

DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION POLICY AND CHILDRENS' SERVICES



To: All Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations

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6 June 2024

Dear Colleague,

LAUNCH OF THE *RAISE* PROGRAMME

I wish to highlight the announcement of a major new initiative to be delivered across Northern Ireland, in specific localities, to raise achievement and reduce educational disadvantage. This was announced on 31 May 2024 by the Education Minister (see [here](#)) and will involve a collaborative approach between educational settings, families and the wider community.

The Department has secured funding of £20 million for a two-year period, from the Shared Island Investment Programme. The vast majority of the funding will be directed towards “*promoting a whole community place-based approach to education*” as envisioned by the Fair Start report, published in 2021.

The programme and its investment in place-based approaches will make a major contribution to the mission to ensure all children and young people regardless of background are given the best start in life. This also supports the Department of Education’s vision that “*every child is happy, learning and succeeding*”.

The RAISE programme will support a whole community and place-based approach in disadvantaged areas across Northern Ireland. This aligns with the Fair Start’s

advocacy of addressing educational underachievement by “*placing equality of opportunity at the core of everything we do*”. The eligible areas have been selected using data and are listed at **Appendix I**.

This investment will support area-based partnership approaches over the next 2 years, and potentially extend further subject to evaluation. It will enable delivery of a bespoke local Strategic Plan for each place, codesigned by schools and other settings, families/carers, and others with valuable roles to play in supporting children’s learning in communities across these localities. How this programme complements and connects with relevant initiatives and priorities within the Community Plans of Local Government will be very important as well as with other place-based programmes funded or delivered by Departments.

Collaboration enabled by the new programme will build on good practice, test innovative approaches and identify and enhance pathways which promote equality of opportunity for those who face barriers to their learning and are at risk of exclusion, marginalisation and under-achievement. I attach a summary background document at **Appendix II**. The shared island investment will also fund a creative arts programme as well as an online research resource which are in development.

Following announcement of this investment, the RAISE team within the Department will be engaging with a wide range of stakeholders across localities to develop local plans.

The intention behind the programme is to foster strong, collaborative partnerships across schools, community organisations and government departments working across these eligible areas.

The engagement process will start with schools within the eligible localities (before the end of June 2024). Over the summer period, this will extend to include voluntary and community organisations, other departments and arms length bodies, local government, families and communities. Children and young people will be at the

centre of the RAISE programme and they will form an essential part of the engagement to follow.

We will wish to bring all relevant stakeholders together in each of the 15 localities in the Autumn so that the work on *RAISE* can begin in earnest.

This additional investment will be significant in seeking to raise achievement and tackle those issues that impact on educational disadvantage. I know you will join me in welcoming the opportunity and I very much look forward to working with you as this programme develops.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linsey Farrell".

LINSEY FARRELL
DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION POLICY AND CHILDRENS' SERVICES

Appendix I

The RAISE Programme will operate in specific localities across Northern Ireland.

These have been selected using objective criteria based on data.

These localities are within:

- Antrim
- Ards Peninsula
- Ballymena
- Belfast
- Carrick
- Coleraine
- Derry / Londonderry
- Dungannon
- Enniskillen
- Limavady
- Lisburn
- Lurgan and Craigavon
- Newry
- Newtownabbey
- Portadown

Appendix II

Summary background document (PDF attached separately)