

Education Directorate, Area Planning  
Education Authority

By email only [draftSAP2@eani.org.uk](mailto:draftSAP2@eani.org.uk)

11 April 2022

Dear Sir or Madam,

**Consultation response - Planning for Sustainable Provision: Draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27**

We welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on the Education Authority's consultation on its Draft Strategic Area Plan 2022-27. A separate response will be provided to the Special Schools and Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools Area Plan consultation.

**Specific comments**

- 1. We recommend a clear commitment within the Area Plan, underpinned by robust, outcome-focused action measures, to addressing and monitoring the relevant inequalities experienced by the Section 75 equality groups, as well as to promoting good relations.**

We welcome the stated aim of area planning 'to ensure that all children and young people have access to pathways through a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs and leads to improved outcomes' (p4). We note however the lack of reference to the needs of children with particular Section 75 equality characteristics.

For example, within the key aim of 'parity of access for all to appropriate pathways' there is no reference to what this means in practice for, for example, Newcomer children who may experience barriers to accessing education due to language. This is of particular relevance to planning given the year on year increases in the number of Newcomer children attending Northern Ireland schools. In addition, consideration is recommended of the needs of children with disabilities who do not have or require a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

- 2. We have recommended the promotion of collaborative approaches involving engagement with parents, families, carers and the wider communities of key equality groups.** We therefore welcome the emphasis given to community involvement and participation and suggest reference to the need to ensure all voices are heard, particularly those who may experience barrier to engaging in such involvement and participation.

3. We note references to sharing in education and recommend that they include recognition of the potential of sharing to support improved attainment across equality groups and in advancing a shared society.
4. While recognising that this is a strategic plan, other policy interventions operating to support groups such as Traveller and Roma children, are also relevant to the planning environment but are not referenced in the document.

### **General comments**

5. We note that the actions at page 17 and issues at page 19 share some similarity but do not align. It is unclear what the difference is between the status of the two lists.
6. The measures at page 24 under the heading 'how will we know we have been successful' are statements of what will be measured but do not assist the reader in understanding how EA will know whether it has been successful.

I trust that this response is useful, and if discussion would be helpful, please let me know. Further information on the Commission's recommendations on Equality in Education can be found here: [www.equalityni.org/education/policy](http://www.equalityni.org/education/policy).

Yours faithfully



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