



1 June 2021

Statement from the Equality Commission on the Report of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement

The Equality Commission today welcomed the report of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement. Chief Commissioner Geraldine McGahey said: "We are pleased that the Education Minister has endorsed it too. The panel took evidence from a wide range of stakeholders and took into account our work to highlight key inequalities in education and the importance of family engagement in education.

"We particularly welcome the focus on the vital early years of childhood and the call for the Childcare Strategy, the importance given to family and community engagement with schools and the specific inclusion of boys' educational attainment. These are all issues which we have identified and called for action on in recent years.

"If we are serious about wanting to see fundamental change for the benefit of our most disadvantaged children, everyone in Northern Ireland must prioritise education and learning. As the report says, this means placing equality of opportunity at the core of everything we do. This will benefit not only all learners, but our society as a whole, it will allow all learners to give their best and reach their full potential. The investment that's needed is enormous, and so is the effort that is required. This issue cannot be dealt with by just the education sector alone.

"We must make this the last report looking back and move to implementing the action plan, which means commitment and allocation of resources as a matter of urgency."