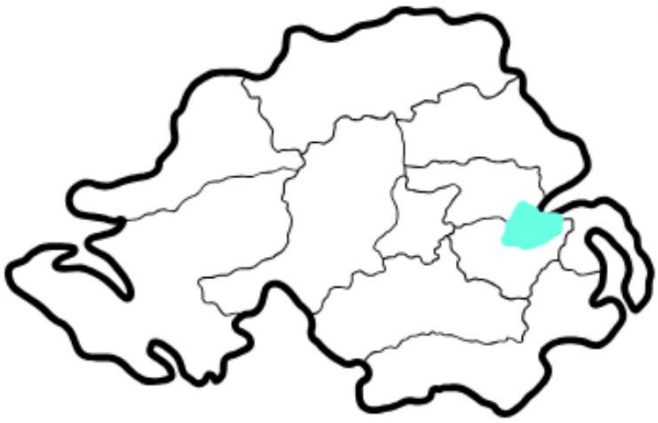
Education Authority

2026 - 2029



NORTH & EAST BELFAST

LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF NEED

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Contents

Introduction *3*

Methodology *4*

North & East Belfast in Numbers *6*

Findings From Children and Young People *10*

Emotional Health and Wellbeing **11**
Key facts 11
Stakeholder input/feedback 12

Access to Play and Leisure **14**
Key facts 14
Stakeholder input/feedback 15

Learning and Achieving **16**
Key facts 16
Stakeholder input/feedback 17

Living in Safety and Stability **19**
Key facts 19
Stakeholder input/feedback 20

Economic and Environmental Stability **22**
Key facts 22
Stakeholder input/feedback 23

Making a Positive Contribution **25**
Key facts 25
Stakeholder input/feedback 26

Respect for Young People's Rights **27**
Key facts 27
Stakeholder input/feedback 28

Good Relations and Equality **29**
Key facts 29
Stakeholder input/feedback 30

Summary Conclusion of Needs across Strategic Themes for North & East Belfast **32**

The findings – Identification of priorities/DEA profiles *34*

Castle **34**
Key facts 34
Castle Stakeholder input/feedback 35
Castle Summary 37

Oldpark **38**
Key facts 38
Stakeholder input/feedback 39
Oldpark Summary 41

Court North **42**
Key facts 42
Stakeholder input/feedback 43
Court North Summary 45

Ormiston 46
Key facts 46
Ormiston Stakeholder input/feedback 47
Ormiston Summary 49

Titanic 50
Key facts 50
Titanic Stakeholder input/feedback 51
Titanic Summary 53

Lisnasharragh 54
Key facts 54
Lisnasharragh Stakeholder input/feedback 55
Lisnasharragh Summary 57

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 North & East Belfast. It brings together data, evidence and local insight to help identify the needs and barriers children and young people in North & East Belfast 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 North & East Belfast. The tools used to gather essential information and data for the regional document had the ability to be filtered at a local level and this supplied EA with an excellent resource to listen to and understand the direct voices of children and young people. Details of how this was achieved are laid out in the regional document.

Part One – Children and Young People's Survey

A survey for all children and young people aged 4-25 years was designed and developed by a project team set up within the Education Authority Youth Service based on the eight strategic outcomes of the Children and Young Peoples' Strategy 2020-2030. A total of 5,451 children and young people responded to the survey. From those figures 623 participants completed the survey in North & East Belfast.

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. 12 focus groups, involving 402 participants were completed in North & East Belfast.

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 North & East Belfast can be found here.

Part Four – Embedding Findings from Key Research

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

Part Five – Parents and Organisation Survey

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

Part Six – Wider Stakeholder Engagement

Consultation with 916 stakeholders across North & East Belfast took place from October 2024 until end of January 2025 through the following methods.

635 young people completed the local assessment of need survey & focus groups.

241 young people surveyed by Youth Voice groups in North & East Belfast.

40 stakeholders surveyed within North & East Belfast Local Advisory Group.

North & East Belfast in Numbers

The population of Belfast Local Government District is 348,005 people.

118,083 children and young people are aged 0-25 years live in Belfast.

102,524 children and young people are aged 4-25 years live in Belfast.

Age bands population

- 15,553 aged 0 – 3 years
- 21,120 aged 4 – 8 years
- 21,645 aged 9 – 13 years
- 19,632 aged 14 – 18 years
- 40,127 aged 19 – 25 years

In Belfast 62,583 children and young people aged 0-25 years (53%) live in deprivation.

38% of children and young people aged 0-24 years old in Belfast come from a lone parent family (census21).

5,021 Newcomers attend schools in Belfast (7.6%) – NI Average 5%.

127 Irish Traveller children and young people.

25,458 (45.6%) of all pupils in Belfast are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24. (NI average 28%).

13,857 pupils (23%) who attend school in Belfast 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).

The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C (incl. equivalent qualifications) including GCSE English and Maths in Belfast in 2022/23 is 82% compared to the NI average of 76.1%.

The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed and/or unknown in Belfast in 2022/23 is 5.8% (NI average 4.7%).

6.4% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification. (NI average 4.9%).

The proportion of Primary 1 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Belfast in 2022/23 is 20.3% (NI average 20.4%).

The proportion of Year 8 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Belfast in 2022/23 is 26.5% (NI average 26%). This represents 27.2% of girls (NI 26.2%) and 25.9% of boys (NI 25.8%).

Suicide rates in Belfast recorded 49 suicides in 2023. This is a 21% decrease from 62 suicides in 2020. The suicide rate has continued to fall this past 2 years in Belfast.

There were 319 incidents with a sectarian motivation in Belfast in 2023/24.

There were 635 incidents with a racist motivation in Belfast in 2023/24. This is a 14% increase from the previous year of 557 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 5,485 domestic abuse crimes in Belfast in 2023/24. This is a 5% decrease from the previous year. The average rate for domestic abuse crimes in Belfast DEAs is 549 (NI average 250).

There was a total of 13,390 anti-social behaviour incidents in Belfast in 2023/24. This is a 5% decrease from the previous year. The average for anti-social behaviour incidents in Belfast DEAs is 1339 (NI average 567).

Constituency Data

According to figures released by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in 2018, 75.6% of all young people in North Belfast live in an Area of 50% most Deprived with 49% in East Belfast. By comparison, the Northern Ireland Average is 25.2%.

Multiple Deprivation Measure data remains mapped in North & East Belfast area to 84 Super Output Areas.

- 5 Super Output Areas are ranked in the top 10 most deprived in terms of multiple deprivation, these are all in North Belfast.
- 10 Super Output Areas are in the top 20 most deprived in terms of multiple deprivation, these are all in North Belfast.
- 8 Super Output Areas in North & East Belfast are ranked in the top 10 most deprived in terms of Education, Skills and Training.
- 5 Super Output Areas in North Belfast are in the top 10 most deprived in terms of Health & Disability.
- 7 Super Output Areas in North Belfast are in the top 20 most deprived in terms of Employment.
- 8 Super Output Areas in North Belfast are in the top 40 most deprived in terms of Income.

Northern Ireland Data

- 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

1. **Age Distribution**: With 118,083 children and young people aged 0-25 years in Belfast, and significant numbers in each age band, the challenge lies in providing age-appropriate services and resources. For instance, there are 21,120 aged 4-8 years, 21,645 aged 9-13 years, 19,632 aged 14-18 years, and 40,127 aged 19-25 years. The varying needs of these age groups can complicate the delivery of consistent and effective services.

2. **Deprivation and Family Structure**: With 62,583 children and young people (53%) living in deprivation and 38% coming from lone parent families, there are significant socio-economic challenges. These conditions can lead to higher stress levels, limited access to educational and recreational opportunities, and poorer health outcomes. Children in deprived areas may face barriers to academic achievement and personal development, while those from lone parent families might experience reduced emotional and financial support, impacting their overall well-being.

3. **Education and Special Needs**: The high percentage of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (45.6%) and those with Special Education Needs or Disabilities (23%) presents a dual challenge. Schools must provide adequate nutritional support and specialised educational resources, which can be logistically demanding. Despite these challenges, the high achievement rate in GCSEs (82%) suggests that current strategies are effective, but maintaining and improving these outcomes will require sustained effort. The logistical complexities of catering to diverse educational needs can strain resources and staff.

4. **Health and Well-being**: The high obesity rates among young people indicate a need for better nutrition and physical activity programmes. For example, 20.3% of Primary 1 pupils and 26.5% of Year 8 pupils are identified as obese or overweight. This challenge involves not only Youth Services but also families and schools in promoting healthier lifestyles. Additionally, while the decrease in suicide rates (21% decrease from 2020) is positive, ongoing efforts are needed to continue improving mental health support and addressing underlying issues such as stress, anxiety, and depression among young people. The prevalence of obesity and mental health issues highlights the need for early intervention approaches.

5. **Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion**: The presence of 5,021 newcomer young people (7.6%) and 127 Irish Traveller children in Belfast schools highlights the city's ethnic diversity. This diversity presents issues such as, language barriers, cultural differences, and potential discrimination. The challenge lies in creating an inclusive environment that accommodates the needs of a diverse youth population.

6. **Crime and Safety**: While there has been a decrease in domestic abuse (5% decrease) and anti-social behaviour incidents (5% decrease), the rise in racially motivated incidents (14% increase) is alarming. Ensuring safety and fostering a sense of belonging for all residents is crucial for community well-being. The increase in racially motivated incidents indicates underlying social tensions that need to be addressed to maintain community harmony.

7. **Multiple Deprivation**: The concentration of deprivation in North and East Belfast presents a significant challenge. For example, 75.6% of young people in North Belfast and 49% in East Belfast live in areas of multiple deprivation. These present significant issues in education, health, and employment opportunities. The high levels of deprivation in these areas can perpetuate cycles of poverty and limit opportunities for young people.

8. **Future Trends**: The projected decrease in the number of children aged 4-8 years and the increase in 14–18-year-olds suggest a demographic shift. Anticipating these changes and planning accordingly is essential to meet the evolving needs of the population. The demographic shift poses challenges in reallocating resources and services to meet the changing needs of the population.

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

Findings From Children and Young People

This section combines the results from the survey data conducted with children and young people across North & East Belfast, NISRA statistical data, feedback from focus groups and outlining how these are supported by the findings from research.

When asked what the most important theme of provision was for children and young people across North & East Belfast, through the survey, ranked the themes by importance to them as follows:

1. Your Future
2. Health & Wellbeing
3. Play, hobbies and interests
4. Safety
5. Your rights
6. Education
7. Equality
8. Citizenship

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Key facts

13,857 pupils (23%) who attend school in Belfast 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).

Approximately 23,616 children and young people aged 0-25 years have a mental health need.

7,414 children and young people aged 0-24 years have autism.

The proportion of Primary 1 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Belfast in 2022/23 is 20.3% (NI average 20.4%).

The proportion of Year 8 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Belfast in 2022/23 is 26.5% (NI average 26%). This represents 27.2% of girls (NI 26.2%) and 25.9% of boys (NI 25.8%).

21.7% of children and young people aged 0-24 years have a long-term health condition (NI 19.8%).

There was 9.81 births per 1,000 births to young mothers aged under 20 years (NI average 5.83%).

There was 1.86 births per 1,000 births to young mothers aged under 17 years (NI average 0.75%).

According to the most recent census, 3,499 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

Suicide rates in Belfast recorded 49 suicides in 2023. This is a 21% decrease from 62 suicides in 2020. The suicide rate has continued to fall this past 2 years in Belfast.

**Figures for some section 75 groups are only available by NI level. These include Looked After Children, NEETS and Young Carers. **

Stakeholder input/feedback

In a comprehensive assessment of emotional health and wellbeing among young people, several significant needs have been identified:

Over 20% of young people surveyed feel there are insufficient opportunities in their communities to engage in physical activities that promote health and wellbeing. This lack of access to sports and recreational facilities leaves them wanting more ways to stay active and healthy. The proportion of Primary 1 pupils identified as obese or overweight in Belfast is 20.3%, and for Year 8 pupils, it is 26.5%, highlighting the need for more physical activity opportunities.

Over 20% of young people surveyed feel there are not enough supports to help with their emotional wellbeing. This gap in support services means that many are left to navigate their mental health challenges alone, without the guidance and resources they need. Approximately 23,616 children and young people aged 0-25 years in Belfast have a mental health need.

30% of young people surveyed report that they do not feel calm and relaxed regularly. The pressures of daily life, school, and social expectations weigh heavily on them, making it difficult to find moments of peace and relaxation. Many young people are experiencing high levels of anxiety and stress related to school pressures, which further exacerbates their mental health challenges.

While over 80% of young people feel cheerful and in good spirits, 55% wake up feeling less than refreshed and rested. This indicates a broader issue with sleep quality and overall daily energy levels, impacting their ability to function optimally.

The access to, and use of drugs, vaping and alcohol is a significant concern among young people. The normalisation of these substances within their peer groups poses a serious risk to their health and prospects.

Issues surrounding self-esteem and self-confidence are prevalent. Young people are struggling with their self-image and the pressures to meet societal standards, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-worth. Concerns related to body image, the influence of social media, and online safety are common. The pervasive nature of social media exacerbates these issues, as young people are constantly exposed to idealised images and lifestyles that can negatively impact their mental health.

Feelings of isolation are prevalent among young people. Despite being more connected than ever through technology, many still feel lonely and disconnected from their peers and communities. According to the most recent census, 3,499 young people in Belfast aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+, and they may face additional challenges related to acceptance and support.

Young people expressed concerns regarding healthy relationships, the importance of healthy eating, and engaging in physical activities. This manifests in how to navigate complex social dynamics and make healthy choices.

Young mothers have highlighted the impact of anxiety, lack of transport, and the absence of safe green spaces on their physical health. They also face significant mental and emotional health challenges, including stress, social media pressures, difficult relationships, poverty, isolation, addiction, and judgement from others. The birth rate among young mothers aged under 20 years in Belfast is 9.81 per 1,000 births, which is higher than the NI average.

Factors such as exercise routines, positive peer groups, eating habits, and the cost of healthy options influence physical health. Mental and emotional health are impacted by stable family life, toxic friendships, social media pressures, financial constraints, and the ability to meet basic needs.

Young people find support from households, friends, family, school, youth workers, peers, counselling, and teachers.

Access to Play and Leisure

Key facts

- Belfast City Council manages over 40 public parks and open spaces across the city.
- Belfast City Council manages 14 leisure and recreational centres across the city through the 'Better' brand operated by GLL. 4 of these are in North Belfast and 3 in East Belfast.
- In North and East Belfast, there are approximately 20 community football teams.
- In North and East Belfast, there are approximately 10 registered GAA clubs.
- 97% of teachers in Northern Ireland agree that outdoor play is critical for a child to reach his/her potential.
- 88% of teachers in Northern Ireland agree that children are happier after playing outdoors.
- 86% of teachers in Northern Ireland agree that playing outdoors gives children a better understanding of the environment.
- There were 22,715 pre-school placements in Northern Ireland in 2022/2023.
- 36,556 children in Northern Ireland aged 0-3 were registered with Sure Start projects in 2023-2024.

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.

In Belfast there are over 40 public parks and open spaces across the city with 14 leisure and recreational centres. These areas provide essential spaces for young people to enjoy themselves, learn life skills and stay active. However, 55% of young people surveyed feel there are not enough fun activities or events in their local area. Nearly 30% of young people surveyed report the absence of safe places to hang out with friends. This highlights the need for more safe social spaces, accessible activities, and diverse sports, cultural events without the risk of anti-social behaviours or unsafe environments.

Young people have expressed the need to be supported in accessing safe and enjoyable play and recreational activities within their communities. These activities help improve physical and mental health, reduce stress and boost mood while providing opportunities to make new friends. Unfortunately, young people stated that some parks are not perceived as safe spaces especially due to teenagers vaping, poor lighting, dog mess or supervision. This makes it essential to address these safety concerns to ensure young people feel secure when participating in outdoor play activities.

Young people want to learn practical life skills that can be used in everyday life, such as cooking and home economics. They enjoy their hobbies and free-time activities but seek more opportunities to engage in them safely and affordably.

Play also helps develop skills such as sharing and listening, while providing emotional benefits like building confidence and resilience. These activities are important not only for younger children but for all young people, regardless of age.

Learning and Achieving

Key facts

The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C (incl. equivalent qualifications) including GCSE English and Math in Belfast in 2022/23 is 82% compared to the NI average of 76.1%.

The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed and/or unknown in Belfast in 2022/23 is 5.8% (NI average 4.7%).

6.4% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification. (NI average 4.9%).

5,021 Newcomers attend schools in Belfast (7.6%) – NI Average 5%.

127 Irish Traveller children and young people.

25,458 (45.6%) of all pupils in Belfast were eligible for Free School Meals in 2023/24. (NI average 28%).

13,857 pupils (23%) who attend school in Belfast 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).

1,179 children and young people were suspended from school in Belfast.

The attendance rate for post-primary schools was 92.2%. (NI average 96%).

According to the most recent census, 3,499 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

**Figures for some section 75 groups are only available by NI level. These include Looked After Children, NEETS and Young Carers. **

Stakeholder input/feedback

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

However, many children face challenges that hinder their educational success. Vulnerable groups, such as those with special educational needs or disabilities, children who are looked after, newcomers, young carers, or those from disadvantaged backgrounds, often struggle to fit in, make friends, or keep up with learning, leading to feelings of isolation.

75% of young people surveyed in North & East Belfast find value in their current youth work programmes, which help them learn and achieve qualifications. However, barriers such as exam stress, relationships with teachers, and special educational needs can limit their opportunities to succeed. The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, including English and Math, is higher in Belfast (82%) compared to the Northern Ireland average (76.1%). Despite this, 5.8% of school leavers are unemployed or their status is unknown, which is higher than the NI average of 4.7%.

Nearly 40% of young people surveyed often feel unsupported during significant changes in their education, such as moving to a new school. Stress from school, exam pressure, and mental health issues at home are significant concerns. Young people in focus groups have told us they require more support in developing essential skills such as leadership, communication, time management, and life skills.

Children and young people in focus groups also stated that it is important not only to be taught academic subjects but also to be prepared for real-life challenges. Life skills such as how to get a job, manage money, solve problems and handle stressful situations are essential for their future success and well-being. They noted that it is important in providing these skills outside of the traditional classroom, helping young people feel confident and ready for the future. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of equipping young people with both academic and life skills, ensuring they are prepared for adulthood.

Barriers to learning, such as dyslexia, learning difficulties, attendance issues, and struggling in formal education environments, are common. Concerningly, the attendance rate for post-primary schools in Belfast is 92.2%, which is lower than the NI average of 96%. This is leading to more young people with free time during the day due to reduced time tabling, absenteeism and expulsion from schools. Additionally, external pressures like parental expectations, career aspirations, and competitive school placements add to the stress young people face. Youth Services have an important role to play in this area.

In focus groups young people prioritise learning about relationships and sexual health. They highlight needing access to information and feel more comfortable discussing these topics with youth workers. There is also a need for more work around domestic violence, abuse, and ending violence against women and girls. Young people seek greater understanding and education on sexuality, inclusion, and diversity.

Young people are presenting with an ever-broader range of needs to Youth Services. In Belfast, 45.6% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is significantly higher than the NI average of 28%. Additionally, 23% of pupils have a special education need or disability, compared to the NI average of 19%. The presence of 5,021 newcomers and 127 Irish Traveller children and young people in schools highlights the diversity within the student population. Furthermore, 3,499 young people aged 16-24 identify as LGBTQI+, indicating the need for inclusive and supportive environments.

In summary, while education is a fundamental right, it must be accessible and inclusive for all children and young people. Support and opportunities should be provided to ensure all children and young people can succeed, regardless of their background or circumstances. Education is not only about academic learning but also about preparing children for life and it is essential that it recognises the diverse needs of all children and young people.

Living in Safety and Stability

Key facts

In Belfast 62,583 children and young people aged 0-25 years (53%) live in deprivation.

According to the most recent census, 3,499 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

38% of children and young people aged 0-24 years old in Belfast come from a lone parent family.

There were 319 incidents with a sectarian motivation in Belfast in 2023/24.

There were 635 incidents with a racist motivation in Belfast in 2023/24. This is a 14% increase from the previous year of 557 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 5,485 domestic abuse crimes in Belfast in 2023/24. This is a 5% decrease from the previous year. The average rate for domestic abuse crimes in Belfast DEAs is 549 (NI average 250).

There was a total of 13,390 anti-social behaviour incidents in Belfast in 2023/24. This is a 5% decrease from the previous year. The average for anti-social behaviour incidents in Belfast DEAs is 1339 (NI average 567).

Suicide rates in Belfast recorded 49 suicides in 2023. This is a 21% decrease from 62 suicides in 2020. The suicide rate has continued to fall this past 2 years in Belfast.

**Figures for some section 75 groups are only available by NI level. These include Looked After Children, NEETS and Young Carers. **

Stakeholder input/feedback

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

In North & East Belfast, there are notable needs among children and young people, especially those living in deprivation. 53% of children and young people aged 0-25 years (62,583 individuals) live in deprivation, facing challenges related to safety, well-being, and social issues. Nearly a quarter of all young people surveyed do not feel safe in their local areas, with worries about crime, social media's negative impact, and pressure to engage in harmful activities. The safety of women and girls is a major concern with focus groups, with many expressing fears about their security in the community. This widespread anxiety highlights the need for focused attention on creating safer environments.

In the past year, the prevalence of gender-based violence across Northern Ireland among 16-year-olds has highlighted the importance of this stability. The 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls' report found that 19% of 16-year-olds had experienced online violence, while 18% reported psychological violence. The locations where these violent acts occurred most frequently were online (42%), at school (35%), and in public outdoor spaces (26%). These alarming statistics emphasise the importance of safe, secure environments where young people can grow and learn without fear of harm. These statistics highlight the importance of a safe and supportive environment both at home and in the community, where young people can learn, grow and thrive without fear of violence or abuse.

Exposure to violence, deprivation, and social issues can lead to chronic stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders. For instance, children who witness domestic violence are more likely to experience emotional trauma, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Untreated mental health issues can result in long-term problems such as social isolation, poor academic performance, and difficulties in forming healthy relationships.

Local stakeholders have pointed out issues such as interface violence, domestic violence, bullying, sectarianism, racism, and the exploitation of young people. 319 incidents with a sectarian motivation and 635 incidents with a racist motivation were reported in Belfast in 2023/24, with the latter representing a 14% increase from the previous year. Additionally, there has been a 10.8% rise in racist incidents across Northern Ireland, indicating areas that need more education and intervention.

Experiencing racism and sectarianism can lead to long-term psychological and emotional harm. These experiences can create a sense of fear and insecurity, impacting mental health and social interactions. Social media can exacerbate these issues by contributing to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and depression. Excessive use of social media can disrupt sleep, distract from homework and family activities, and expose young people to cyberbullying and unrealistic standards.

Focus groups have emphasised the importance of feeling safe at home, school, and in their neighbourhoods. Concerns about travelling, especially at night, and the safety of young women are common. Incidents of racial violence and specific events in local schools have further highlighted these

safety concerns. Young people have shared their fears about drug-taking, paramilitary activity, and anti-social behaviour in their communities, which contribute to their sense of insecurity.

Chronic stress from living in unsafe environments can lead to physical health problems. Stress affects hormone levels, causing inflammation and increasing the risk of chronic diseases. Children exposed to domestic violence may also suffer from developmental delays and cognitive impairments. Exposure to anti-social behaviour and violence can lead to behavioural issues such as aggression, rebelliousness, and difficulties in forming healthy relationships. Young people who witness or experience violence are more likely to engage in violent behaviour themselves.

Additionally, statistics reveal concerning trends: 5,485 domestic abuse crimes and 13,390 anti-social behaviour incidents were recorded in Belfast in 2023/24, although both figures represent a 5% decrease from the previous year. The average rate for domestic abuse crimes in Belfast DEAs is 549, compared to the NI average of 250. The average for anti-social behaviour incidents in Belfast DEAs is 1339, compared to the NI average of 567. Suicide rates in Belfast recorded 49 suicides in 2023, a 21% decrease from 62 suicides in 2020. Despite this decrease, the overall safety and mental health of young people remain critical issues.

Addressing these needs requires a comprehensive approach involving community support and other statutory services. Children and young people need to feel safe both at home and in their communities, have access to support networks and be protected from harm, whether online or offline. Safe, stable and supportive environments are essential for young people's health, happiness and long-term success.

Economic and Environmental Stability

Key facts

In Belfast 62,583 children and young people aged 0-25 years (53%) live in deprivation.

The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed and/or unknown in Belfast in 2022/23 is 5.8%. (NI average 4.7%).

6.4% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification. (NI average 4.9%).

25,458 (45.6%) of all pupils in Belfast are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24. (NI average 28%).

**Figures for some section 75 groups are only available by NI level. These include Looked After Children, NEETS and Young Carers. **

Stakeholder input/feedback

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

The Regional Assessment of Need highlights several important concerns among young people in North & East Belfast. Many feel uncertain about their future career prospects and worry that they lack the necessary skills to secure employment. Financial difficulties are a common theme, with families struggling to afford activities and essentials. Poverty is seen as a significant issue affecting the lives of children and young people in Northern Ireland, with 62,583 children and young people aged 0-25 years (53%) living in deprivation in Belfast.

Over 25% of young people across the area have expressed that they feel there will not be a career option for them in the future and many feel ill-equipped for the job market ahead. The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or whose status is unknown in Belfast in 2022/23 is 5.8%, higher than the Northern Ireland average of 4.7%. Additionally, 6.4% of young people aged 20-24 are not in employment and do not have a qualification, compared to the Northern Ireland average of 4.9%. Stakeholders have stated that this uncertainty leaves young people feeling anxious about their prospects.

Long-term low income makes these challenges even more difficult for children and young people. The ongoing cost-of-living crisis, characterised by rising costs of food, energy, and fuel, has intensified the situation for many families. This financial strain is affecting children and young people, particularly as they struggle to meet their basic needs. Free School Meals is one indicator of this with 25,458 (45.6%) of all pupils in Belfast are eligible for Free School Meals in 2023/24, significantly higher than the Northern Ireland average of 28%.

Emotional and mental health concerns are also rising, with stakeholders agreeing that children and young people from lower-income families are more likely to experience mental health issues compared to their wealthier peers. This disparity has been reported by local health services, who have noted an increased need for mental health support in communities. The rate of mental health issues is further increased by the feeling of limited opportunities for the future, with many young people acknowledging that their current experiences contribute to their anxiety.

Environmental concerns are also prominent, with many worried about climate change and feeling that not enough is being done to address its impacts. There is a desire for more education on climate change and better use of green spaces, as well as concerns about local issues like fires, fly-tipping, and inadequate recycling. Almost 40% of young people surveyed across the area have expressed worry about climate change and its impact on their local area. This growing anxiety is increased by the feeling that they have no control over the environmental damage taking place around them in terms of random fires, fly-tipping, and inadequate recycling. Just over 40% of young people surveyed stated that they feel they are not getting enough education on climate change with 65% believing that not enough is being done to tackle its effects. Many of them want to be part of the solution, actively engaging in environmental actions and contributing to efforts aimed at protecting and improving their surroundings.

Overall, economic and environmental stability are major worries, with young people expressing fears about job opportunities, the cost of living, and the ability to live independently. They feel that barriers

such as money, education, health, and relationships hinder their potential. There is a call for more life skills education, including financial literacy, CV building, job interview preparation and support for starting businesses. Young people are seeking more support to overcome these challenges and achieve their full potential. They want practical help with life skills, financial management and employability, as well as efforts to address poverty and environmental issues.

Making a Positive Contribution

Key facts

The attendance rate for post-primary schools was 92.2%. (NI average 96%) .

5,021 Newcomers attend schools in Belfast (7.6%) – NI Average 5%.

127 Irish Traveller children and young people.

1,179 children and young people were suspended from school in Belfast.

According to the most recent census, 3,499 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

**Figures for some section 75 groups are only available by NI level. These include Looked After Children, NEETS and Young Carers. **

Stakeholder input/feedback

In a recent regional assessment, young people voiced a strong desire for more opportunities to make a difference in their schools and local communities. Despite being able to express their views, many feel their contributions are not taken seriously. This sentiment is echoed by local stakeholders, who noted that the community often holds negative views of young people, highlighting the need for a stronger youth voice.

Focus group discussions revealed that young people appreciate platforms like local voice and membership committees, which allow them to be heard. However, there is a common feeling that they lack the power to effect real change. Youth work is viewed positively, as it provides a space where young people feel listened to and valued.

In schools and communities, young people feel valued only under specific conditions, such as during certain events or when they are perceived as "good." This selective recognition contributes to a sense of being undervalued. Young people also expressed a need for more opportunities to make a positive contribution to society to help change community attitudes and provide meaningful engagement.

5,021 Newcomers attend schools in Belfast, making up 7.6% of the student population, compared to the NI average of 5%. Among these students are 127 Irish Traveller children and young people, who face unique challenges in the education system. According to the most recent census, 3,499 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+. Furthermore, 1,179 children and young people were suspended from school in Belfast. These figures indicate a diverse group of young people who may need additional support and engagement strategies to feel integrated and represented in decision-making processes.

Young people in focus groups underscore the importance of citizenship for gaining respect in the community, being positive role models, and learning from others. They emphasise the need for campaigns, encouragement, and active listening to young people, as well as giving them more influence over budget decisions and project feedback.

Local stakeholders identify key concerns such as the community having a negative view of young people and the importance of young people having a voice. Discussions emphasise the importance of local voice and membership committees in giving young people a voice. Young people in focus groups discuss how they make a difference through student councils and local voice initiatives. Citizenship is seen as important for helping others, encouraging young people to speak out on local issues, and fostering a sense of community involvement.

Young people surveyed and in focus groups express a desire for more volunteering opportunities to make a positive impact in their communities, with over 40% stating they don't have opportunities to make a difference. They believe that volunteering can help them develop skills, gain experience, and contribute meaningfully to society. Nearly 80% of young people believe they can change things for the better if they could be involved in decision-making processes and have their voices heard.

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.

Respect for Young People's Rights

Key facts

According to the most recent census, 3,499 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

Approximately 23,616 children and young people aged 0-25 years have a mental health need.

In Belfast 62,583 children and young people aged 0-25 years (53%) live in deprivation.

5,021 Newcomers attend schools in Belfast (7.6%) – NI Average 5%.

127 Irish Traveller children and young people.

25,458 (45.6%) of all pupils in Belfast are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24. (NI average 28%).

13,857 pupils (23%) who attend school in Belfast 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).

**Figures for some section 75 groups are only available by NI level. These include Looked After Children, NEETS and Young Carers. **

Stakeholder input/feedback

In North & East Belfast, children and young people feel their views are often overlooked, despite their rights being enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This convention ensures that all young people are protected and respected, regardless of their religion, race, gender, or disability. However, a recent survey revealed that nearly 50% of young people in North & East Belfast feel they are not listened to, valued, or respected.

During a regional assessment, young people shared their experiences and needs regarding their rights and involvement in their communities. Many expressed frustration that their views are often ignored when decisions affecting them are made. Despite this, over 70% of young people surveyed are aware of their rights, and more than 80% feel that their youth work programmes respect these rights and ensure they have a voice. This is particularly significant given that 62,583 children and young people aged 0-25 years (53%) in Belfast live in deprivation, and 25,458 (45.6%) of all pupils in Belfast are eligible for Free School Meals, highlighting the socio-economic challenges they face.

There is a clear need for more support and advocacy for young people's rights. Nearly 30% of those surveyed in North & East Belfast feel they lack the confidence and skills to stand up for their rights effectively. They emphasised the importance of peer support and youth leadership programmes in helping them develop these skills and expressed a strong desire to be more involved in their communities. This is crucial for the 23,616 children and young people aged 0-25 years who have a mental health need, as well as the 13,857 pupils (23%) who attend school in Belfast and have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3.

Focus group discussions highlighted that young people often do not know enough about their rights and lack the confidence to assert them. They discussed the importance of understanding their rights and how these are respected in various settings, such as schools, government, and youth work. Youth workers were praised for providing opportunities to express views and for being understanding and non-judgemental. This support is vital for the 3,499 young people aged 16-24 years old who identify as LGBTQI+ and the 127 Irish Traveller children and young people, who may face additional challenges in asserting their rights.

Young people also noted that older generations often do not respect their views and that they are frequently blamed for various issues. In contrast, Youth Services were seen as respectful of their rights, offering choices, voluntary participation, and signposting to other services. This is especially important for the 5,021 Newcomers attending schools in Belfast (7.6%), who may need additional support to integrate and feel valued.

To advocate for their rights, young people suggested the creation of local voice groups, campaigns, consultations, and needs assessments. They emphasised the importance of these efforts being genuine and not tokenistic, ensuring that young people's voices are truly heard.

In summary, while young people in North & East Belfast are aware of their rights and value the respect and opportunities provided by youth work, they feel their views are often overlooked. There is a need for greater support and advocacy to ensure their rights are upheld and their voices are heard in their communities.

Good Relations and Equality

Key facts

There are 13 interface areas in Belfast. 8 of these are in North Belfast and 2 are in East Belfast.

5,021 Newcomers attend schools in Belfast (7.6%) – NI Average 5%.

127 Irish Traveller children and young people.

25,458 (45.6%) of all pupils in Belfast are eligible for Free School Meals. 2023/24. (NI average 28%).

13,857 pupils (23%) who attend school in Belfast 2022/23 have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3. (NI average 19%).

In Belfast 62,583 children and young people aged 0-25 years (53%) live in deprivation.

According to the most recent census, 3,499 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+.

**Figures for some section 75 groups are only available by NI level. These include Looked After Children, NEETS and Young Carers. **

Stakeholder input/feedback

An equal society is one where everyone is treated fairly, regardless of their background or identity. Good relations are built on kindness, respect, and understanding, where diversity is recognised and everyone feels welcome. The United Nations highlights that all children should be treated equally, regardless of culture, language, or abilities, ensuring they have equal opportunities to succeed.

In Northern Ireland, "Good Relations" aims to promote understanding and cooperation between people from different backgrounds, addressing issues like racism, bullying, and disrespect. While progress has been made, stakeholders, including children and young people, note that challenges persist, particularly in areas where divisions remain across North & East Belfast.

There are 13 interface areas in Belfast, with 8 in North Belfast and 2 in East Belfast. These areas often experience community tensions, polarisation, and segregation. Many people in this area still face forms of residential, educational, environmental, and social segregation. North Belfast is home to nearly two-thirds of all interfaces in Belfast. Many of these interfaces have gates installed that are opened and closed during daily working hours, impacting communities' access to parks, hospitals, and other vital services. Children and young people growing up in these environments are more likely to experience educational challenges and a greater risk of engaging in antisocial behaviour. In Belfast, 62,583 children and young people aged 0-25 years (53%) live in deprivation. While relationships continue to improve, more work is still required to ensure lasting peace and cooperation in the area.

The Regional Assessment of Need highlights several areas where young people feel improvements could be beneficial. Nearly 80% of young people surveyed believe that youth work programmes are inclusive and accessible to everyone, offering support for those from different backgrounds. However, over 40% of young people are concerned that not all young people feel included or treated equally in their local communities. In Belfast, 5,021 newcomers attend schools, making up 7.6% of the student population, compared to the NI average of 5%. There are also 127 Irish Traveller children and young people. Additionally, 25,458 pupils (45.6%) in Belfast are eligible for Free School Meals, significantly higher than the NI average of 28%. Furthermore, 13,857 pupils (23%) who attend school in Belfast have a Special Education Need or Disability Stage 1-3, compared to the NI average of 19%.

Respect for young people from different backgrounds is another significant concern. Nearly 50% of young people surveyed feel that others in their area do not respect those who are different, and there are issues with how children and young people are treated. This lack of respect can lead to feelings of isolation and exclusion, negatively impacting young people's well-being and development. According to the most recent census, 3,499 young people aged 16-24 years old identify as LGBTQI+, highlighting one specific group.

North & East Belfast have also become culturally diverse in recent years. However, despite this, racist hate crimes have exceeded sectarian hate crimes in the last number of years, highlighting the increasing challenges surrounding race and discrimination. In response to these challenges, young people have strongly supported a need for more opportunities to meet others from different cultures to foster positive relationships and reduce prejudice. By creating spaces where young people can interact and learn from each other, it is possible to build a more inclusive and respectful community.

Young people in North & East Belfast have shared their strong desire for more inclusive safe spaces where everyone is treated fairly. They want to see less bullying, reduced discrimination, and more

support for vulnerable groups, such as children with special educational needs and disabilities or those from the LGBTQI+ community. They have communicated the importance of creating safe spaces where these issues are addressed and where young people feel heard and supported.

Finally, young people have expressed that the attitudes and opinions of others can be a barrier to their participation in activities. There is also a lack of awareness about available clubs and activities in their areas. Improving communication and engagement with young people can help them feel more connected and involved in their communities.

Summary Conclusion of Needs across Strategic Themes for North & East Belfast

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

- Increased access to substances (alcohol, drugs, and vaping).
- Negative impacts of social media and internet safety on mental health.
- Unhealthy relationships, poor eating habits, and physical health issues.
- Low confidence and self-esteem
- Prevalence of mental health challenges.

Access to Play and Leisure

- Lack of safe environments for young people to socialise.
- Limited access to play and leisure opportunities.
- Restricted range of creative and outdoor activities.

Learning and Achieving

- Barriers to learning such as bullying, stress, and peer pressure.
- Lack of opportunities to broaden horizons.
- Need for practical life skills and career guidance.
- Educational Underachievement .
- Support during school transitions.

Living in Safety and Stability

- Persistent issues of bullying, racism, and sectarianism.
- Young people facing harm at home, including domestic violence and exploitation.
- Safety concerns for women and girls.
- Need for peer support development.
- Ongoing interface issues affecting community safety.

Economic and Environmental Stability

- Lack of employability skills and job readiness.
- Concerns about climate change and environmental issues.
- Poverty and economic challenges.

Making a Positive Contribution

- Desire for more volunteering opportunities.
- Youth Leadership Programmes.
- Importance of intergenerational understanding.

Respect for Young People's Rights

- Young people's views not always heard or respected.
- Limited community involvement in planning and decision-making.
- Limited civic engagement opportunities for young people.

Good Relations and Equality

- Need for inclusivity and respect for diversity.
- Challenges with sectarianism, racism, and discrimination.
- Support for vulnerable groups.

The findings – Identification of priorities/DEA profiles

Castle

Key facts

Castle is one of the ten district electoral areas in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Located in the north of the city, the district elects six members to Belfast City Council and contains the wards of Bellevue, Cavehill, Chichester Park, Duncairn, Fortwilliam, and Innisfayle. The district is bounded to the east by the Victoria Channel, to the north by Newtownabbey Borough Council and Belfast Lough, to the south by North Street, and to the west by the Cavehill Road. The area is served by the M2 and M5 motorways and the Yorkgate railway station.

Castle DEA is characterised by significant areas of affluence with the communities of Tigers Bay, Mount Vernon, Whitewell/Whitecity presenting several inherent problems. They have higher than average rates of unemployment and economic inactivity, physical and mental ill health, lower levels of educational attainment and qualifications, skills deficits, higher rates of crime, drug and alcohol abuse, youth disillusionment and problems with quality and maintenance of the environment. The areas highlighted are also impoverished in terms of employment opportunities and income levels. (NISRA MDM)

(Tigers Bay) Duncairn 1 – MDM Rank – 49.

(Tigers Bay) Duncairn 2 – MDM Rank – 53.

(Whitewell/Whitecity) Bellevue 2 – MDM Rank – 123.

(Mount Vernon) Castleview 1 – MDM Rank – 119.

There is 10,990 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Castle DEA.

4,112 fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

5.7% 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 5.9% 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 Math in 2022/23 is 78.9% (NI average 76.1%).

5,675 (24.3%) (NI average 19%) young people have Special Education Need (SEN 1-3) with 491 (8.7%) of those statemented in 2022/23 (NI average 7%).

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

There were 64 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 12.3% increase from the previous year of 57 racial motivated incidents.

Castle DEA has 2 prominent interfaces – Limestone Road and Alexander Park.

Castle Stakeholder input/feedback

There are 10,990 children and young people aged 0-25 years old in Castle DEA, with 4,112 falling within the key Youth Service priority age bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years. Emotional health and wellbeing are important issues, with only 24% of young people surveyed feeling calm and relaxed. However, anxiety, stress, and self-confidence issues are common. Mental health challenges, including the use of drugs and the impact of social media, are notable concerns. Young people report in focus groups, feeling anxious due to fake news and online interactions with strangers.

Access to recreational activities is somewhat limited, with 68% of young people surveyed stating there are "not really" fun things to do in their area. This lack of engaging activities can lead to boredom and anti-social behaviour. Only 26% of young people surveyed report their lives are filled daily with things that interest them. Educational support is essential, with 74% of young people surveyed experiencing barriers to learning. Issues such as bullying, stress from school, and peer pressure are common. Additionally, 33% of young people surveyed feel unsupported during significant changes like moving schools. The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, including GCSE English and maths, in 2022/23 is 78.9%, which is higher than the NI average of 76.1%. However, this statistic would not be true in the areas of Tigers Bay, Mount Vernon, White City, and Whitewell where achievement of grades is consistently lower demonstrated through Multiple Deprivation Measurements ranked 49 - 123, according to NISRA data.

Additionally, 5,675 (24.3%) (NI average 19%) young people have Special Education Need (SEN 1-3) with 491 (8.7%) of those statemented in 2022/23 (NI average 7%). These figures are above the NI average on both counts and can impact young people's academic performance, social integration, emotional well-being, and future employment prospects. Key stakeholders report of the challenges facing Youth Services integrating a higher number of young people with additional needs.

Safety is a concern within castle DEA, with 50% of young people surveyed worried about the safety of women and girls, and 15% concerned about crime in their area. Interface issues on Limestone Road and Alexander Park, along with paramilitary involvement, contribute to feelings of insecurity. Additionally, 18% of young people surveyed feel they lack safe spaces to hang out with friends. Economic stability is a significant issue, with 81% of young people surveyed believing poverty is affecting their lives. Additionally, 50% of young people surveyed are worried about climate change, and there is a desire for better use of green spaces and recycling initiatives. The lack of employment opportunities and confidence in job hunting further exacerbate these challenges. Notably, 5.7% of young people aged 20-24 are not in employment and do not have a qualification, which is higher than the NI average of 4.9%. The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or whose status is unknown in 2022/23 is 5.9%, compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

Young people in Castle are keen to contribute positively to society, with 75% of young people surveyed feeling they are taken seriously. However, 37% of young people surveyed feel that they don't have opportunities to make a difference, and 23% feel they lack opportunities to express their opinions. This lack of recognition can hinder their motivation to engage in community activities. Respect for the rights of children and young people is a vital issue. While 74% of young people surveyed feel confident fighting for their rights, 46% believe they are not listened to, valued, or respected. Ensuring that young people are aware of their rights and feel empowered to advocate for themselves is crucial for their development and empowerment.

Good relations and equality are areas where improvement is needed. Sectarianism and racism are a concern, and 49% of young people surveyed feel that not all young people are treated equally. When asked if young people respect people from different cultures in their area, 52% disagreed. In 2023/24 there were 525 newcomer pupils in Castle DEA primary and post primary schools. Concerningly, in the community there were 64 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. Alarmingly, this is a 12.3% increase from the previous year. Promoting inclusivity and respect for diversity is essential to fostering a more harmonious community and to ensure the safety of all young people.

Castle Summary

- Anxiety, stress, and self-confidence issues are prevalent, along with concerns about drugs and social media.
- There is a need for more fun and engaging activities to prevent boredom and anti-social behaviour.
- Barriers to learning, such as bullying, stress, and peer pressure, are common. Support during school transitions is also needed.
- Educational Underachievement.
- There are significant worries about the safety of women and girls, crime, and the influence of paramilitary groups.
- Some young people feel they lack safe places to hang out with friends.
- Poverty, employment opportunities, and job-hunting confidence are major concerns.
- Climate change worries and the desire for better green spaces and recycling are important.
- Many young people feel they lack opportunities to make a difference and express their opinions.
- Ensuring young people are aware of their rights and feel empowered to advocate for themselves is crucial. Many feel they are not listened to, valued, or respected.
- Concerns about sectarianism, racism, and the feeling that not all young people are treated equally are issues. There has been an increase in racist incidents.

Oldpark

Key facts

Oldpark is one of the ten district electoral areas in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Located in the north of the city, the district elects six members to Belfast City Council and contains the wards of Ardoyne, Ballysillan, Cliftonville, Legoniel, New Lodge, and Water Works. The area is part of the Belfast North constituency for the Northern Ireland Assembly and UK Parliament.

Oldpark DEA can be considered disadvantaged in relative terms as it has been designated by the NI Executive as a Neighbourhood Renewal Area siting the top 10% of multiple deprivation measures. Currently 4 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRA) are designated within the DEA of Oldpark in Belfast, Crumlin/Ardoyne, Inner North Belfast, Upper Ardoyne/Ballysillan and Ligoniel. The area is characterised by several inherent problems, it has higher than average rates of unemployment and economic inactivity, physical and mental ill health, lower levels of educational attainment and qualifications, skills deficits, higher rates of crime, drug and alcohol abuse, youth disillusionment and problems with quality and maintenance of the environment. The area is also impoverished in terms of employment opportunities and income levels. (NISRA MDM)

There is 12,302 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Oldpark DEA.

4,878 fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

9.7% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).

The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 8.1% 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 Math in 2022/23 is 63.5% (NI average 76.1%).

6,961 (30.2%) (NI average 19%) young people have Special Education Need (SEN 1-3) with 764 (11%) of those statemented in 2022/23 (NI average 7%).

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

There were 82 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 122% increase from the previous year of 37 racial motivated incidents.

Oldpark DEA has 4 prominent interfaces – Crumlin Road from Ardoyne Shops to Carlisle Circus roundabout inclusive of Hillview and Girdwood sites, Alliance Avenue, North Queen St.

Stakeholder input/feedback

In the Oldpark DEA of Belfast, young people face a variety of challenges that impact their daily lives and prospects. Emotional health and wellbeing are important issues, with 50% of young people surveyed feeling they can get help for their emotional health needs. However, young people involved in focus groups reported stress from school, drug use, and confidence issues are common. Mental health challenges, including self-harm and suicidal thoughts, are significant concerns. Social media addiction and its negative impact on mental health are also noted.

Access to recreational activities is highlighted, with 39% of young people surveyed stating there are "not really" fun things to do in their area. Furthermore, 18% feel they lack safe spaces to hang out with friends. This lack of engaging activities can lead to boredom and anti-social behaviour. Educational support is crucial, with 72% of young people surveyed able to gain qualifications through youth work programs. However, 27% feel unsupported during significant changes like moving schools. Stress from school, bullying, and peer pressure are common issues, impacting their ability to achieve their full potential. The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, including GCSE English and Math, in 2022/23 is 63.5%, which is lower than the NI average of 76.1%.

6,961 (30.2%) (NI average 19%) young people have Special Education Need (SEN 1-3) with 764 (11%) of those statemented in 2022/23 (NI average 7%). These figures are significantly above the NI average on both counts and can impact young people's academic performance, social integration, emotional well-being, and future employment prospects. Key stakeholders report of the challenges facing Youth Services integrating a higher number of young people with additional needs.

Safety is a significant concern, with 40% of young people surveyed worried about the safety of women and girls, and 21% concerned about crime in their area. Interface issues in Hillview, Alliance Avenue and Girdwood, rioting, and domestic violence contribute to feelings of insecurity. Additionally, anti-social behaviour, including violence and sectarianism, are a concern, creating a challenging environment for young people. Economic stability is a significant issue, with 49% of young people surveyed believing poverty is increasingly affecting young people. Additionally, 40% are worried about climate change, and there is a desire for better use of green spaces and recycling initiatives. The lack of employment opportunities and the pressure to succeed academically further exacerbate these challenges. Notably, 9.7% of young people aged 20-24 are not in employment and do not have a qualification, which is higher than the NI average of 4.9%. The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or whose status is unknown in 2022/23 is 8.1%, compared to the NI average of 4.7%. This links with the significant issues of educational underachievement, demonstrating the impacts on employability and how economic deprivation is embedded in a community.

Young people in Oldpark are eager to make a positive impact, with 51% of young people surveyed feeling they can change things for the better. However, 22% feel they lack opportunities to express their opinions, and 35% believe they are not listened to, valued, or respected. This lack of recognition can hinder their motivation to engage in community activities. Respect for the rights of children and young people is an important issue. While 46% of young people surveyed feel confident fighting for their rights, 35% believe they are not listened to, valued, or respected. Ensuring that young people are aware of their rights and feel empowered to advocate for themselves is crucial for their development and empowerment. Good relations and equality are areas where improvement is needed. Sectarianism and racism are a concern, and 31% of young people surveyed feel that children and young people in their

area are not treated equally. In 2023/24 there were 441 newcomer pupils in Oldpark DEA primary and post primary schools. Concerningly, in the community there were 82 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. Alarmingly, this is a 122% increase from the previous year. Promoting inclusivity and respect for diversity is essential to fostering a more harmonious community and ensuring the safety of all young people.

Oldpark Summary

- Stress from school, drug use, confidence issues, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, and the negative impact of social media.
- Limited fun activities and safe spaces for young people to hang out with friends.
- Barriers to learning, such as bullying, stress, and peer pressure. Support during school transitions.
- Educational Underachievement.
- Higher than average levels of young people with Special Education Need.
- Significant worries about the safety of women and girls, crime, interface issues, rioting, and domestic violence.
- Concern of violence and sectarianism.
- High levels of poverty, unemployment, and lack of qualifications among young people.
- Concerns about climate change and the desire for better green spaces and recycling.
- Some young people feel they lack opportunities to express their opinions and believe they are not listened to, valued, or respected.
- Ensuring young people are aware of their rights and feel empowered to advocate for themselves.
- Concerns about sectarianism, racism, and the feeling that children and young people are not treated equally. There has been an increase in racist incidents.

Court North

Key facts

Court North is one of the ten district electoral areas in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Located in the north and west of the city, the district elects six members to Belfast City Council and contains the wards of Ballygomartin, Forth River, Shankill, and Woodvale (known as Greater Shankill Area). The area is part of the Belfast North and Belfast West constituencies for the Northern Ireland Assembly and UK Parliament.

Greater Shankill can be considered disadvantaged in relative terms as it has been designated by the NI Executive as a Neighbourhood Renewal Area. The area is characterised by several inherent problems, it has higher than average rates of unemployment and economic inactivity, physical and mental ill health, lower levels of educational attainment and qualifications, skills deficits, higher rates of crime, drug and alcohol abuse, youth disillusionment and problems with quality and maintenance of the environment. The area is also impoverished in terms of employment opportunities and income levels. (NISRA MDM)

Overall, there is 11,314 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Court DEA.

In Court North 7,926 children and young people are aged 0 – 25 years old.

In Court North 3,184 (4,437 in Court) fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

In Court 10.6% of young people 20-24 years old are not in employment and do not have a qualification (NI average 4.9%).

In Court the percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 8.5% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

In Court The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and Math in 2022/23 is 60.5% (NI average 76.1%).

6,410 (26%) (NI average 19%) young people have Special Education Need (SEN 1-3) with 621 (9.7%) of those statemented in 2022/23 (NI average 7%).

In Court 482 newcomer pupils in Court DEA primary and post primary schools in 2023/24.

In Court there were 86 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 68.6% increase from the previous year of 51 racial motivated incidents.

Court North DEA has 4 prominent interfaces – Crumlin Road from Ardoyne Shops to Carlisle Circus roundabout inclusive of Hillview and Girdwood sites, Springmartin Road down to Townsend Street inclusive of Springvale, Lanark Way and Northumberland Street and Cupar Way.

Stakeholder input/feedback

In the Court North DEA of Belfast, young people face a variety of challenges that impact their daily lives and prospects. Emotional health and wellbeing are important issues for young people in Court North. Only 23% of the young people surveyed wake up feeling fresh and rested most of the time, while 56% of those surveyed feel rested less than half the time. Mental health challenges such as stress, self-esteem issues, anxiety, and substance abuse are common. Despite these challenges, 58% of young people surveyed feel they can get help for their emotional health if needed, though there is still a significant need for better support services.

Access to play and leisure activities is highlighted, with 42% of young people surveyed stating there are "not really" fun things to do in their area. This lack of engaging activities contributes to feelings of boredom and can lead to anti-social behaviour. Only 38% of young people surveyed prioritise play and hobbies, indicating a need for more recreational opportunities that cater to their interests and provide safe spaces to socialise.

Educational underachievement is a significant issue, with many young people feeling unsupported in their academic pursuits. Education can sometimes be a single pathway to success, which does not cater to the diverse needs of all students. This narrow focus, combined with peer pressure and bullying, leads to demotivation and challenging behaviour. Additionally, 23% of young people surveyed do not feel equipped to apply for jobs, highlighting the need for more comprehensive career guidance and support. The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, including GCSE English and Math, in 2022/23 is 60.5%, which is significantly lower than the NI average of 76.1%. The Greater Shankill Partnership in recognising this concerning figure, designated the Greater Shankill Area as an Educational Zone, to prioritise educational achievement within the community, as a key measure to alleviate challenges that impact daily life and improve prospects.

6,410 (26%) (NI average 19%) young people have Special Education Need (SEN 1-3) with 764 (9.7%) of those statemented in 2022/23 (NI average 7%). These figures are significantly above the NI average on both counts and can impact young people’s academic performance, social integration, emotional well-being, and future employment prospects. Key stakeholders report of the challenges facing Youth Services integrating a higher number of young people with additional needs.

Safety is a significant concern for young people in Court North. 56% of young people surveyed are concerned about the safety of women and girls, and 25% do not feel safe in their local area. The prevalence of anti-social behaviour, particularly at interfaces in the Shankill area, exacerbates these fears. Additionally, 20% of young people surveyed feel pressured to engage in dangerous activities, highlighting the need for safer environments and better support systems.

Economic and environmental stability are major concerns, with 84% of young people surveyed believing poverty is increasingly affecting their peers. This economic strain impacts their health, wellbeing, and social interactions. The lack of employment opportunities and the pressure to succeed in an educational pathway further exacerbate these challenges. Young people also express a desire for better use of green spaces to improve their environment. Notably, 10.6% of young people aged 20-24 in Court are not in employment and do not have a qualification, which is higher than the NI average of 4.9%. The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or whose status is unknown in 2022/23 is 8.5%, compared to the NI average of 4.7%. This links with the significant issues of educational

underachievement, demonstrating the impacts on employability and how economic deprivation is embedded in a community.

In the Court North DEA of Belfast, young people are eager to make a positive contribution to society. However, 23% of young people surveyed feel they lack opportunities to make a difference in their school or community. Many young people believe their voices are not heard, with 60% feeling that they are not listened to, valued, or respected. This sense of being overlooked can hinder their motivation to engage in civic activities and contribute positively to their community.

Respect for the rights of children and young people is a critical issue. Many young people feel their rights are not adequately respected, with 44% of young people surveyed stating they are not taken seriously. Only 47% know what their rights are, indicating a need for better education and awareness. Ensuring that young people are valued and respected is crucial for their development and empowerment.

Good relations and equality are areas where young people feel there is much room for improvement. A significant 58% of young people surveyed believe that young people in their area do not respect others who are different. Issues such as sectarianism and racism are a concern, and 28% feel they are not treated equally. In 2023/24 there were 482 newcomer pupils in Court DEA primary and post primary schools. Concerningly, in the community there were 86 incidents in Court DEA with a racist motivation in 2023/24. Alarmingly, this is a 68.6% increase from the previous year. Promoting inclusivity and respect for diversity is essential to fostering a more harmonious community and to ensure the safety of all young people.

Court North Summary

- Prevalent issues such as stress, self-esteem problems, anxiety, and substance abuse.
- Limited fun activities and safe spaces for young people to socialise, leading to boredom and potential anti-social behaviour.
- Barriers to learning such as stress from school, bullying, and peer pressure.
- Educational Underachievement .
- Higher than average levels of young people with Special Education Need.
- Significant worries about the safety of women and girls, local area safety, and anti-social behaviour, particularly at interfaces.
- Poverty and lack of employment opportunities.
- Concerns about green space usage and environmental improvements.
- Many young people feel they lack opportunities to make a difference and believe their voices are not heard, valued, or respected.
- Ensuring young people are aware of their rights and feel empowered to advocate for themselves.
- Concerns about sectarianism, racism, and the feeling that not all young people are treated equally. There has been an increase in racist incidents.

Ormiston

Key facts

Ormiston is one of the ten district electoral areas in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Located in the east of the city, the district elects seven members to Belfast City Council and contains the wards of Belmont, Garnerville, Gilnahirk, Sandown, Shandon, Knock, and Stormont. The area is part of the Belfast East constituency for the Northern Ireland Assembly and UK Parliament.

Ormiston DEA is characterised by significant areas of affluence with the communities of Tullycarnet and Clarawood presenting several inherent problems. These areas are characterised by several issues, they have higher than average rates of unemployment and economic inactivity, physical and mental ill health, lower levels of educational attainment and qualifications, skills deficits, higher rates of crime, drug and alcohol abuse, youth disillusionment and problems with quality and maintenance of the environment. (NISRA MDM)

There is 9,487 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Ormiston DEA.

4,177 fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

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

The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or are unknown in 2022/23 is 2.9% 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 Math in 2022/23 is 82.5% (NI average 76.1%).

5,610 (16.3%) (NI average 19%) young people have Special Education Need (SEN 1-3) with 358 (6.3%) of those statemented in 2022/23 (NI average 7%).

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

There were 15 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 50% increase from the previous year of 10 racial motivated incidents.

Ormiston Stakeholder input/feedback

In the Ormiston DEA of Belfast, young people encounter various challenges that affect their daily lives and prospects. Emotional health and wellbeing are important, with 25% of young people surveyed feeling they cannot get help for their emotional needs. Anxiety, stress, and self-confidence issues are common. Mental health challenges, including the impact of social media, are significant concerns. Young people often feel overwhelmed by the pressures of school, social media.

Access to recreational activities is limited, with 52% of young people surveyed stating there are "not really" fun things to do in their area. This lack of engaging activities can lead to boredom and anti-social behaviour. Only 36% of young people surveyed agree that there are fun things to do in their area. Educational support is important, with 32% of young people surveyed experiencing barriers to succeeding. Issues such as stress from school, bullying, and peer pressure are common. Additionally, 30% feel unsupported during significant changes like moving schools. The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, including GCSE English and Math, in 2022/23 is 82.5%, which is higher than the NI average of 76.1%. Key stakeholders report that young people should access to supportive environments where they can thrive.

5,610 (16.3%) (NI average 19%) young people have Special Education Need (SEN 1-3) with 358 (6.3%) of those statemented in 2022/23 (NI average 7%). Although these figures are below the NI average they impact young people's academic performance, social integration, emotional well-being, and future employment prospects.

Safety is a significant concern, with 61% of young people surveyed worried about the safety of women and girls, and 15% concerned about crime in their area. Interface issues and domestic violence contribute to feelings of insecurity. Additionally, 25% of young people surveyed feel they lack safe spaces to hang out with friends. Economic stability is a major concern, with 30% of young people surveyed reporting that their parents do not have enough money to pay for the things they need. Additionally, 61% are worried about climate change, and there is a desire for better use of green spaces and recycling initiatives. The lack of employment opportunities and confidence in job hunting further exacerbate these challenges. Notably, 4.2% of young people aged 20-24 are not in employment and do not have a qualification, which is slightly lower than the NI average of 4.9%. The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or whose status is unknown in 2022/23 is 2.9%, compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

Young people in Ormiston are eager to contribute positively to society, but 31% of young people surveyed feel they lack opportunities to make a change in their community. Additionally, 32% feel they do not have a chance to express their opinions, and 53% do not feel listened to, valued, or respected. This lack of recognition can hinder their motivation to engage in community activities. Respect for the rights of children and young people is a critical issue. While 26% of young people surveyed feel confident fighting for their rights. Additionally, 26% do not know what their rights are. Ensuring that young people are aware of their rights and feel empowered to advocate for themselves is crucial for their development and empowerment.

Good relations and equality are areas where improvement is needed. Sectarianism and racism are a concern, and 54% of young people surveyed feel that some young people are not included. In 2023/24 there were 260 newcomer pupils in Ormiston DEA primary and post primary schools. Concerningly, in the community there were 15 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. Alarmingly, this is a 50%

increase from the previous year. Promoting inclusivity and respect for diversity is essential to fostering a more harmonious community.

Ormiston Summary

- Anxiety, stress, self-confidence issues, and the negative impact of social media are prevalent concerns.
- Limited fun activities .
- Barriers to learning, such as stress from school, bullying, peer pressure and school transitions.
- Significant worries about the safety of women and girls, crime, interface issues, and domestic violence.
- Some young people feel they lack safe places to hang out with friends.
- Concerns about parents' financial stability, climate change, and the desire for better green spaces and recycling.
- Many young people feel they lack opportunities to make a change in their community.
- Ensuring young people are aware of their rights and feel empowered to advocate for themselves. Many feel they are not listened to, valued, or respected.
- Concerns about sectarianism, racism, and the feeling that some young people are not included. There has been an increase in racist incidents.

Titanic

Key facts

Titanic is one of the ten district electoral areas in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Located in the east of the city, the district elects six members to Belfast City Council and contains the wards of Ballymacarrett, Beersbridge, Bloomfield, Connswater, Sydenham, and Woodstock. The area is part of the Belfast East constituency for the Northern Ireland Assembly and UK Parliament.

Titanic DEA can be considered disadvantaged in relative terms as it has been designated by the NI Executive as a Neighbourhood Renewal Area (Inner East Belfast) siting the top 10% of multiple deprivation measures. The area is characterised by several inherent problems, it has higher than average rates of unemployment and economic inactivity, physical and mental ill health, lower levels of educational attainment and qualifications, skills deficits, higher rates of crime, drug and alcohol abuse, youth disillusionment and problems with quality and maintenance of the environment. The area is also impoverished in terms of employment opportunities and income levels. (NISRA MDM)

There is 10,918 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Titanic DEA.

3,875 fall within the key youth service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

8.1% of young people 20-24 years old 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 5.2% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and Math in 2022/23 is 60.4% (NI average 76.1%).

5,613 (27.9%) (NI average 19%) young people have Special Education Need (SEN 1-3) with 478 (8.5%) of those statemented in 2022/23 (NI average 7%).

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

There were 49 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 38.8% decrease from the previous year of 80 racial motivated incidents.

Titanic Stakeholder input/feedback

In the Titanic DEA of Belfast, young people face a variety of challenges that impact their daily lives and prospects. Emotional health and wellbeing are important issues, with 81% of young people surveyed feeling fresh less than half the time. Feeling tired and lacking energy during the day will significantly challenge the mental health of a young person. Young people surveyed report feeling overwhelmed by the pressures of school, social media, and unexpected problems manifesting as stress, lacking motivation and low self-esteem.

Access to recreational activities is limited, with 58% of young people surveyed stating there are "not really" fun things to do in their area. However, 70% of young people surveyed report having safe spaces to hang out with friends. This lack of engaging activities can lead to boredom and anti-social behaviour.

Educational support is crucial, with 80% of young people surveyed finding youth work positive and 30% experiencing barriers to learning. However, stress from school, bullying, and peer pressure are common issues. Additionally, 40% of young people surveyed feel unsupported through significant changes. The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, including GCSE English and Math, in 2022/23 is 60.4%, which is lower than the NI average of 76.1%. This highlights the significant issue of educational underachievement which is regularly reported by the Eastside Partnership and media outlets for young people living within Inner East Belfast.

5,613 (27.9%) (NI average 19%) young people have Special Education Need (SEN 1-3) with 478 (8.5%) of those statemented in 2022/23 (NI average 7%). These figures are significantly above the NI average on both counts and can impact young people's academic performance, social integration, emotional well-being, and future employment prospects. Key stakeholders report of the challenges facing Youth Services integrating a higher number of young people with additional needs.

Safety is a significant concern, with 63% of young people surveyed worried about the safety of women and girls, and 56% concerned about crime in their area. Interface issues between Newtownards Road, Short Strand and Lower Woodstock Link, and domestic violence contribute to feelings of insecurity. Additionally, 36% of young people surveyed feel pressure to get involved in activities that might be dangerous.

Economic stability is a major concern, with 78% of young people surveyed believing poverty is affecting more children and young people. Additionally, 63% of young people surveyed are worried about climate change, and 60% believe not enough is being done to prevent it. Despite these challenges, 66% of young people surveyed are confident in their career options, and 76% feel equipped to apply for jobs. Notably, 8.1% of young people aged 20-24 are not in employment and do not have a qualification, which is higher than the NI average of 4.9%. The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or whose status is unknown in 2022/23 is 5.2%, compared to the NI average of 4.7%. This links with the significant issues of educational underachievement, demonstrating the impacts on employability and how economic deprivation is embedded in a community.

Young people in Titanic are eager to contribute positively to society, with 87% of young people surveyed feeling that young people can make a change. However, 44% of young people surveyed struggle to find space to express their thoughts, and 41% feel they are not taken seriously. This lack of recognition can hinder their motivation to engage in community activities.

Respect for the rights of children and young people is a critical issue. While 73% of young people surveyed know what their rights are, 51% don't feel listened to, valued, and respected. Ensuring that young people are aware of their rights and feel empowered to advocate for themselves is crucial for their development and empowerment.

Good relations and equality are areas where improvement is needed. Sectarianism and racism are a concern, and 42% of young people surveyed feel others aren't treated equally. In 2023/24 there were 733 newcomer pupils in Titanic DEA primary and post primary schools. Concerningly, in the community there were 49 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. Even though this is a 38.8% decrease from the previous year. Promoting inclusivity and respect for diversity is essential to fostering a more harmonious community.

Titanic Summary

- Stress, drug use, self-esteem issues, and the negative impact of social media are prevalent concerns.
- Limited fun activities for young people, although many report having safe spaces to hang out with friends.
- Barriers to learning, such as stress from school, bullying, and peer pressure. Many young people feel unsupported through significant changes.
- Educational Underachievement.
- Higher than average levels of young people with Special Education Need.
- Significant worries about the safety of women and girls, crime, interface issues, and domestic violence.
- Some young people feel pressured to get involved in dangerous activities.
- Poverty and lack of employment opportunities.
- Concerns about climate change.
- Many young people struggle to express their thoughts and feel they are not taken seriously.
- Ensuring young people are aware of their rights and feel empowered to advocate for themselves. Many feel they are not listened to, valued, or respected.
- Sectarianism, racism, and the feeling that not all young people are treated equally. There has been a decrease in racist incidents.

Lisnasharragh

Key facts

Lisnasharragh is one of the ten district electoral areas in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Located in the east of the city, the district elects six members to Belfast City Council and contains the wards of Cregagh, Hillfoot, Merok, Orangefield, Ravenhill, and Rosetta. The area is part of the Belfast South and Belfast East constituencies for the Northern Ireland Assembly and UK Parliament.

Lisnasharragh DEA is characterised by significant areas of affluence with the community of Cregagh presenting several inherent problems. This area is characterised by a few issues, it has higher than average rates of unemployment and economic inactivity, physical and mental ill health, lower levels of educational attainment and qualifications, skills deficits. (NISRA MDM)

There is 8,059 children and young people aged 0 -25 years old in Lisnasharragh DEA.

3,216 fall within the key Youth Service priority aged bands of 9-13 years and 14-18 years.

3.7% 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 3.6% compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including GCSE English and Math in 2022/23 is 90.9% (NI average 76.1%).

4,563 (17.6%) (NI average 19%) young people have Special Education Need (SEN 1-3) with 308 (6.7%) of those statemented in 2022/23 (NI average 7%).

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

There were 14 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. This is a 17.6% decrease from the previous year of 17 racial motivated incidents.

Lisnasharragh Stakeholder input/feedback

In the Lisnasharragh DEA of Belfast, young people encounter various challenges that affect their daily lives and prospects. Emotional health and wellbeing are important issues, with stress, drug use, and self-esteem problems being common. While 73% of young people surveyed can access help for their emotional needs, 58% feel refreshed less than half the time. Feeling tired and lacking energy during the day will significantly challenge the mental health of a young person. Young people surveyed report feeling concerned by the pressures of school, social media, and unexpected problems manifesting as stress, and low self-esteem.

Access to recreational activities is relatively positive, with 67% of young people surveyed feeling there are plenty of fun things to do in their area and 82% having safe spaces to hang out with friends.

Educational support is crucial, with 94% of young people surveyed learning through youth work and 33% experiencing barriers to succeeding. However, stress from school, bullying, and peer pressure are common issues. Additionally, 76% feel supported through significant changes. The percentage of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, including GCSE English and Math, in 2022/23 is 90.9%, which is higher than the NI average of 76.1%. Key stakeholders report that young people should access to supportive environments where they can thrive.

4,563 (17.6%) (NI average 19%) young people have Special Education Need (SEN 1-3) with 308 (6.7%) of those statemented in 2022/23 (NI average 7%). Although these figures are below the NI average they impact young people's academic performance, social integration, emotional well-being, and future employment prospects.

Safety is a significant concern, with many young people worried about interface issues, riots, and domestic violence. Additionally, 76% of young people surveyed are worried about the safety of women and girls, and 36% are concerned about crime in their area. These issues contribute to feelings of insecurity and stress.

Economic stability is a major concern, with 76% of young people surveyed believing poverty is affecting more children and young people. Additionally, 76% are worried about climate change, and 64% believe not enough is being done to prevent it. Despite these challenges, 79% are confident in their career options, and 67% feel equipped to apply for jobs. Notably, 3.7% of young people aged 20-24 are not in employment and do not have a qualification, which is lower than the NI average of 4.9%. The percentage of school leavers who are unemployed or whose status is unknown in 2022/23 is 3.6%, compared to the NI average of 4.7%.

Young people in Lisnasharragh are eager to contribute positively to society, but they feel their voices are often unheard. Many believe that young people need to have a voice and that social media can create issues when used incorrectly. This lack of recognition can hinder their motivation to engage in community activities.

Respect for the rights of children and young people is a critical issue. While 70% of young people surveyed know what their rights are, 36% don't feel listened to, valued, and respected. Ensuring that young people are aware of their rights and feel empowered to advocate for themselves is crucial for their development and empowerment.

Good relations and equality are areas where improvement is needed. Racism and sectarianism are a concern, and 33% of young people surveyed don't feel others are treated equally. In 2023/24 there were 415 newcomer pupils in Lisnasharragh DEA primary and post primary schools. However, in the community there were 14 incidents with a racist motivation in 2023/24. Even though this is a 17.6% decrease from the previous year. Promoting inclusivity and respect for diversity is essential to fostering a more harmonious community.

Lisnasharragh Summary

- Stress, drug use, self-esteem problems, and the impact of social media are concerns.
- While many young people feel there are plenty of fun things to do and safe spaces to hang out, there is still room for improvement.
- Barriers to learning, such as stress from school, bullying, and peer pressure. Many young people feel supported through significant changes.
- Significant worries about interface issues, riots, domestic violence, and the safety of women and girls.
- High levels of poverty and concerns about climate change. Despite this, many young people feel confident in their career options and job application skills.
- Many young people feel their voices are often unheard and believe social media can create issues when used incorrectly.
- Ensuring young people are aware of their rights and feel empowered to advocate for themselves.
- Racism, sectarianism, and the feeling that not all young people are treated equally. There has been a decrease in racist incidents.