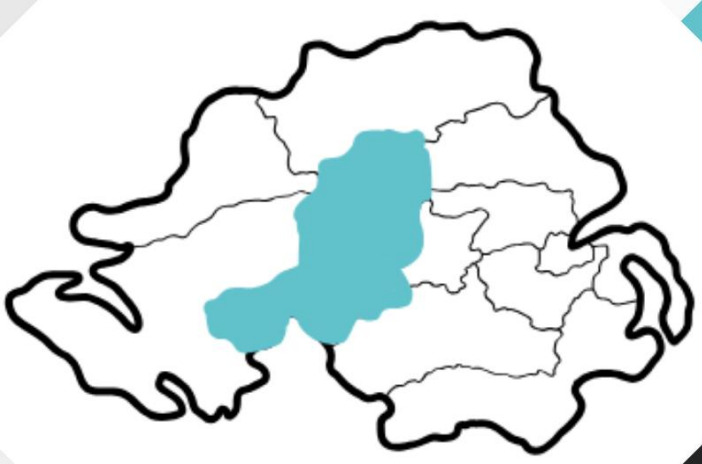
Education Authority

2026 - 2029



MID ULSTER

LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF NEED

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PUBLISHED
3 November 2025

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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 Ulster. It brings together data, evidence and local insight to help identify the needs and barriers children and young people in Mid Ulster 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 Mid Ulster. 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 People's Strategy 2020-2030. A total of 5,451 children and young people responded to the survey. From those figures, 610 children and young people responded to the survey in Mid Ulster.

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. A total of 8 focus groups, involving 163 participants, were facilitated throughout Mid Ulster.

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 Ulster 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. Logic branching was incorporated into the survey to tailor questions based on previous responses and made the survey more relevant to different age bands and groups.

Likert scales were used so that the data could be analysed to measure attitudes. There were 180 responses to this survey.

Part Six – Wider Stakeholder Engagement

Additional engagement included Local Advisory group feedback along with Mid Ulster Youth Voice and the voice of local voice groups across Mid Ulster. Policing Community Safety (Mid Ulster), Good Relations (Mid Ulster District Council) and local Children and young people's diversionary engagement forums were also consulted on the needs of children and young people across the region. Cookstown local Youth Services also consulted with a further 75 young people across the DEA on their needs and priorities.

A key principle of consultation was the importance of the voice of children and young people in the assessment of need across Mid Ulster. This allowed Youth Service planners to understand children and young people's lived experiences, hear their views and circumstances. Surveys formed the initial part of this process and focus groups followed for more in-depth discussion about attitudes, feelings and experiences that included Local Advisory group feedback along with Mid Ulster Youth Voice and the voice of local voice groups across Mid Ulster.

Meaningful engagement offered opportunities for children and young people to reflect on their needs and ensured that interventions were responsive to these needs.

Council in Numbers

Population and Demographics:

Total Population: 151,001 people.

Children and Young People (0-25 years): 52,307 (34.6% of total population).

Children and Young People (4-25 years): 43,896 (29.1% of total population).

Age Bands:

0-3 years: 8,411 (5.6% of total population).

4-8 years: 11,067 (7.3% of total population).

9-13 years: 11,013 (7.3% of total population).

14-18 years: 10,029 (6.6% of total population).

19-25 years: 11,787 (7.8% of total population).

Here's a summary of the projected population data for different age bands from 2024 to 2036:

Age Bands	2024	2027	2030	2033	2036
0 - 3 years	81,979	79,340	77,162	75,442	74,912
4 - 8 years	120,003	109,660	102,695	100,296	97,726
9 - 13 years	129,570	125,948	118,800	108,771	103,882
14 - 18 years	128,465	132,640	130,832	126,228	116,873
19 - 25 years	148,557	155,399	166,356	172,117	170,182
Total (0-25 years)	608,594	602,987	595,845	582,584	563,575

The data shows a general trend of decreasing population in the younger age bands (0-3, 4-8, 9-13 years) over the years, while the population in the older age bands (14-18, 19-25 years) initially increases and then stabilizes or slightly decreases.

Deprivation: 13.9% of children and young people aged 0-25 years live in deprivation (NI average: 13.2%).

Rural Community: Mid Ulster has a much higher percentage of young people living in rural areas (66%) compared to the Northern Ireland average (34.5%). This indicates a strong rural community presence.

Lone Parent Families: 19% of children and young people aged 0-24 years come from lone parent families (NI average: 21%).

Suicide Rates: 20 suicides in 2023 (100% increase from 2020). This is a key area of need within Mid Ulster highlighted later in the document.

Newcomers in Schools: 5.7% of school attendees are newcomers (NI average: 5%).

Irish Language Users: 11,694 people have knowledge of the Irish language; 6,179 (4.29%) use it daily (highest percentage in NI).

Census 2021 data highlights steady growth in Irish language engagement across Mid Ulster. The number of people with some ability in Irish rose from 22,984 in 2011 to 29,397 in 2021, now representing 20.4% of the population, well above the regional average. Daily speakers number over 6,000, with nearly 16,500 residents reporting some level of fluency. The number of people using Irish as their main language at home rose from 404 to 682 over the decade, with highest usage among children and young adults. In the 3–14 age group, 0.86% of residents report Irish as their main language, followed by 0.52% among 15–39-year-olds. These figures reflect a vibrant and growing linguistic community and confirm the strategic importance of continued investment in Irish Medium education and Youth Services in the district.

Knowledge of Irish (per LDG)

	All usual residents aged 3 and over	Some ability in Irish (count)	Some ability in Irish (%)
2011	132,025	22,984	17.41%
2021	144,036	29,397	20.41%
Increase	-	*+6,413*	*3.0%*

Free School Meals: 26.6% of pupils are eligible (NI average: 28%).

Special Education Needs: 17.1% of pupils have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3 (NI average: 19%).

GCSE Achievement: 81.6% of school leavers achieve at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and maths (NI average: 76.1%).

Unemployment/Unknown Status: 2.8% of school leavers are unemployed and/or unknown (NI average: 4.7%).

Primary 1 Obesity/Overweight: 20.6% (NI average: 20.4%).

- **Girls**: 23.2% (NI average: 24.3%).
- **Boys**: 16.6% (NI average: 16.5%).

Year 8 Obesity/Overweight: 22.7% (NI average: 26%).

- **Girls**: 23.6% (NI average: 26.2%).
- **Boys**: 21.8% (NI average: 25.8%).

Sectarian Incidents: 82 incidents in 2023/24.

Racist Incidents: 51 incidents in 2023/24 (8.5% increase from previous year).

Anti-Social Behaviour Incidents: 2,192 incidents in 2023/24 (7% decrease from previous year; NI average: 567 per DEA).

In Mid Ulster, there were 1,114 domestic abuse crimes recorded in 2023/24, which represents a 23% decrease from the previous year. The average rate for domestic abuse crimes in Mid Ulster District Electoral Areas (DEAs) is 160 per DEA, compared to the Northern Ireland (NI) average of 250 per DEA.

For Northern Ireland as a whole, there were 19,262 domestic abuse crimes recorded in the 12 months up to June 2024, which is a 11.9% decrease from the previous year. This translates to approximately 10 domestic abuse crimes per 1,000 population.

Northern Ireland Data:

The Executive Office Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Experiences and Attitudes of 16-year-olds in Northern Ireland in 2024 Report:

In the last year, almost a fifth of 16-year-olds had experienced online violence (19%).

Psychological violence was experienced by 18% of respondents. Just over one in ten had experienced sexual violence (11%) and 7% had experienced physical violence.

Of those respondents experiencing violent acts or behaviour in the last year, the most common places where they occurred were online (42%), at school (35%) and a public outdoor space (26%).

Key Trends/Highlights

Growing Youth Population: The increase in younger populations (especially in the 4-13 age bands) will lead to a higher number of 14-18-year-olds over the next few years.

Economic Disadvantage and Deprivation: Within the Mid Ulster area, 13.9% of children and young people in deprivation. This highlights the socio-economic challenges faced by many in the area. With 66% of young people living in rural communities and 19% coming from lone-parent families, there are interconnected challenges of limited access to resources, social isolation and increased vulnerability to poverty-related issues.

Mental and Physical Health Concerns: The obesity rates across Mid Ulster raise concerns, with 20.6% of Primary 1 pupils and 22.7% of Year 8 pupils identified as overweight or obese. These figures closely mirror the Northern Ireland average, highlighting the need for health initiatives aimed at preventing obesity among children and young people. This trend not only affects general well-being but contributes to deeper emotional health and well-being issues in later life.

Rising Incidents of Hate, Anti-Social Behaviour and Domestic Abuse: Hate crime and sectarianism remain pressing concerns in Mid Ulster. There was an 8.5% increase in racially motivated incidents from 2022/23 to 2023/24, alongside 82 sectarian incidents in 2023/24. However, the most alarming trend is the significant rise in domestic abuse crimes, which totalled 1,114 incidents in 2023/24— although a 23% decrease from the previous year, the rate and numbers is very worrying. This is particularly concerning given the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people's safety and mental health. Children and young people are affected by domestic abuse, with the trauma often spilling over into their school and social environments, further complicating their emotional and mental well-being**.**

Educational Achievement and Employment Concerns: In Mid Ulster, 81.6% of school leavers achieved at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, slightly above the Northern Ireland average of 76.1%. However, 2.8% of school leavers in the area were either unemployed or their status was unknown, which is lower than the Northern Ireland average of 4.7%. This highlights the ongoing issue of youth unemployment in the area and challenges faced by young people, including additional barriers such as limited career opportunities. Additionally, 4.1% of young people aged 20-24 are neither employed nor qualified, which is close to the Northern Ireland average of 4.9%. This situation highlights the need for career guidance, better access to vocational training and employment support for all children and young people, especially those from marginalised and vulnerable groups**.** Furthermore, 17.1% of pupils in the Mid Ulster area have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), whilst slightly lower than the Northern Ireland average of 19% it still highlights the challenges faced by these young people and the barriers, they may encounter in accessing support and opportunities.

Violence against young women and girls in Northern Ireland is a growing concern in across the area with 18% of 16-year-olds reported experiencing psychological violence, 11% sexual violence and 7% physical violence. These incidents are most commonly occurring online (42%), in schools (35%) and in public spaces (26%). Young women and girls are particularly vulnerable to these forms of violence, which negatively impact their mental health and safety. Domestic abuse crimes are high in Mid Ulster with 1,114 incidents reported in 2023/24. This suggests that young women often face violence both in their homes and in public spaces.

Overall, these trends suggest that young people in Mid Ulster face socio-economic challenges that affect their mental health, educational attainment and employment prospects, alongside rising community tensions and violence against women and girls.

Priorities for Young People:

Below are the top ranked priorities for young people highlighted within the Mid Ulster Area based on the recent consultations.

1. **Your Future**: This encompasses career aspirations, opportunities for personal growth and the support needed to achieve long-term goals.
2. **Play, Hobbies and Interests**: This includes recreational activities, sports and hobbies that young people enjoy.
3. **Health and Wellbeing**: This involves their emotional health and wellbeing, physical health and overall wellbeing.
4. **Safety**: This covers physical safety, emotional security and feeling safe in your community**.**
5. **Your Rights**: This includes understanding and advocating for their rights as a young person.
6. **Equality:** Ensuring equality in Youth Services is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment where all young people can thrive. Here are some key aspects and recommendations for promoting equality:
    - ***Inclusiveness***: Ensuring all young people, regardless of background, have access to Youth Services.
    - ***Diversity***: Celebrating and respecting the diverse backgrounds and cultures of young people.
    - ***Rights***: Upholding the rights of young people and ensuring their voices are heard and valued.
7. **Education**: This covers access to quality education, educational resources and support for learning.
8. **Citizenship** - Citizenship education aims to equip young people with the skills and confidence to participate actively in society, make informed decisions and contribute positively to their communities. This education is crucial for developing self-confidence, a sense of agency and the ability to handle life changes and challenges such as bullying and discrimination.

The Findings

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Key facts

5,115 pupils (17.1%) who attend school in Mid Ulster 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).

Approximately 10,000 children and young people aged 0-25 years have a mental health need.

2,109 children and young people aged 0-24 years have autism.

The proportion of Primary 1 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Mid Ulster in 2022/23 is 20.6%. (NI average 20.4%). This represents 23.2% of girls (NI 24.3%) and 16.6% of boys (NI 16.5%).

The proportion of Year 8 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Mid Ulster in 2022/23 is 22.7%. (NI average 26%). This represents 23.6% of girls (NI 26.2%) and 21.8% of boys (NI 25.8%).

15.5% of children and young people aged 0-24 years have a long-term health condition (NI 19.8%).

There were 3.63 births per 1,000 births to young mothers aged under 20 years (NI average 5.83%).

There were 0.48 births per 1,000 births to young mothers aged under 17 years (NI average 0.75%).

According to the most recent census, 402 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

Suicide rates in Mid Ulster recorded 20 suicides in 2023. This is an 100% increase from 2020 which had 10 suicides. The suicide rate has risen this past three consecutive years in Mid Ulster.

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.

Across Mid Ulster, children and young people have voiced concerns about both their mental and physical health. Over 100 young people aged 0-25 in the area have emotional and mental health needs. Many young people have reported stress, anxiety, bullying and body image as issues. Stakeholders agree that there is a need to address these concerns. Excessive phone use, particularly through social media, was also identified as contributing to emotional difficulties, with concerns over screen time's impact on mental health.

More than 30% of young people in the area reported feeling they have nowhere to go for help with their emotional well-being. Many suggested the creation of safe spaces for relaxation, discussing feelings and mindfulness activities. Young people also raised concerns about vaping, substance misuse, lack of exercise and poor eating and sleeping habits. Almost 30% of young people expressed that there are no local opportunities for physical activities to support health and well-being. Stakeholders agree that promoting both physical and emotional well-being, including exercise and healthy habits, is very important.

In terms of special education needs, Mid Ulster has 5,115 pupils (17.1%) with a Special Education Need or Disability at stages 1-3, slightly lower than the NI average of 19%., the high prevalence of autism, with 2,109 children and young people aged 0-24 years diagnosed with autism.

Obesity rates among young people in Mid Ulster are a mixed picture. For Year 8 pupils, the obesity rate is 22.7% (girls: 23.6%, boys: 21.8%), which is lower than the NI average of 26% (girls: 26.2%, boys: 25.8%). For Primary 1 pupils, the obesity rate is 20.6% (girls: 23.2%, boys: 16.6%), like the NI average of 20.4% (girls: 24.3%, boys: 16.5%) (publichealth.ie).

The prevalence of long-term health conditions among children and young people aged 0-24 years in Mid Ulster is 15.5%, lower than the NI average of 19.8%. Births to young mothers (under 20 years) in Mid Ulster are 3.63 per 1,000 births, lower than the NI average of 5.83%.

Support for LGBTQI+ youth is growing in Mid Ulster, with 402 young people aged 16-24 identifying as such. This is essential for fostering an inclusive and supportive community. Organisations like Mid Ulster Pride and Cara-Friend are actively working to provide resources and support for LGBTQI+ individuals.

Based on feedback from nine focus groups, young people feel they have spaces where they can relax and feel calm. 81% of young people strongly believe they receive the emotional health and well-being support they need. They also have opportunities to engage in physical activities, including Outdoor Learning Service activities and residentials, which help improve their social skills in a positive environment. Additionally, they benefit from physical health and fitness activities, sleep and relaxation therapy and healthy eating.

However, young people have identified several major concerns related to emotional health and well-being, including stress, social media, body image and vaping. They believe that physical health and fitness, along with good sleep and relaxation therapy, can significantly enhance their overall health and well-being. Other suggestions include eating healthy and having positive influences around them to provide additional support.

The responses reveal several critical needs and concerns among young people. Bullying and Safe Spaces: A significant portion of young people (79%) strongly agree or agree that they can get help for their emotional health and well-being (EHWB). However, 21% feel they don't know or need more help, indicating a need for more accessible and effective support systems.

Mental Health Challenges: Issues such as mental health, suicide, self-harm and a lack of services for young people are prevalent. This highlights the urgent need for comprehensive mental health services, including mindfulness programmes, self-care information, mental health retreats and residentials.

Over half of young people report not feeling well-rested. There is a strong demand for mindfulness programmes, self-care resources and access to mental health resources. Young people value safe spaces for relaxation, with 81% feeling they receive emotional health and well-being (EHWB) support when needed. However, 21% feel uncertain or believe more help is required. Key priorities include physical activities, outdoor learning and residentials, alongside improving social skills, maintaining physical health and access to sleep and relaxation therapy.

Concerns about sexual health, drug and alcohol misuse and vaping are significant. Addressing these issues requires targeted education and support programmes to help young people make informed decisions and access necessary resources. In terms of sleep quality, more than 50% of young people did not wake up feeling fresh and rested, indicating a need for better sleep hygiene education and support to improve overall well-being. The lack of facilities in rural areas is not ideal for helping with mental health. Enhancing access to mental health support and creating safe spaces in these areas is crucial.

Overall, the feedback and responses from young people underscores the need for a multifaceted approach to support young people's emotional health and well-being, including addressing bullying, improving mental health provision, providing sexual health education, tackling substance misuse and ensuring adequate facilities in rural areas. By addressing these needs, this can create a more supportive and healthier environment for young people.

Access to play and Leisure

Key Facts

The availability of outdoor play spaces is crucial for fostering children's growth. Mid Ulster District Council boasts over 120 play parks and outdoor spaces 4, contributing to the more than 700 council-registered playparks across Northern Ireland. These facilities provide enriching opportunities for play, allowing children to engage in physical activities and social interactions that are vital for their overall development.

Leisure and recreational centres also play a significant role in promoting physical activity and wellbeing among young people. Mid Ulster District Council operates several leisure facilities, including Cookstown Leisure Centre, Dungannon Leisure Centre, Magherafelt Leisure Centre and Mid Ulster Sports Arena. These centres offer a range of activities and programmes that encourage children and young people to stay active and healthy.

In Mid Ulster, there are a variety of sporting clubs, including GAA clubs and football teams:

Sporting Clubs: Mid Ulster has numerous sporting clubs across various disciplines. While an exact number is not readily available, the region is known for its active participation in sports like athletics, boxing, gymnastics and more.

GAA Clubs: There are approximately 580 GAA clubs in the Ulster province, which includes Mid Ulster. This number encompasses clubs involved in Gaelic football, hurling, camogie and handball.

Football Teams: The Mid-Ulster Football League features 27 clubs across its divisions 3. This includes teams in both intermediate and junior sections.

In Mid Ulster, there are several uniformed and scouting groups:

Uniformed Groups: These include organizations like the Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade and various cadet forces. The exact number can vary, but there are numerous groups spread across the region, supported by the Education Authority.

Scouting Groups: Mid Ulster is part of the Northern Ireland Scout Council, which oversees scouting activities in the area. There are three Scout Districts in Mid Ulster, with multiple scout groups within each district. Northern Ireland has 163 Scout Groups and 80 Explorer Scout Units.

Regional Data

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

88% of teachers agree that children are happier after playing outdoors. (Muddy Hands Report)

86% of teachers agree that playing outdoors gives children a better understanding of the environment. (Muddy Hands Report)

Research conducted by Queen's University Belfast highlights that a significant majority of teachers in Northern Ireland believe outdoor play is essential for children's overall development. Additionally, many teachers report that children exhibit increased happiness and improved mental health after

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.

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. Stakeholders also agree on the importance of play for both physical and emotional development.

Young people have expressed that they have ample opportunities to participate in play and leisure activities, with all respondents affirming this in relation to safe spaces for socialising with their peers. They are currently able to engage in various sports, cultural and artistic activities. The impact of these activities on their wellbeing includes feelings of freedom, confidence building, socializing and physical health benefits.

Older aged youth in Mid Ulster have highlighted the need for more music opportunities, safe spaces and mixed-gender activities to accommodate Trans young people who may feel uncomfortable with gender-specific sports. They appreciate the Youth Service for providing a safe, warm space where they can be themselves and engage in activities like art and cooking. They suggest that the Youth Service could enhance their experience by offering more residentials, fun days and diverse programmes such as cooking, art and physical activities. Additionally, they propose initiatives like a one-off night to try new sports, sports programmes and teaching about cultural sports to enrich their play and leisure options.

Staff, adults (parents, key stakeholders and key partners) were also consulted on the needs of young people across Mid Ulster (502 in total). From the data collated from the stakeholder consultation, the feedback was as follows:

Young people prioritise arts and crafts, music and cultural arts programmes, along with better access to leisure services. However, over 50% feel there aren't enough fun activities in their area and 47% believe there are not enough safe spaces to hang out. With only 49% feeling they have a safe space to spend time with friends, there is a clear need for youth-friendly spaces in both urban and rural areas. Young people express the importance of inclusive spaces, particularly for trans youth, who often struggle with gender-specific activities.

Additionally, youth clubs are seen as a crucial escape from school and home life, offering opportunities to socialise and interact with peers and friendship groups. The feedback highlights the need to create engaging, fun programmes that also incorporate educational and personal development elements. The above needs identified would be like that identified within the regional assessment of need that also included top priorities such homework and revision clubs, opportunities for social interaction and building relationships; Access to extracurricular activities and resources and support for young parents and providing childcare and educational opportunities.

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 Ulster in 2022/23 is 81.6% compared to the NI average of 76.1%.

The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed and/or unknown in Mid Ulster in 2022/23 is 2.8% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

4.2% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification. (NI average 4.9%).

3,382 Newcomers attend schools in Mid Ulster (5.7%) – NI Average 5%.

213 Irish Traveller children and young people.

6,235 (26.6%) of all pupils in Mid Ulster are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24 (NI average 28%).

5,115 pupils (17.1%) who attend school in Mid Ulster 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).

538 children and young people were suspended from school in Mid Ulster.

The attendance rate for post-primary schools was 93.2%. (NI average 96%).

According to the most recent census, 402 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

Mid Ulster demonstrates a strong educational performance, with 81.6% of school leavers achieving at least five GCSEs at grades A*-C, including English and maths, compared to the Northern Ireland (NI) average of 76.1% (source: www.dera.ioe.ac.uk). This indicates effective educational support and resources in the region. Additionally, the unemployment or unknown status of school leavers in Mid Ulster is significantly lower at 2.8%, compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

The region also has a lower percentage of young people aged 20-24 who are not in employment and without qualifications, at 4.2%, compared to the NI average of 4.9% (NISRA). This highlights the effectiveness of local initiatives aimed at supporting young people in their educational and career aspirations. However, the post-primary school attendance rate in Mid Ulster is 93.2%, which is lower than the NI average of 96%. This indicates a need for initiatives to improve school attendance and ensure that students remain engaged in their education.

Mid Ulster's diverse student population includes 5.7% newcomers, higher than the NI average of 5% (PSNI Statistics). This diversity necessitates inclusive educational practices to support all students effectively. The eligibility rate for free school meals in Mid Ulster is 26.6%, slightly below the NI average of 28%. Additionally, the percentage of pupils with special education needs at stages 1-3 is lower in Mid Ulster (17.1%) compared to the NI average of 19%.

Support for LGBTQI+ youth is growing in Mid Ulster, with 402 young people aged 16-24 identifying as such. This is essential for fostering an inclusive community where all young people feel supported and valued.

Stakeholder input/feedback

36% of young people felt their future was a top priority. Careers And pathways guidance and support, Accreditation (72% feel they can get qualifications through youth work programmes). Social skills. Independent living skills, budget and planning on a budget.

Young people aged 12 to 13 in Mid Ulster learn valuable skills through Youth Services, including teamwork, group work, patience, independence, mobility/movement, talking and listening and social skills. They emphasise the importance of Youth Services providing qualifications, as it can help young people learn in a fun environment, is free and can assist those who cannot attend school. Barriers to their education include emotional health and wellbeing, teachers, physical health and bullying. External pressures such as cyberbullying, mental health issues, physical health, family issues and home life also impact their ability to do well in education. They suggest that Youth Services can support them by spreading awareness of different types of bullying and stepping in if someone is struggling.

For those aged 14 to 18, there is a call for more programmes, revision classes and workshops that focus on learning experiences beyond marks and grades. They express a need for better support in schools around careers and pathways, sexual health, mental and emotional health, healthy eating, physical health and independent living skills. Youth Services are appreciated for providing safe spaces and opportunities such as OCNs and training programmes in youth work, as well as supporting young people from the LGBTQ+ community. They suggest more international trips, residentials and funding for local group activities to enhance their educational and social experiences.

Staff, adults (parents, key stakeholders and key partners) were also consulted on the needs of young people across Mid Ulster (502 in total). From the data collated from the stakeholder consultation, below were the key findings:

Nearly half of the young people (48%) strongly agree that they learn a lot through their youth work programmes, with an additional 21% agreeing. However, 17% feel they do not learn much and 9% disagree. Similarly, 46% strongly agree that they can obtain qualifications through these programmes and 23% agree, while 20% feel they do not get qualifications and 8% disagree. This indicates that while a majority find youth work programmes beneficial for learning and qualifications, there is still a notable minority who do not share this experience.

Regarding barriers to success, 45% of young people strongly agree that they face obstacles and 16% agree, while 16% disagree and 14% strongly disagree. Additionally, 45% feel supported through significant changes like moving schools, with 25% agreeing, but 16% do not feel supported and 7% strongly disagree. These responses highlight the importance of addressing barriers and providing consistent support to ensure all young people can benefit from Youth Services.

These insights can help guide planning and development to better meet the needs and preferences of young people in the area. The above needs identified would be like that identified within the Regional Assessment of need that also included top priorities such homework and revision clubs; opportunities for social interaction and building relationships; access to extracurricular activities and resources; support for young parents; practical career pathways and support for special educational needs.

Living in safety and stability

Key facts

In Mid Ulster 7,270 children and young people aged 0-25 years (13.9%) live in deprivation.

34,523 children and young people (66%) live in a rural community in Mid Ulster.

According to the most recent census, 402 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

17.8% of children and young people aged 0-24 years old in Mid Ulster come from a lone parent family.

There were 82 incidents with a sectarian motivation in Mid Ulster in 2023/24.

There were 51 incidents with a racist motivation in Mid Ulster in 2023/24. This is an 8.5% increase from the previous year of 47 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 1,114 domestic abuse crimes in Mid Ulster in 2023/24. This is a 23% decrease from the previous year. The average rate for domestic abuse crimes in Mid Ulster DEAs is 160 (NI average at 250).

There was a total of 2,192 anti-social behaviour incidents in Mid Ulster in 2023/24. This is a 7% decrease from the previous year. The average rate for anti-social behaviour incidents in Mid Ulster DEAs is 314 (NI average 567).

Suicide rates in Mid Ulster recorded 20 suicides in 2023. This is an 100% increase from 2020 which had 10 suicides. The suicide rate has risen this past three consecutive years in Mid Ulster.

Mid Ulster faces several challenges and opportunities in addressing the needs of its young population. With 13.9% of children and young people aged 0-25 years living in deprivation, slightly higher than the Northern Ireland (NI) average of 13.2%, there is a clear need for targeted support and resources to address these socioeconomic disparities. The rural nature of the community is also significant, with 66% of children and young people living in rural areas, compared to the NI average of 34.5%.

The region also has a growing recognition and support for LGBTQIA+ youth, with 402 young people aged 16-24 identifying as such. This is essential for fostering an inclusive community.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents in Mid Ulster have seen a 7% decrease from the previous year, with 2,192 incidents recorded in 2023/24 (PSNI Mid Ulster Statistics). This is part of a broader trend observed across various District Electoral Areas (DEAs) within the region. Despite this decrease, there were still 82 sectarian incidents and 51 racist incidents recorded in the same period.

Domestic abuse crimes in Mid Ulster have decreased by 23% from the previous year, with 1,114 crimes recorded in 2023/24. This suggests that local interventions are having a positive impact, but continued support is necessary. The prevalence of gender-based violence among 16-year-olds across Northern Ireland further underscores the importance of creating safe and supportive environments for young people. Ensuring the safety of women and girls remains a prominent issue, with 66% of girls and over 50% of boys expressing concern about their safety in their local communities.

Lastly, the rising suicide rates in Mid Ulster, with 20 suicides recorded in 2023, suggesting progress is being made in tackling mental health crises. However, stakeholders communicated that work is needed to further reduce mental health-related challenges.

Stakeholder input/feedback

Ending violence against young women and girls is a top priority in Mid Ulster, with initiatives such as safe spaces, first aid training and afterschool support programmes being highly prioritised. Twilight programmes for rural young people are also emphasised. Addressing misogyny, supporting young men and challenging negative behaviours and social media influences are crucial. Addressing misogyny, supporting young men and challenging negative behaviours and social media influences are crucial for several reasons:

1. Promoting Gender Equality: Misogyny perpetuates gender inequality and discrimination against women. By addressing it, it can create a more inclusive and fair society where everyone, regardless of gender, has equal opportunities and rights.
2. Supporting healthy development: Young men often face societal pressures to conform to harmful stereotypes of masculinity. Providing support helps them develop healthier identities, fostering emotional intelligence, empathy and respect for others.
3. Reducing violence and aggression: Challenging negative behaviours and attitudes can reduce instances of violence and aggression. This not only benefits individuals but also contributes to safer communities.
4. Improving mental health: Negative social media influences can impact self-esteem and mental health. By promoting positive behaviours and providing support, we can help young people and young men build resilience and cope with stress more effectively.
5. Encouraging positive role models: Highlighting positive influences and role models can inspire young men to adopt healthier behaviours and attitudes, leading to better overall well-being.
6. Building a supportive environment: Creating a culture that challenges negative behaviours and supports positive development helps young people feel valued and understood, which is essential for their emotional and social growth.

By addressing these issues, we can foster a more supportive, respectful and healthy environment for everyone.

Issues like online bullying, gambling, child sexual exploitation (CSE) and domestic abuse are significant concerns. Creating safe spaces for girls to talk and offering information, resources and helplines are essential steps. Awareness workshops are also vital in educating and empowering young women and girls.

Safety and keeping safe is a key need within Mid Ulster. 19% of young people feel pressure to get involved in activities that might be dangerous. While 63% feel safe, this perception changes at nighttime due to limited street lighting and country roads, especially for those living in rural areas. These findings highlight the need for improved safety measures, community support and targeted interventions to address the unique challenges faced by young people in Mid Ulster.

Staff, adults (parents, key stakeholders and key partners) were also consulted on the needs of young people across Mid Ulster (502 in total). From the data collated from the stakeholder consultation, below were the key findings:

In Mid Ulster, 54% of young people feel safe in their local area, while 25% strongly agree with this sentiment. However, 29% do not feel safe. Regarding social media, 39% feel it has a negative impact on them, with 22% agreeing, while 32% do not feel affected. Concerns about crime are prevalent, with 60% worried about crime in their area. Safety of women and girls is a significant concern, with 65% worried and 70% agreeing, while 30% are not worried. Additionally, 65% feel pressure to get involved in dangerous activities. The main need identified by the data is enhancing safety and security for young people in Mid Ulster. This encompasses feeling safe, addressing crime concerns, safety of young woman and girls and addressing the pressure young people feel to get involved in dangerous activities.

Ending violence against young women and girls is a top priority, with a significant need for safe spaces, education and resources especially in rural areas. There are high concerns over online and social risks include social media bullying, gambling, child sexual exploitation (CSE) and young people subjected to domestic abuse. Furthermore, 19% of young people feel pressured to engage in dangerous activities. These findings highlight the importance of creating supportive environments and addressing the specific needs and concerns of young people to ensure their safety and well-being.

Economic and environmental stability

Key facts

In Mid Ulster 7,270 children and young people aged 0-25 years (13.9%) live in deprivation.

34,523 children and young people (66%) live in a rural community in Mid Ulster.

The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed and/or unknown in Mid Ulster in 2022/23 is 2.8% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

4.2% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification. (NI average 4.9%).

6,235 (26.6%) of all pupils in Mid Ulster are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24 (NI average 28%).

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.

Mid Ulster faces notable challenges and opportunities in various aspects of youth wellbeing and socioeconomic conditions. The region has a higher percentage of children and young people living in deprivation (13.9%) compared to the Northern Ireland (NI) average of 13.2%. Additionally, Mid Ulster's rural community is significantly larger, with 66% of children and young people living in rural areas, compared to the NI average of 34.5%.

Despite these challenges, Mid Ulster performs better in terms of unemployment rates for school leavers, with only 2.8% of school leavers being unemployed or having an unknown status, compared to the NI average of 4.7%. Furthermore, the percentage of young people aged 20-24 not in employment and without qualifications is lower in Mid Ulster (4.2%) compared to the NI average of 4.9%. Additionally, the eligibility rate for free school meals in Mid Ulster is slightly below the NI average (26.6% vs. 28%), indicating marginally better socioeconomic conditions.

Stakeholder input/feedback

Young people aged 12 to 13 in Mid Ulster feel hopeful for their future, but identify several barriers to reaching their full potential, such as academic performance and low self-esteem. Confidence in living independently is mixed, with many of them feeling very confident and less than half not confident. They suggest Youth Services can support their employability by helping with CV, career guidance, work experience programmes and linking with employers. For those aged 14 to 18, there is a need for help with job readiness, finding opportunities and job applications.

The older age group of young people feel hopeful but recognise barriers such as money, education, opportunities and access to travel with limited public transport being a recurring theme. They appreciate the skills developed through Youth Services but feel more funding is needed. Societal poverty is seen as a significant issue, affecting young people, families and small businesses, with rising costs increasing stress levels and daily challenges.

Staff, adults (parents, key stakeholders and key partners) were also consulted on the needs of young people across Mid Ulster (502 in total). From the data collated from the stakeholder consultation, below were the key findings:

In Mid Ulster, 63% of young people feel that poverty is impacting more children and young people and 21% say their families cannot support them in activities. The lack of transport in rural areas limits opportunities, highlighting the need for career and employability support such as CV building, job preparation, part-time work support and career guidance. Many young people feel they are not reaching their full potential academically and request afterschool support and improved work ethic and skills development. Environmental concerns are significant, with two-thirds of young people worried about these issues. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive support to address economic barriers, enhance employability and promote environmental awareness.

This narrative provides a comprehensive overview of the opinions of young people and key stakeholders on various important issues that also seems to be reflected in the regional assessment of need. Additional areas for consideration highlighted within the regional assessment of need included life skills, support for independence, poverty alleviation and community engagement.

Making a positive contribution

Key facts

The attendance rate for post-primary schools was 93.2%. (NI average 96%).

3,382 Newcomers attend schools in Mid Ulster (5.7%) – NI Average 5%.

213 Irish Traveller children and young people in Mid Ulster.

538 children and young people were suspended from school in Mid Ulster.

In Mid Ulster 7,270 children and young people aged 0-25 years (13.9%) live in deprivation.

34,523 children and young people (66%) live in a rural community in Mid Ulster.

According to the most recent census, 402 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

Mid Ulster's post-primary school attendance rate of 93.2% is lower than the Northern Ireland (NI) average of 96%, indicating a need for initiatives to improve school attendance. The region has a higher percentage of newcomers in schools (5.7%) compared to the NI average (5%), suggesting a diverse student population. Additionally, there are 213 Irish Traveller children and young people in Mid Ulster. The number of suspensions from school, totalling 538, points to behavioural challenges through the school system.

Deprivation affects 13.9% of children and young people aged 0-25 years in Mid Ulster, slightly higher than the NI average of 13.2%, indicating a need for targeted support and resources. The rural nature of the community is significant, with 66% of children and young people living in rural areas, compared to the NI average of 34.5%.

Furthermore, Mid Ulster has 402 young people aged 16-24 identifying as LGBTQI+, reflecting a growing recognition and need for support for LGBTQI+ youth.

Stakeholder input/feedback

For young people to succeed, they need to feel valued and respected. Having the ability to express their opinions in schools, youth centres and communities is essential for their growth and confidence. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of creating safe environments where young people's voices are heard, promoting their development and sense of belonging.

In Mid Ulster, 69% of young people feel that they can change things for the better, emphasising the importance of Youth Voice initiatives that allow them to contribute positively to their community. They suggest more opportunities for residentials, working and networking with others and programmes to make changes in the community. Social enterprise support, intergenerational programmes, volunteering and increased leadership opportunities are also high on their list. Social action ideas and themed events are seen as ways to promote a positive image of young people. They advocate for spaces to support youth provision in rural areas and more social actions to highlight the positive contributions of young people.

Young people aged 12 to 13 make a difference in their community through activities that makes them feel part of their community and taking part in community projects. They feel that making a positive contribution is important as it represents young people well. However, they sometimes feel their voices are not fully heard or valued. Those aged 14 to 18 express the need for more opportunities such as Youth Voice, residentials and programmes to make a change in their community. They raise awareness on issues like mental health, rural safety, period poverty and inclusivity, but feel their voices can be dismissed due to their rural location. They suggest that Youth Services could provide more support by encouraging advocacy, offering new opportunities and addressing barriers to participation.

Staff, adults (parents, key stakeholders and key partners) were also consulted on the needs of young people across Mid Ulster (502 in total). From the data collated from the stakeholder consultation, below were the key findings:

In summary, young people want to feel respected and valued for their contributions. They seek opportunities to take part in decision-making, learn about social and political issues and engage in community activities. These experiences help them grow personally and socially, preparing them to become active, responsible citizens. Over 47% of young people shared that they don't feel they can make a difference in school or their local community, indicating barriers to full participation and additionally, 54% feel they can tell others what they think. Stakeholders have expressed the need to remove these barriers and provide more opportunities for young people to contribute meaningfully. They noted by providing more opportunity for participation, we can help young people realise their potential and make a lasting, positive impact on society. Stakeholders have noted that we need to help young people realise their potential, make a lasting, positive impact on society, be trusted with responsibility and take initiatives.

This narrative provides a comprehensive overview of the opinions of young people and key stakeholders on their opportunities to make a difference, express their thoughts, feel listened to and believe in their ability to create positive change which is somewhat like that reflected within the regional assessment of need.

Respect for young people's rights

Key facts

According to the most recent census, 402 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

Approximately 10,000 children and young people aged 0-25 years have a mental health need.

In Mid Ulster 7,270 children and young people aged 0-25 years (13.9%) live in deprivation.

34,523 children and young people (66%) live in a rural community in Mid Ulster.

3,382 Newcomers attend schools in Mid Ulster (5.7%) – NI Average 5%.

213 Irish Traveller children and young people.

6,235 (26.6%) of all pupils in Mid Ulster are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24 (NI average 28%).

5,115 pupils (17.1%) who attend school in Mid Ulster 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).

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. However, 55% of children and young people in the Mid Ulster Area feel their views are not considered in decisions affecting them. Stakeholders highlight the need for more opportunities to ensure young people's views are heard and taken seriously.

Mid Ulster's diverse student population includes 5.7% newcomers, higher than the NI average of 5%. While 26.6% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, slightly lower than the NI average of 28%, the region also shows the need for continuous need for early intervention for special education needs, with 17.1% of pupils at stages 1-3, lower than the NI average of 19%. LGBTQI+ youth is growing, with 402 young people aged 16-24 identifying as such. There are 213 Irish Traveller children and young people. Mid Ulster has a strong presence of the Irish language, with 11.44% of the population having knowledge of Irish and 4.29% using it daily, significantly higher than the NI averages of 12.6% and 1.7%, respectively.

Stakeholder input/feedback

In Mid Ulster, 80% of young people know some of their basic human rights and 85% believe they are listened to, valued and respected. They express a need for more information and awareness sessions on young people's rights, emphasising the importance of having their voices heard. There is a call for greater opportunities to get involved in youth voice, local voice and thematic voice programmes, as well as more rights-based engagement events. Young people suggest that videos and discussions on their rights should be shown and taught by Youth Services, with accessible formats like podcasts and social media videos.

Young people aged 12 to 13 learn about their rights at youth clubs and feel confident in standing up for them, though they acknowledge that not everyone's rights are respected. Those aged 14 to 18 feel that while some of their rights are upheld, they often don't know where to find more information. They suggest more leaflets, talks and one-off workshops to raise awareness. They also feel that Youth Services should provide more programmes and discussions on rights, particularly in relation to jobs and housing. Overall, young people believe that having opportunities to make a difference and being educated about their rights are crucial for their empowerment and future success.

Staff, adults (parents, key stakeholders and key partners) were also consulted on the needs of young people across Mid Ulster (502 in total). From the data collated from the stakeholder consultation, below were the key findings:

As part of the survey on youth perceptions reveals that 85% of young people feel listened to, valued and respected. However, there is a call for more information and education on rights. 50% of young people feel their rights are respected in youth work programmes. Young people are advocating for accessible resources and discussions on their rights, as well as more engagement opportunities through rights-based programmes.

Young people in the area need greater freedom of expression, better leadership opportunities and increased awareness of their rights. While almost 74% feel confident fighting for their rights, many believe more needs to be done for full recognition and respect. Stakeholders agree that creating a society where young people’s rights are respected is essential for promoting a sense of belonging, dignity and empowerment. Upholding these rights 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 equal access to opportunities, education and services and guarantees fair and just treatment, which are key factors in helping young people reach their full potential. Additionally, it helps protect them from exploitation and discrimination, contributing to a more inclusive society for all.

Good Relations and Equality

Key facts

34,523 children and young people (66%) live in a rural community in Mid Ulster.

3,382 Newcomers attend schools in Mid Ulster (5.7%) – NI Average 5%.

213 Irish Traveller children and young people.

6,235 (26.6%) of all pupils in Mid Ulster are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24 (NI average 28%).

5,115 pupils (17.1%) who attend school in Mid Ulster 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).

In Mid Ulster 7,270 children and young people aged 0-25 years (13.9%) live in deprivation.

According to the most recent census, 402 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

An equal society treats everyone fairly, regardless of their background or identity. Good relations are built on kindness, respect and understanding, recognising diversity and ensuring everyone feels welcome. The United Nations emphasises that all children should be treated equally, regardless of culture, language or abilities, to ensure they have equal opportunities to succeed. In Northern Ireland, the "Good Relations" initiative aims to promote understanding and cooperation between people from different backgrounds, addressing issues like racism, bullying and disrespect. Despite progress, stakeholders, including children and young people, note that challenges persist, particularly in areas where divisions remain across the Mid Ulster area.

Mid Ulster has experienced a notable increase in cultural diversity in recent years. Despite this progress, the area has seen a rise in racist hate crimes, surpassing sectarian hate crimes, which highlights the growing challenges related to race and discrimination. In response, young people have voiced strong support for the establishment of safe spaces where inclusion is promoted and differences are celebrated. They emphasise the need for environments where everyone is treated fairly, bullying is minimised, discrimination is reduced and vulnerable groups, such as children with special educational needs, disabilities and those from the LGBTQI+ community receive more support.

Across Mid Ulster, approximately 34,860 (66%) of children and young people live in rural communities, with 2,694 being newcomers to Northern Ireland, above the national average. (Newcomers in Schools: 5.7% of school attendees are newcomers (NI average: 5%). The area also has 214 children from the Irish traveller community. Approximately 26.6% of children receive free school meals, just below the NI average, while 17.1% have special educational needs or disabilities, slightly below the NI average of 19%. However, 11% of young people live in economically disadvantaged communities with limited opportunities. The most recent census data also shows that 929 young people aged 16-24 identify as LGBTQI+, highlighting the diverse nature of the youth population. Stakeholders have expressed the importance of creating safe, inclusive spaces where all children and young people can feel supported and celebrated for who they are, further promoting equality and acceptance within the community.

Despite the efforts of the community relations equality and diversity policy (CRED), parts of Mid Ulster continue to experience division. The education system remains predominantly segregated, with most children and young people attending schools aligned with their religious backgrounds. Although there

has been notable progress towards peace, the challenges mentioned underscore that much work is still needed to build a genuinely inclusive society where everyone feels equal, respected and supported.

Stakeholder input/feedback

The feedback from young people indicates that 70% of young people strongly agree and agree that they respect others who are different. This highlights the need for cultural awareness programmes, including celebrations of various cultures and anti-discrimination events and awareness sessions in schools and youth programmes. Some local district electoral areas (DEAs) have reported an increase in issues around prejudice and discrimination, emphasising the importance of addressing these concerns. Language barriers can be a significant issue for newcomers, necessitating increased awareness and respect/understanding programmes across the district.

Young people have voiced the need for more accessibility with quotes like "everyone deserves to be treated equally" from Mid Ulster 12 to 13-year-olds. However, there are significant issues around prejudice and discrimination, including racism, sectarianism, homophobia, transphobia and sexism, particularly among Mid Ulster 14 to 18-year-olds. The Youth Service is seen as a welcoming place that provides a safe environment for self-expression and promotes acceptance and tolerance through awareness-raising events. Nonetheless, there is room for improvement in services for non-native speaking young people, as language barriers may prevent them from accessing available resources.

Staff, adults (parents, key stakeholders and key partners) were also consulted on the needs of young people across Mid Ulster (502 in total). From the data collated from the stakeholder consultation, below were the key findings:

From the consultation with key stakeholders, it reveals that 70% of young people agree they respect others who are different, highlighting the need for more cultural awareness programmes and anti-discrimination events. Some local areas are experiencing an increase in issues related to prejudice and discrimination, emphasising the necessity for respect and understanding programmes. Language barriers are a significant challenge for newcomers, indicating that Youth Services need to improve accessibility for non-native speakers and newcomer children and young people. Additionally, there is a call for better accessibility for young people with disabilities and more inclusive services for SEND young people.

Regarding inclusivity, 40% of young people agree that everyone is included and no one feels left out, while 32% believe all children and young people in their area respect others who are different. 49% feel that youth work programmes are accessible for everyone and 55% feel these programmes support young people from other backgrounds. Furthermore, 52% agree they get the chance to spend time with people who are different from them. These findings underscore the importance of creating inclusive and supportive environments for all young people, regardless of their background or abilities.

Additional to this, the regional assessment of need highlights other areas for consideration that were taken from the regional consultations. These areas were Equality and Inclusion and the need for more inclusive and welcoming environments, especially for LGBTQI+ individuals, those with disabilities and ethnic minorities. The need for more cultural awareness programmes, cross-community initiatives and opportunities to learn about different religions, identities and cultures. Concerns were also raised through the feedback about unequal educational resources and the need for inclusive education that celebrates cultural diversity and minority languages.

Issues were highlighted with transport and accessibility, particularly in rural areas, with calls for better financial support for educational trips and accessing Youth Services with limited provision. The need for campaigns and workshops to combat discrimination and prejudice, including racism, sectarianism, homophobia and transphobia. Young people want their voices to be heard and to have a say in decisions that affect them.

Summary Conclusion of Needs across Strategic Themes

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

- Lack of safe, inclusive spaces for support, connection with others
- Poor emotional health and well-being caused by anxiety, depression and family pressure to perform and achieve academically
- Physical activity
- Better education and life choices on healthy eating and better healthy options.
- Bullying, body shaming and low self-esteem affecting confidence and healthy relationships
- Emotional resilience and bounce -back-ability
- Fear of missing out, screen time online and negative images and information children and young people are exposed too

Access to Play and Leisure:

- Access to safe play & fun activities
- Physical activities to develop growth and co-ordination and build soft skills
- Play and brain stimulation
- Safe accessible inclusive spaces for all ages
- Secure environments in which to express themselves and build new and positive relationships

Learning and Achieving:

- Accessible, inclusive educational experiences and pathways to employment
- Pathways to further education
- Positive careers, advice and guidance support
- Educational underachievement
- Staying engaged in formal education
- Early intervention, especially for vulnerable groupings
- Support to overcoming barriers and ensuring success
- Opportunities to widen experiences and build personal skills

Living in Safety and Stability:

- Lack of safe, inclusive spaces for support, connection and non-judgmental guidance
- Exposure to domestic abuse (directly and indirectly)
- Violence against women and girls
- Exposure to substance misuse
- Anti-social behaviour
- Bullying and peer pressure
- Online violence and negative impact of social media
- Impact of poverty on young people's access to basic needs and opportunities
- Experiences of racism and discrimination among minority ethnic young people
- Ongoing community division and need for peacebuilding

- Exposure to unsafe driving behaviours and limited road safety awareness

Economic and Environmental Stability:

- Socio-economic disadvantage affecting young people's well-being and life experiences
- Cost of living crisis increases anxiety, stress and emotional health and wellbeing concerns.
- Environmental concerns within their own community.
- Isolation and inequality caused by rural poverty, affecting inclusion, mobility and opportunity
- Climate change (globally)
- Low aspirations and limited belief in future opportunities, especially young people coming from rural areas.

Making a Positive Contribution to Society:

- Being respected and valued
- Trust and responsibility to take forward initiatives to feel part of their community
- Secure environments to express and explore feelings and opinions
- Political engagement

Respect for Your Rights

- Rights to be valued and respected
- Knowledge and confidence to proclaim and defend their rights
- Participate and own decision making

The findings – Identification of priorities/DEA profiles

Carntogher

Key facts

6,108 children and young people aged 0-25 years old in Carntogher DEA.

316 SEN stages 1-2 pupils, with 14.8% stages 1-3 compared to the NI average of 19%.

82 suspended pupils in 2022/23, above the NI average of 65.

149.4 per 1000 pupils with Asperger/autism syndrome, the highest DEA across Mid Ulster, significantly above the NI average of 49.0 per 1000.

2,464 falls within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

2.7% of young people aged 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification, compared to the NI average of 4.9%.

*86.1% of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A-C including GCSE English and maths in 2022/23**, compared to the NI average of 76.1%.

55 newcomer pupils in Carntogher DEA primary and post-primary schools in 2023/24.

3 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24, a 50% increase from the previous year of 2 racially motivated incidents.

These statistics highlight areas where Carntogher DEA is performing better or worse than the NI averages, indicating specific needs for targeted interventions and support such as supporting young people with special education and behavioural support in school. The lower percentage of young people not in employment and the higher GCSE achievement rate are positive indicators, but the increase in racially motivated incidents calls for more robust anti-discrimination measures and cultural awareness programmes.

Below are the top ranked priorities for young people highlighted within the DEA.

1. **Your Future**: This encompasses career aspirations, opportunities for personal growth and the support needed to achieve long-term goals.
2. **Health and Wellbeing**: This involves their emotional health and wellbeing, physical health and overall wellbeing.
3. **Play, Hobbies and Interests**: This includes recreational activities, sports and hobbies that young people enjoy.
4. **Safety**: This covers physical safety, emotional security and feeling safe in your community.
5. **Your Rights**: This includes understanding and advocating for their rights as a young person.
6. **Education**: This covers access to quality education, educational resources and support for learning.

Response by Age Band:

- 14 to 18 Years: 57%
- 9 to 11 Years: 23%
- 12 to 13 Years: 18%
- 22 to 25 Years: 2%

Response by Gender:

- Female: 59%
- Male: 39%
- Other: 2%

Response by Ethnic Background:

- White: 98%
- Chinese: 2%

Response by Rural Versus Urban:

- I live in a rural area: 80%
- I live in a town or city: 20%

Response by SEND Versus Non-SEND:

- Non-SEND: 84%
- SEND: 16%

Carntogher Stakeholder input/feedback

Focus group feedback and Staff, adults (parents, key stakeholders and key partners) were also consulted on the needs of young people across Carntogher DEA (64 in total). From the data collated from the stakeholder consultation, below were the key findings:

Young people in Carntogher DEA have raised several concerns, including the pressures of school, limited access to creative and fitness activities and mental health challenges. Substance misuse, such as vaping, smoking and the use of drugs like 'spice,' is a significant issue that stakeholders believe needs preventive measures. Violence, especially towards women and girls, is another major concern, with reports of harassment and fears of theft becoming common.

Bullying related to differences in background, identity and appearance also contributes to feelings of insecurity and exclusion. Concerns about future job opportunities and rising housing costs add to the uncertainty young people feel. They have expressed a need for greater cultural representation, particularly for Irish speakers and believe that increasing cultural awareness can help reduce discrimination, especially towards the LGBTQIA+ community.

Empowering young people through accessible mental health resources, educational support and safe spaces is crucial for their well-being. Survey data shows that young people have varied experiences with their emotional health and well-being. 23% feel active and vigorous most of the time, while 8% feel this way more than half the time. In terms of feeling calm and relaxed, 25% feel this way most of the time and 8% more than half the time. When it comes to waking up feeling fresh and rested, 11% feel this way most of the time and 7% more than half the time. Additionally, 25% feel their daily life is filled with things that interest them most of the time and 5% more than half the time.

Access to physical activities and emotional health support is essential, with 43% strongly agreeing and 41% agreeing that there are plenty of opportunities for physical activities. 61% agree and 20% strongly agree that they can get help for their emotional health needs if required. 23% of young people identified emotional health and wellbeing support as a top priority for Youth Services. They also believe that limited access to nutrition education and information on a balanced diet can support them both physically and emotionally, which is something that Youth Services could support through generic and targeted programmes.

81% strongly feel they receive the necessary support, emphasising the importance of safe spaces to feel relaxed and calm and opportunities for physical activities, including outdoor learning and residentials.

Safe spaces for hanging out, arts and crafts, music, cultural arts programmes and access to leisure services are important to young people. They also prioritise career guidance, qualifications through youth work programmes, social skills and independent living skills.

Safety is a major concern, with 96% feeling safe in their DEA. Ending violence against women and girls, domestic violence support and addressing misogyny and negative social media influences are key areas of focus.

Supporting young people impacted by poverty through academic support, employability preparation and practical skills training is also important. The voice of young people matters, and they want to be

heard and respected through various platforms and focus groups. They believe in the importance of cultural awareness programmes, anti-discrimination events and having their rights respected. Overall, young people in Carntogher DEA seek a supportive environment where they can thrive and feel valued.

Carntogher Summary

- Poor mental health and limited access to responsive emotional wellbeing support.
- Poor life choices in terms of healthy eating and physical activities.
- Increasing substance misuse, including drugs, vaping and smoking, with limited prevention options.
- Experiences of violence, harassment and personal safety concerns, particularly among girls.
- Bullying and exclusion based on background, identity or appearance.
- Lack of access to creative, cultural and physical activities for personal development.
- Underrepresentation of cultural identity, language and LGBTQIA+ inclusion in community spaces.
- Access to services and rurality.
- Uncertainty about future opportunities, including employment and affordable housing.
- Limited access to safe, inclusive spaces that support wellbeing, identity and belonging.
- Limited opportunities to voice opinions and be respected.

Moyola

Key facts

6,586 children and young people aged 0-25 years old in Moyola DEA.

2,805 falls within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

3.4% of young people aged 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification, compared to the NI average of 4.9%.

*82.6% of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A-C including GCSE English and maths in 2022/23**, compared to the NI average of 76.1%.

78 newcomer pupils in Moyola DEA primary and post-primary schools in 2023/24.

These statistics highlight areas where Moyola DEA is performing better or worse than the NI averages, indicating specific needs for targeted interventions and support. For instance, the lower percentage of young people not in employment and the higher GCSE achievement rate are positive indicators.

Below are the top ranked priorities for young people highlighted within the DEA as part of the online consultations.

1. **Your Future**: This encompasses career aspirations, opportunities for personal growth and the support needed to achieve long-term goals.
2. **Your Rights**: This includes understanding and advocating for their rights as a young person.
3. **Health and Wellbeing**: This involves their emotional health and wellbeing, physical health and overall wellbeing.
4. **Play, Hobbies and Interests**: This includes recreational activities, sports and hobbies that young people enjoy.
5. **Education**: This covers access to quality education, educational resources and support for learning.
6. **Safety**: This covers physical safety, emotional security and feeling safe in your community.

Response by Age Band:

- 14 to 18 Years: 78%
- 12 to 13 Years: 9%
- 9 to 11 Years: 9%
- 19 to 21 Years: 4%

Response by Gender:

- Male: 65%
- Female: 35%

Response by Ethnic Background:

- White: 96%
- Mixed Ethnicity: 4%

Response by Rural Versus Urban:

- I live in a rural area: 65%
- I live in a town or city: 35%

Response by SEND Versus Non-SEND:

- No: 83%
- Yes: 13%
- Prefer not to say: 4

Moyola Stakeholder input/feedback

Focus group feedback and staff, adults (parents, key stakeholders and key partners) were also consulted on the needs of young people across Moyola DEA (64 in total). From the data collated from the stakeholder consultation, below were the key findings:

Young people in Moyola DEA have highlighted several key concerns and needs. They feel that having safe spaces to relax and feel calm is vital, with 82% strongly believing they receive the emotional health and well-being support they need. Opportunities for physical activities, including outdoor learning and residentials, are also important. Just over 50% of respondents feel there are plenty of fun things to do and 61% feel they have safe spaces to hang out. However, young people feel there is a need for more targeted programmes and better access to Youth Services.

Many young people are worried about their future, with 43% expressing concerns. They prioritise career guidance, accreditation, social skills, independent living skills and budgeting. Young people also talked about the need to get qualifications, because it helps them get better jobs and can even lower the number of people without jobs. They explained that learning new skills and getting the right qualifications and training can help them find work, earn money and become more independent. Besides helping with money, they also said that finishing their education makes them feel proud of themselves and more confident about themselves. Economic hardship and rising living costs add to their anxiety about the future. While some are hopeful about their careers, others feel trapped by financial limitations and a lack of self-belief. They stress the importance of getting qualifications to improve job prospects and gain independence. Climate change is another significant concern, with many fearing its long-term impacts on their lives and the environment.

Safety is a major concern, with a 116% increase in racist incidents and higher youth justice referrals compared to the Northern Ireland average. Domestic abuse incidents are also significantly higher. Young people express fears about walking alone, dark alleyways and certain areas due to antisocial behaviour and underage drinking. Online spaces are also seen as unsafe due to cyberbullying and toxic group chats. Vaping is a significant issue, with mixed opinions on its impact, but stakeholders agree it remains a growing concern.

Ending violence against young women and girls, providing safe spaces, domestic violence support, awareness workshops and afterschool programmes are also top priorities.

Promoting the youth voice is crucial, with young people wanting to be heard through various platforms and focus groups. They also emphasise the importance of cultural awareness programmes, anti-discrimination events and celebrating diversity.

Overall, young people in Moyola DEA seek a supportive environment where they can thrive, feel valued and have their voices heard.

Moyola Summary

- Safe spaces for young people.
- Social Concerns that include road safety, farming safety and safety in social spaces.
- Poor mental health and emotional wellbeing, driven by stress, anxiety and body image concerns.
- Rising use of vaping, with limited awareness of risks and lack of prevention measures.
- Increased exposure to racism, domestic abuse and youth crime affecting feelings of safety and trust in the community and policing.
- Lack of single identity opportunities for young people.
- Uncertainty about prospects due to financial hardship, low confidence and barriers to independence.
- Limited information and access to support systems that help young people navigate personal, emotional and social challenges.
- Inequality in access to resources, qualifications and opportunities that support long-term wellbeing and success amongst section 75 groupings.

Magherafelt

Key facts

6,581 children and young people aged 0-25 years old in Magherafelt DEA.

2,647 falls within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

*80.2% of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A-C including GCSE English and maths in 2022/23**, compared to the NI average of 76.1%.

279 newcomer pupils in Magherafelt DEA primary and post-primary schools in 2023/24.

12 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24, a 20% increase from the previous year of 10 racially motivated incidents.

In Magherafelt DEA, there are 192 statemented pupils and 316 pupils at SEN stages 1-2, making up 14.8% of pupils at SEN stages 1-3, compared to the Northern Ireland (NI) average of 19%.

Regarding autism, Magherafelt DEA has the highest rate of pupils with Asperger/autism syndrome across Mid Ulster, with 149.4 per 1000 pupils over and above the NI average of 49.0 per 1000.

Below are the top ranked priorities for young people highlighted within the DEA.

1. **Your Future**: This encompasses career aspirations, opportunities for personal growth and the support needed to achieve long-term goals.
2. **Play, Hobbies and Interests**: This includes recreational activities, sports and hobbies that young people enjoy.
3. **Health and Wellbeing**: This involves their emotional health and wellbeing, physical health and overall wellbeing.
4. **Safety**: This covers physical safety, emotional security and feeling safe in your community.
5. **Your Rights**: This includes understanding and advocating for their rights as a young person.
6. **Equality:** Ensuring equality in Youth Services is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment where all young people can thrive. Here are some key aspects and recommendations for promoting equality:
    - ***Inclusiveness***: Ensuring all young people, regardless of background, have access to Youth Services.
    - ***Diversity***: Celebrating and respecting the diverse backgrounds and cultures of young people.
    - ***Rights***: Upholding the rights of young people and ensuring their voices are heard and valued.

Response by Age Band:

- 14 to 18 Years: 63%

- 12 to 13 Years: 13%
- 19 to 21 Years: 10%
- 22 to 25 Years: 7%
- 9 to 11 Years: 7%

Response by Gender:

- Female: 67%
- Male: 33%

Response by Ethnic Background:

- White: 90%
- Black - African: 3%
- Mixed Ethnicity: 3%
- Other Ethnicity: 3%

Response by Rural Versus Urban:

- I live in a town or city: 60%
- I live in a rural area: 40%

Response by SEND Versus Non-SEND:

- No: 77%
- Yes: 17%
- Prefer not to say: 7%

Magherafelt Stakeholder input/feedback

Focus group feedback and Staff, adults (parents, key stakeholders and key partners) were also consulted on the needs of young people across Magherafelt DEA (44 in total). From the data collated from the stakeholder consultation, below were the key findings:

Young people in Magherafelt DEA, 2,647 of which, falls within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years, have highlighted several important issues and needs. Despite strong academic performance and effective educational support within the area, there is a growing concern about lack of job opportunities, independent skills for later life and the ability to develop new skills and training.

Additionally, there is a developing issue in terms of racism, which calls for more robust anti-discrimination measures and cultural awareness programmes provided by Youth Services. There continues to be signs of prejudice and discrimination in Magherafelt DEA, particularly in how young people are treated based on their age, appearance and community they are from. Some young people shared that they are not taken seriously by adults. Stakeholders also stated that efforts are needed in promoting respect and better relationships between communities and they supported the implementation of more inclusive community initiatives.

In terms of health and well-being, young people identified several factors impacting their physical and emotional health, including drugs, drinking, smoking, poor diet and the lack of free sports activities. Bullying, social media and school-related pressures were also highlighted as significant influences on their emotional health. Many young people said they tend to seek support from youth leaders, youth clubs and wellbeing teams in schools, often avoiding discussing their concerns with family members. Survey data shows that 50% of young people feel active and vigorous most of the time, while 27% feel this way more than half the time. Additionally, 37% feel calm and relaxed most of the time and 30% more than half the time. However, there is a call for Youth Services to provide more opportunities for physical activities, outdoor learning spaces and cultural / art programmes.

Young people and key stakeholders feel that the voice of young people, including section 75 groupings, should be amplified. Addressing the negative impact of social media, concerns about crime and the safety of women and girls are also important. Ensuring that all children and young people are treated equally and included is crucial for a supportive community.

Safety remains a considerable concern, with young people highlighting risks such as violence, with a particular focus on young women and girls, drugs, peer pressure and anti-social behaviour at the weekends. They stressed the need to feel safe at home, in school and within their communities, as well as the value of building trusting relationships with adults, peers and support systems.

When discussing their future, some young people feel hopeful, while others are concerned about not getting qualifications or finding employment. Poverty, exam stress, lack of local opportunities and the presence of drugs and alcohol are barriers that may prevent them from reaching their full potential.

There are signs of prejudice and discrimination, particularly in how young people are treated based on their age, appearance and background. The cost of living is also a growing concern, impacting their everyday lives and future opportunities. Many young people worry about rising costs for education and essential needs, which creates additional stress as they strive for independence. This financial strain is

often linked to concerns about crime rates, as economic hardship can lead to higher levels of criminal behaviour. Additionally, young people are concerned about how the increasing cost of living and the effects of climate change may make their futures more difficult.

Overall, young people in Magherafelt DEA seek a supportive environment where they can thrive, feel valued and have their voices heard.

Magherafelt Summary

- High levels of youth crime, anti-social behaviour and school suspensions linked to unmet social and emotional needs.
- Poverty and financial hardship restricting access to essentials, opportunities and long-term aspirations.
- Limited availability of safe, inclusive spaces where young people feel heard, supported and connected.
- Fears and concerns of impact of social media, online bullying and images that affect body image and low self-worth and self-esteem.
- Low educational attainment and limited support for learning, especially among those facing disadvantage.
- Poor Emotional, physical and mental health and l wellbeing, impacted by stress, bullying, poor eating habits and limited support networks.
- Experiences of racism, prejudice and exclusion among minority ethnic, newcomer young people and other section 75 groupings.
- Exposure to domestic abuse, violence and unsafe environments at home and in the community
- Ongoing peer pressure and substance misuse with few positive alternatives or protective influences.
- Lack of trusted relationships and consistent adult support to help navigate challenges and transitions.

Cookstown

Key facts

8,402 children and young people aged 0-25 years old in Cookstown DEA.

3,346 falls within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

4.6% of young people aged 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification, compared to the NI average of 4.9%.

7.6% of school leavers are unemployed or unknown in 2022/23, compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

75.7% of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A-C including GCSE English and maths in 2022/23*, compared to the NI average of 76.1%.

537 newcomer pupils in Cookstown DEA primary and post-primary schools in 2023/24.

6 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24, the same as the previous year.

In Cookstown DEA, 27.4% of households are deprived in the education dimension (NI Average 23.9%), 17.6% in the employment dimension (NI Average 16.5%) and 47.6% in the health dimension (NI Average 11.4%). These percentages are all above the Northern Ireland (NI) average.

18.2% of all pupils across Cookstown DEA (NI Average 19%) are SEN 1-3.

Number of pupils Suspended in Cookstown DEA in 22/23 is 96 above the NI Average of 65.

Below are the top ranked priorities for young people highlighted within the DEA bases on the consultations and feedback from young people.

1. **Your Future**: This encompasses career aspirations, opportunities for personal growth and the support needed to achieve long-term goals.
2. **Play, Hobbies and Interests**: This includes recreational activities, sports and hobbies that young people enjoy.
3. **Health and Wellbeing**: This involves their emotional health and wellbeing, physical health and overall wellbeing.
4. **Safety**: This covers physical safety, emotional security and feeling safe in your community.
5. **Education**: This covers access to quality education, educational resources and support for learning.
6. **Equality:** Ensuring equality in Youth Services is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment where all young people can thrive. Here are some key aspects and recommendations for promoting equality:
    - ***Inclusiveness***: Ensuring all young people, regardless of background, have access to Youth Services.
    - ***Diversity***: Celebrating and respecting the diverse backgrounds and cultures of young people.

- ***Rights***: Upholding the rights of young people and ensuring their voices are heard and valued

7. **Your Rights**: This includes understanding and advocating for their rights as a young person.

Response by Age Band:

- 14 to 18 Years: 55%
- 9 to 11 Years: 29%
- 12 to 13 Years: 14%
- 19 to 21 Years: 2%

Response by Gender:

- Female: 61%
- Male: 36%
- Non-Binary: 2%
- Prefer not to say: 1%

Response by Ethnic Background:

- White: 86%
- Mixed Ethnicity: 5%
- Black - African: 2%
- Chinese: 2%
- Black - Other: 2%
- Indian: 1%
- Irish Traveller: 1%

Response by Rural Versus Urban:

- I live in a town or city: 77%
- I live in a rural area: 23%

Response by SEND Versus Non-SEND:

- No: 71%
- Yes: 17%
- Prefer not to say: 12%

Cookstown Stakeholder input/feedback

From the consultation and feedback from key stakeholders and young people, dealing with stress and emotional health and wellbeing (EHWB) is a significant concern for young people, with 79% strongly agreeing or agreeing that they can get help for EHWB, while 21% feel they don't know or need more support. Issues such as social media, body image, vaping, physical health, sleep and relaxation therapy, eating healthy, positive influences, bullying and safe spaces are crucial areas to address. 55% agree and 26% strongly agree that there are plenty of opportunities for physical activities. Feedback suggests that young people across the DEA have highlighted the need for more opportunities to enhance both their physical and mental health. Many are already participating in a range of programmes and activities, such as sports and cultural programmes.

Safety concerns were a significant topic of discussion among young people from Cookstown DEA. Many expressed fears about walking home at night, going out on their own and the risk of encountering dangerous situations. Broken glass in spaces used by young people along with issues such as underage drinking and drug misuse also raised concerns.

Young people from Cookstown have expressed a desire for more opportunities related to their future, they also discussed the importance of life skills and being more independent for the future, either to live on their own or prepare for further and higher education. Stakeholders acknowledged that the transition from different education settings especially primary to post primary education) and post education to working life is a challenging period for young people that may require support and guidance. The slightly lower percentage of young people aged 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification still highlights the need for employment and training programmes for young people. Career and pathways guidance and support, accreditation, social skills, independent living skills, budgeting and planning on a budget are essential for young people's development. Another key concern is the number of pupils suspended in Cookstown DEA in 22/23, which is a high 96 above the NI Average of 65, pointing to the need for continued efforts to address the challenges experienced by children and young people in their community and in school.

In terms of citizenship, young people stated that they need more opportunities to get involved in their communities and would like to see more inclusive activities that celebrate inclusion about their backgrounds and communities they are part of. Cookstown is also home to 537 newcomer pupils in 2023/24, 5% of the student population above the NI average of 4.1%. This diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for young people. Stakeholders confirmed the need for inclusive opportunities that promote diverse cultural backgrounds. While the number of racially motivated incidents have stayed the same from the previous year (6), it was still recognised that racism remains an issue in the area. This is important to young people because it promotes a sense of belonging, helps build stronger community cohesion and empowers young people to be informed, active citizens and be able to contribute positively to society and their own communities.

There is a high proportion of young people that are unaware of their rights. They expressed a need for a clearer understanding of their rights, which would empower them to better navigate challenges in employment and advocate for themselves. 34% of young people believe all children and young people in their area respect others who are different and 37% think everyone is included and no one feels left out. 41% agree and 33% strongly agree that young people are listened to, valued and respected in their

area. Equality remains a concern for young people in Cookstown DEA, with many expressing a desire for more opportunities for social interaction. Poverty, underage drinking, drug use and a lack of awareness about the challenges faced by young people from different backgrounds were all highlighted as barriers to equality.

Emerging issues, such as concerns about road safety, have also been raised. Young people have expressed fears about falling on footpaths or encountering dangerous drivers, particularly during busy school times. Stakeholders have highlighted that safety concerns for young people in Cookstown DEA, including risks from dangerous drivers on rural roads.

Further Consultation:

The Cookstown Area Youth Service Consultation for 2025/26 gathered 75 responses, with participants including parents/guardians and young people aged 9-25. Key needs identified were mental and emotional health, bullying/peer pressure, online safety and drugs/alcohol misuse. Most respondents currently attend youth provisions, with suggestions for additional support in learning and achieving, addressing the cost-of-living crisis and environmental concerns. Safety and stability in homes, schools and communities were also discussed, along with the importance of inclusion and diversity. The top priorities for Youth Services included providing a safe environment, regular activities, opportunities for skill-building and awareness workshops. Recommendations for improvement included more sports activities and general enhancements to existing services.

Cookstown Summary

- Low educational attainment and barriers to academic success among school-aged young people including suspensions and school refusers.
- Lack of accessible and relevant pathways into employment, training and further education.
- Lack of careers advice and guidance.
- Poor Emotional health and wellbeing, influenced by stress, isolation, lack of support and negative online experiences.
- Poor physical health that includes healthy eating and physical activities.
- Experiences of racism, discrimination and exclusion among newcomer and minority ethnic young people.
- Exposure to domestic abuse and unsafe home environments impacting wellbeing and stability.
- Limited access to inclusive, safe and welcoming spaces for connection, support and recreation.
- Safety concerns in public spaces due substance misuse and antisocial behaviour.
- Lack of awareness of rights and entitlements, particularly among young people with additional needs.
- Inequality in access to opportunities, driven by poverty, social exclusion and community division.

Torrent

Key facts

8,222 children and young people aged 0-25 years old in Torrent DEA.

3,338 falls within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

5.5% of young people aged 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification, compared to the NI average of 4.9%.

3.9% of school leavers are unemployed or unknown in 2022/23, compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

In Torrent DEA, 788 pupils have a Special Education Need. This represents 256 pupils (5.6%) with a SEN Statement Stage 3 and 532 pupils (11.6%) SEN Stage 1-2.

*82.2% of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A-C including GCSE English and maths in 2022/23**, compared to the NI average of 76.1%

306 newcomer pupils in Torrent DEA primary and post-primary schools in 2023/24.

8 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24, a 167% increase from the previous year of 3 racially motivated incidents.

77% of young people in Torrent DEA live in rural areas, vastly over to the Northern Ireland average of 37%.

Below are the top ranked priorities for young people highlighted within the DEA.

1. **Your Future**: This encompasses career aspirations, opportunities for personal growth and the support needed to achieve long-term goals.
2. **Health and Wellbeing**: This involves their emotional health and wellbeing, physical health and overall wellbeing.
3. **Safety**: This covers physical safety, emotional security and feeling safe in your community.
4. **Education**: This covers access to quality education, educational resources and support for learning.
5. **Equality:** Ensuring equality in Youth Services is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment where all young people can thrive. Here are some key aspects and recommendations for promoting equality:
    - ***Inclusiveness***: Ensuring all young people, regardless of background, have access to Youth Services.
    - ***Diversity***: Celebrating and respecting the diverse backgrounds and cultures of young people.
    - ***Rights***: Upholding the rights of young people and ensuring their voices are heard and valued.
6. **Play, Hobbies and Interests**: This includes recreational activities, sports and hobbies that young people enjoy.

7. **Your Rights**: This includes understanding and advocating for their rights as a young person.

Response by Age Band:

- 14 to 18 Years: 59%
- 12 to 13 Years: 22%
- 9 to 11 Years: 19%

Response by Gender:

- Female: 78%
- Male: 22%

Response by Ethnic Background:

- White: 96%
- Chinese: 4%

Response by Rural Versus Urban:

- I live in a rural area: 89%
- I live in a town or city: 11%

Response by SEND Versus Non-SEND:

- No: 89%
- Yes: 7%
- Prefer not to say: 4%

Torrent Stakeholder input/feedback

Young people living in rural areas like the Torrent DEA face several challenges. Limited access to education and career opportunities often requires long distances, while the lack of public transportation forces reliance on personal vehicles. Social isolation is common due to fewer recreational spaces and activities which can contribute to mental health challenges.

Children and young people continue to report experiencing bullying, with body shaming and concerns related to self-esteem being issues. Many express feeling pressured by societal expectations of appearance, body shaming and the constant comparisons seen on social media, which can affect their mental health. These issues not only contribute to feelings of isolation and anxiety but also impact their sense of self-worth, leading to a lack of confidence and difficulties in forming healthy relationships. Emotional health and well-being responses varied, with some young people feeling active and vigorous most of the time, while others felt calm and relaxed less than half the time. Access to provision and support was mixed, with 67% agreeing there were plenty of opportunities for physical activities, but only 52% felt they could get help for their emotional health needs. There's a strong demand for more programmes both during the day and at night and free access to accreditation to help manage external pressures such as exam stress and career support.

Substance misuse, particularly vaping, smoking and drug use, is rising among young people. Young people reported peer pressure to engage in these behaviours. Children and young people have also shared concerns about the availability of drugs on the streets and the risks involved.

Family issues, including domestic abuse, affect many young people. In 2023-2024, there were 211 incidents with a domestic abuse motivation across the area, below the Northern Ireland average of 260. These experiences often contribute to mental health challenges.

Children and young people in Torrent DEA also expressed concern about dangerous and careless driving, particularly in rural roads. They have highlighted the need for more education on safe driving practices for new young drivers, especially when it comes to responsible driving and substance misuse. This concern is even more pronounced in rural areas, where they feel that the risks of unsafe driving are due to the fewer traffic regulations and the isolation of rural roads. Safety concerns, social media impact and worries about crime and the safety of women and girls were also prevalent among the youth. The rurality and access to local provision were also highlighted as barriers.

Sexual health, drug and alcohol misuse and vaping were also significant concerns. The feedback emphasised the need for independent living programmes. EVAWG (Ending Violence Against Women and Girls) was identified as a major priority, especially in rural areas. Stakeholders suggested timely projects that consider rurality to enhance safety for young people at night or out on their own walking. The negative image of the P.S.N.I. (Police Service of Northern Ireland) in certain areas was also noted, with recommendations to support this issue.

Academic performance and the fear of not reaching full potential were other key issues. Young people requested support on this issue to enhance their own careers and future prospects and understanding of other life challenges that they not be aware of at this stage of their lives. Social action projects were proposed to engage young people and allow them to contribute through Youth Voice initiatives and contribute to their own community and area they are from. Videos and discussions on young people's

rights were recommended to be shown and taught by Youth Services. Notably, 48% of young people felt listened to, valued and respected, while 41% knew their rights and 74% felt their rights were respected in youth work programmes.

Prejudice and discrimination were significant issues in the area, with language barriers affecting newcomers and occasional clashes of cultures. 8 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24, a 167% increase from the previous year of 3 racially motivated incidents. Additionally, with a high population of Irish traveller families and over 300 newcomer pupils in Torrent DEA primary and post-primary schools in 2023/24, clearly shows a need for more support around inclusion and prejudices toward others with a better focus on acceptance and celebration of cultures.

In Torrent DEA, 788 pupils have a Special Education Need. This represents 256 pupils (5.6%) with a SEN Statement Stage 3 and 532 pupils (11.6%) SEN Stage 1-2.

Respect and understanding programmes were deemed necessary to address these challenges. Additionally, 37% felt confident fighting for their rights if necessary, highlighting the need for empowerment and support in advocacy.

Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRAs) are neighbourhoods identified as experiencing the most severe multiple deprivation and received support under the Department for Communities People and Place Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. In total 36 neighbourhoods have been identified to received support. There is one NRA in the DEA area of Coalisland.

Torrent Summary

- Mental health challenges and emotional distress, fuelled by anxiety, depression and the pressures of online activity.
- Inequality in access to opportunities, driven by poverty, social exclusion and community division.
- Bullying, body shaming, healthy eating and low self-esteem affecting confidence and healthy relationships.
- Limited access to education, training and career, advice and guidance opportunities due to rural isolation and lack of knowledge.
- Lack of single identification programmes and workshops across different age groups.
- Lack of safe, inclusive spaces for support, connection and non-judgmental guidance.
- Limited public transport restricting participation in activities and services.
- Rising substance misuse, including vaping, smoking and drug use, linked to peer pressure.
- Lack of accessible, youth-friendly sexual health education and support.
- Impact of family issues and domestic abuse on young people's stability and wellbeing.
- Rural Road safety concerns and exposure to unsafe driving practices in rural communities.
- Social isolation and reduced opportunities for recreation and peer connection in rural communities.

Dungannon

Key facts

Total children and young people aged 0-25 years old: 8,887.

Key Youth Service priority aged bands (9-13 years and 14-18 years): 3,533.

Young people aged 20-24 not in employment and without a qualification: 5.5% (NI average: 4.9%).

School leavers who are unemployed or unknown (2022/23): 3.3% (NI average: 4.7%).

School leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A-C including English and maths (2022/23) **: 71.5% (NI average: 76.1%).

Newcomer pupils in primary and post-primary schools (2023/24): 1,981 (Dungannon is in the top 2.5% of areas across Northern Ireland with school-aged newcomer children and young people).

Incidents with a racist motivation (2023/24): 17 incidents (13% increase from previous year of 15 incidents).

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents (2023/24): 44,099 incidents in Northern Ireland, with Dungannon DEA contributing to 729 of this total, above the NI Average of 708.

Domestic violence incidents (2023/24): 32,763 incidents in Northern Ireland, with Dungannon DEA contributing to 311 in total, above the NI Average of 260 in 23/24.

Below are the top ranked priorities for young people highlighted within the DEA:

1. **Your Future**: This encompasses career aspirations, opportunities for personal growth and the support needed to achieve long-term goals.
2. **Health and Wellbeing**: This involves their emotional health and wellbeing, physical health and overall wellbeing.
3. **Play, Hobbies and Interests**: This includes recreational activities, sports and hobbies that young people enjoy.
4. **Safety**: This covers physical safety, emotional security and feeling safe in your community.
5. **Your Rights**: This includes understanding and advocating for their rights as a young person.
6. **Education**: This covers access to quality education, educational resources and support for learning.
7. **Equality:** Ensuring equality in Youth Services is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment where all young people can thrive. Here are some key aspects and recommendations for promoting equality:
    - ***Inclusiveness***: Ensuring all young people, regardless of background, have access to Youth Services.
    - ***Diversity***: Celebrating and respecting the diverse backgrounds and cultures of young people.

- ***Rights***: Upholding the rights of young people and ensuring their voices are heard and valued.

Response by Age Band

- 14 to 18 Years: 42 (88%)
- 12 to 13 Years: 5 (10%)
- 9 to 11 Years: Not specified

Response by Gender

- Female: 33 (69%)
- Male: 15 (31%)

Response by Ethnic Background

- White: 39 (81%)
- Black - African: 3 (6%)
- Other Asian: 1 (2%)
- Arab: Not specified
- Irish Traveller: Not specified
- Other Ethnicity: Not specified

Response by Rural Versus Urban

- I live in a town or city: 28 (58%)
- I live in a rural area: 20 (42%)

Response by SEND Versus Non-SEND

- No: 44 (92%)
- Yes: 2 (4%)
- Prefer not to say: Not specified

Dungannon Stakeholder input/feedback

Emotional health and well-being are rising concerns for young people in Dungannon, with various issues contributing to increased stress and anxiety. Bullying, whether in-person or online, remains a significant challenge, often leading to feelings of isolation, low self-esteem and depression. Peer pressure also plays a critical role, as many young people feel compelled to conform to social expectations or engage in risky behaviours to fit in. A notable 63% feel that poverty is affecting more children and young people and 69% believe that young people can change things for the better. However, only 49% feel they have a safe space to hang out with friends. Emotional health responses show varied levels of well-being, with 6% feeling active and vigorous all the time, while 19% feel this way most of the time. Similarly, 6% feel calm and relaxed all the time, but 13% feel this way more than half the time. They noted that this pressure is often increased by the influence of social media, where the constant comparison to others can create unrealistic expectations and intensify mental health issues. Additionally, the use of substances such as vaping, drugs and alcohol has become a coping mechanism for some, further impacting their emotional well-being. These factors combined create many new and existing challenges that can have short, medium and long-term effects on young people's mental health, potentially leading to issues such as anxiety, depression and substance misuse.

Additionally, it was reported that prejudice and discrimination are prevalent in Dungannon DEA, particularly affecting newcomer populations. Language barriers and cultural clashes are common, with Dungannon ranking in the top 5 areas across Northern Ireland for newcomer children and young people. Additionally, 21% of young people feel their families cannot support them to do things and 63% feel poverty is affecting more children and young people. These issues highlight the importance of community support and inclusive programmes to bridge cultural gaps and provide equal opportunities.

Despite these needs, only 46% feel safe in their local area and 40% are worried about crime. Furthermore, 35% are concerned about the safety of women and girls, with Ending Violence against young women and girls one of the top priorities across the DEA. Emotional health responses show varied levels of well-being, with 58% feeling barriers that hold them back from succeeding and 48% feeling supported through big changes like moving schools.

Furthermore, the area has a notable percentage of young people whose main language is not English, with 21% of the youth population in this category, much higher than the NI average of 4.1%. (1,981 - Dungannon is in the top 2.5% of areas across Northern Ireland with school-aged newcomer children and young people). Young people have shared that language barriers often make them feel isolated and frustrated. They struggle to keep up with their peers in school and social settings, which can make them feel disconnected and left out. This sense of disconnection means they can't fully join in on discussions or extracurricular activities. It affects their self-esteem and confidence, which can hurt their long-term educational progress and social integration. Young people have expressed the need for more support to feel included and engaged in their communities, so they don't get left behind because of language barriers.

Safety and well-being are also concerns for young people in Dungannon DEA. Anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents in 2023/24 within the DEA were 729 above the NI Average of 708. This highlights the

vulnerability of many young people crime and anti-social behaviour, which can have severe and lasting effects on their mental health, stability and sense of security.

Domestic violence incidents (2023/24) recorded in Dungannon DEA contributed to 311 in total, above the NI Average of 260. This again can have devastating long-term effects on young people subjected to domestic violence. For those living in homes where violence or abuse is present, the impact can extend beyond just the immediate dangers, affecting their ability to trust others, form healthy relationships and cope with stress. The trauma of witnessing or experiencing domestic abuse can interfere with their emotional well-being and academic performance, leaving them at greater risk of developing long-term issues.

The 13% rise in racially motivated incidents in 2023 highlights growing concerns about racial tensions and discrimination in the Dungannon DEA. Young people, especially those from minority ethnic backgrounds, have voiced their need for greater inclusivity and safety. They shared that experiencing discrimination and racism creates a hostile and unwelcoming environment for them, affecting their sense of belonging and personal security. Feeling unsafe in their own communities can lead to social isolation, lower self-esteem and reduced participation in community life. These incidents put up barriers in their ability to thrive, impacting their emotional well-being, confidence and self-esteem. To ensure they feel secure and respected, it's crucial to prioritise inclusive practices and initiatives that foster an environment where all young people can thrive, regardless of their ethnicity.

Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRAs) are neighbourhoods identified as experiencing the most severe multiple deprivation and received support under the Department for Communities People and Place Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. In total 36 neighbourhoods have been identified to received support. There is one NRA in the DEA area of Dungannon.

Overall, the data paints a picture of a community with significant needs and challenges, but also with a strong sense of potential and resilience among its young people. Addressing issues such as emotional health, substance misuse, prejudice and access to opportunities will require a concerted effort from local authorities, community organisations and the young people themselves. By fostering a supportive and inclusive environment, Dungannon DEA can help its young people overcome these challenges and achieve their full potential.

Dungannon Summary

- Lack of accessible pathways and carers guidance to enhance employment, training and skills development / opportunities.
- low educational attainment and disengagement from learning.
- Poor mental health and emotional well-being due to exam stress, bullying and low self-worth.
- Isolation and exclusion of newcomer young people due to language barriers.
- Isolation and exclusion for young people facing rural isolation and access to services.
- Experiences of racism and discrimination among minority ethnic young people.
- High levels of domestic abuse impacting young people's safety and stability.
- Limited opportunities for young people to have a voice and influence decisions.
- Bullying, peer pressure and negative impact of social media.
- Poverty and financial hardship affecting access to activities and essentials.
- Ongoing community division and need for peacebuilding within certain contentious areas.
- Exposure to substance use and lack of positive alternatives.

Clogher Valley

Key facts

There is 7,518 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Clogher Valley DEA.

2,911 falls within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

In the Clogher Valley District Electoral Area (DEA), approximately 83**%** of young people live in rural areas, much greater than the NI Average of 34%.

3.0% 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 4.5% 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 83.9% (NI average 76.1%).

146 newcomer pupils in Clogher Valley DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.

There were 4 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 56% decrease from the previous year of 9 racial motivated incidents.

School Leavers Achieving 5 GCSEs (A-C including English and Maths) - Clogher Valley DEA: 83.9% with NI Average being 76.1%

Below are the top ranked priorities for young people highlighted within the DEA.

1. **Your Future**: This encompasses career aspirations, opportunities for personal growth and the support needed to achieve long-term goals.
2. **Health and Wellbeing**: This involves their emotional health and wellbeing, physical health and overall wellbeing.
3. **Play, Hobbies and Interests**: This includes recreational activities, sports and hobbies that young people enjoy.
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5. **Equality:** Ensuring equality in Youth Services is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment where all young people can thrive. Here are some key aspects and recommendations for promoting equality:
    - ***Inclusiveness***: Ensuring all young people, regardless of background, have access to Youth Services.
    - ***Diversity***: Celebrating and respecting the diverse backgrounds and cultures of young people.
    - ***Rights***: Upholding the rights of young people and ensuring their voices are heard and valued

6. **Safety**: This covers physical safety, emotional security and feeling safe in your community.
7. **Your Rights**: This includes understanding and advocating for their rights as a young person.

Response by Age Band

- 14 to 18 Years: 35 responses (81%)
- 12 to 13 Years: 7 responses (16%)
- 9 to 11 Years: 1 response (2%)

Response by Gender

- Female: 33 responses (77%)
- Male: 10 responses (23%)

Response by Ethnic Background

- White: 43 responses (100%)

Response by Rural Versus Urban

- I live in a rural area: 41 responses (95%)
- I live in a town or city: 2 responses (5%)

Response by SEND Versus Non-SEND

- No: 39 responses (91%)
- Yes: 3 responses (7%)
- Prefer not to say: 1 response (2%)

Clogher Valley Stakeholder input/feedback

The data from Clogher Valley DEA, home to 7,518 children and young people aged 0-25, highlights both unique challenges and opportunities in supporting its youth population. Of these, 2,911 fall within the key Youth Service priority age bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years. Statistically, Clogher Valley DEA presents a more positive outlook compared to the wider Northern Ireland (NI) region, particularly in terms of employment and qualifications. Only 3% of young people aged 20-24 are neither employed nor qualified, significantly lower than the NI average of 4.9%. Moreover, the percentage of school leavers in Clogher Valley who are unemployed or whose status is unknown stands at 4.5%, closely aligned to the I average of 4.7%. These figures indicate that Clogher Valley's educational and employment landscape is relatively stable compared to other DEAs across Mid Ulster, a key point that stakeholders have identified as an encouraging and a positive note sign for the Clogher Valley area.

The area is also home to a high number of newcomer pupils, with 146 enrolled in primary and post-primary schools during the 2023/24 school year. This contributes to the area's cultural diversity but also presents challenges for integration and language support. Furthermore, Clogher Valley reported only 4 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 56% decrease from the previous year of 9 racial motivated incidents. This is a low number compared to other DEAs across Mid Ulster and therefore reflects a more inclusive atmosphere among children and young people in the area.

When it comes to domestic abuse, In the Clogher Valley District Electoral Area (DEA) during the 2023/24 year, there were 152 recorded incidents with a domestic abuse motivation. This figure is below the Northern Ireland average of 260 incidents, suggesting a relatively safer environment for children and young people in Clogher Valley DEA. However, stakeholders pointed out that this figure should be understood in the context of potential underreporting or cultural factors that may influence the recognition and reporting of such issues. Some stakeholders also noted the importance of ensuring that young people have the necessary support and education to identify and deal with domestic abuse issues when they arise. Concerns about safety and social issues were also prevalent. While 63% felt safe in their local area, 51% believed social media negatively impacted them and 42% were worried about crime. Additionally, 40% were concerned about the safety of women and girls and 35% felt pressure to engage in potentially dangerous activities.

Young people agreed that play and leisure activities not only made them happy and excited but also helped relieve stress. Stakeholders emphasised that these activities are crucial for both physical and emotional health and well-being, providing a much-needed break from daily pressures. Children and young people highlighted the need for recreational activities and safe spaces where they feel valued, a point strongly supported during focus group sessions. Regarding safety, young people mentioned that while they had safe places to socialise, like youth clubs, schools and churches, public spaces such as parks were not always seen as safe, especially for socialising at night or at weekends.

Feedback from key stakeholders highlighted several critical issues affecting young people in rural areas. A significant concern is the lack of facilities, which is not conducive to supporting mental health. Stakeholders emphasised the need for programmes and activities to help address these gaps. Additionally, 33% of respondents felt there were insufficient activities in their area, suggesting more sporting activities and opportunities to explore arts and cultural expressions.

Emotional health and wellbeing responses indicated varied experiences among young people. While 14% felt active and vigorous all the time, 28% felt this way more than half the time and 33% felt calm and relaxed most of the time. However, only 12% woke up feeling fresh and rested all the time and 14% felt this way more than half the time. For instance, 23% agreed there were plenty of opportunities for physical activities, while 58% strongly agreed. However, 33% felt there were not enough fun things to do in their area and 49% agreed they had safe spaces to hang out with friends. The responses also highlighted the importance of youth work programmes, with 53% agreeing they could get qualifications through these programmes and 44% learning a lot through them.

Young people in Clogher Valley DEA have highlighted the need for more opportunities to enhance both their physical and mental health. Many are already participating in a diverse array of recreational activities, such as football and swimming as well as arts like Irish dancing and music.

Career readiness was another area of focus, with 60% feeling equipped to apply for and get a job in the future. However, 53% believed poverty was affecting more children and young people and 37% felt young people were listened to, valued and respected. The feedback also indicated a need for better understanding and respect for rights, with 60% knowing their rights and 42% feeling confident in fighting for them if necessary. The key needs identified are enhancing career readiness programmes, addressing poverty, ensuring young people feel listened to and valued and improving education and empowerment regarding their rights. Addressing these needs will help create a more supportive and empowering environment for young people to succeed and thrive.

Educational achievements in Clogher Valley also align closely with the regional averages. In 2022/23, 83.9 % of school leavers in Clogher Valley DEA achieved at least five GCSEs, including English and Math, which is above the NI average of 76.1%. This suggests that educational attainment in the area is strong and young people are generally achieving the qualifications needed to move forward in life. Stakeholders agreed, however, that there is still room for improvement, particularly for those who may not have access to support outside the home or school environment.

Looking ahead, children and young people in Clogher Valley DEA have mixed feelings about their future. Many are hopeful and believe their futures can change in positive ways, but some also feel nervous about what's to come. Despite these uncertainties, young people are confident in their ability to live independently, though they recognise that challenges like bullying, social media pressures and issues at home might make it harder to reach their full potential. Poverty is another concern, as it can affect their peers by excluding them from social activities due to a lack of access to branded clothes or the ability to go on educational trips. This social exclusion can lead to bullying, highlighting the need for support to address the broader socio-economic factors that impact young people's lives.

Clogher Valley Summary

- Mental health challenges and emotional distress, fuelled by anxiety, unhealthy easting, depression and the pressures of academic life put on them by families.
- Bullying, online body shaming and low self-esteem affecting confidence and healthy relationships.
- Limited access to careers guidance for further education, training and career opportunities due to rural isolation.
- Lack of safe, inclusive spaces for support, connection and non-judgmental guidance.
- Limited public transport restricting participation in activities and services.
- Rising substance misuse, including vaping, smoking and drug use, linked to peer pressure.
- Lack of accessible, youth-friendly sexual and physical health education and support.
- Impact of family issues and domestic abuse on young people's stability and wellbeing.
- Road safety concerns and exposure to unsafe driving practices in rural communities.
- Social isolation and reduced opportunities for recreation and peer connection in rural communities.