

**Briefing Paper**

**West Belfast Partnership Board (WBPB) Background:**

The West Belfast Partnership Board is one of four Area Partnerships in Belfast. Its mission is to “*involve people who live and work in West Belfast in generating social, economic and physical development and to ensure West Belfast contributes to and benefits equitably from, developments in the city as a whole*”.

West Belfast Partnership has established close links with government departments, Belfast City Council, elected representatives, the community and voluntary sector, the private sector, and the wider local community to encourage, develop and support a range of economic, social and physical regeneration projects in the west Belfast area.

Key areas of work include Education; Housing, Planning, and the Environment; Health and well-being; Economic Development; Community Planning and Neighbourhood Renewal.

West Belfast Partnership is committed to collaborative partnership working to make a real difference to people's lives in west Belfast and across the city, focussing on the physical, social, economic, and environmental needs of residents.

**1. Sharing the Learning Programme**

The WBPB Sharing the Learning Programme is the core education programme and is funded by the Department of Education, through the Tackling Education Disadvantage team.

The current business case was submitted based on a three year cycle to March 2025 and is currently funded on a year to year basis.

We are also the lead partner in a city-wide consortium for delivery of the Belfast City Council GCSE Support Programme, an element of which also includes delivery of supports to students in the Ards and North Down Council area.

**2. A Partnership Approach**

To date, West Belfast Partnership Board has achieved an unprecedented level of significant school, community, statutory and family buy-in to improve the quality of needs-based learning for our children and young people and we believe it is these partnerships which have been vital in helping to meet challenge of tackling disadvantage & educational underachievement.

WBPB works in partnership with all education stakeholders in West Belfast, including Nursery, Primary, and Post-Primary Schools (51 in total), the Department of Education, the Education Authority, CCMS, the Education and Training Inspectorate, and community sector educators.

We have established, in partnership with our schools, Area Learning Networking Communities (ALNC) for Nursery and Primary sectors and are represented on the Post primary Area Learning Community (WBALC).

Strategically, three connected priorities and approaches have been identified to support academic achievement and to tackle disadvantage, under-achievement and educational inequalities.

In line with the above work, WBPB has developed and embedded:

* **Transition points:** Sure Start, Nursery, Primary, Post Primary, FE / RTO – development of information proforma, resources and guides, and associated training
* **Strategic Planning**: Education Strategic Steering Group, ongoing revision, and implementation of a strategic education plan for WBPB, robust communication and PR strategy, shared vision for education attainment, resilience and economic regeneration.
* **Quality Assurance:** the development and implementation of evidence-based self-evaluation processes.

**3. Core Delivery**

One of the core aims of our work to date has been to raise attainment levels across the education spectrum at each phase for children and young people experiencing disadvantage in west Belfast and further afield.

WBPB has continued to work to further improve progress and academic outcomes in west Belfast, whilst building on new and existing networks to imbed processes and structures in areas of similar disadvantage in both Belfast and regionally.

WBPB has put in place a range of interventions and additional learning opportunities to address the identified needs not only of pupils, but also, crucially, their parents, families, and wider communities.

Our programme facilitates the creation of a seamless education pathway for children and young people. The services delivered are designed to help break the cycle of disadvantage by delivering targeted interventions at a number of key levels of education:

* Early Years
* Pre-school
* Nursery School
* Primary School
* Post-Primary School

West Belfast Partnership Board has established, through consultation with all partners, the need for the interventions below:

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| **KEY OBJECTIVES**  |  |
| 1. To disseminate WBPB education programme as a model of good practice in West Belfast and as model of next practice in other geographical areas.
 | This involves WBPB working with stakeholders in West Belfast and city-wide to share best practice.We have also worked in Derry/Londonderry, Lurgan and Ards and North Down.  |
| 1. Pre-Nursery to Nursery
 | This involves work with 11 Early Years providers and Nursery providers to support parents to ensure that they and their children are ready for children starting Nursery.  |
| 1. Nursery to Primary
 | This involves support for families and children in preparation for learning and making transition from Nursery to starting Primary School. |
| 1. Primary Support
 | This involves work with 19 Primary schools to increase the literacy and numeracy skills of primary school children including through the provision and use of appropriate technology, including iPads |
| 1. After School Support
 | Provision of quality Literacy and Numeracy support and Family Learning in 13 community based After School settings to strengthen links between community and schools. |
| 1. Summer Transition School

  | Provision of support to pupils in P7 during the summer holidays to consolidate learning and increase confidence and self-esteem to ease transition to Year 8. This is a partnership approach with local schools, families, St Mary’s University College and Full Service Community Network. |
| 1. Post Primary Support – Yrs 8 - 10
 | Provision of literacy and numeracy support to Y8 – 10 pupils outside of normal school hours to address issues with attainment, engagement and attendance to enable pupils to reach their full potential, complementing the work in schools. |
| 1. GCSE Support
 | To increase the proportion of pupils with FSME achieving 5+ GCSEs A\* - C including English and Maths, through provision of the annual Easter School and Saturday/Twilight supports  |

**4. Dissemination of Practice**

A core activity has been to further disseminate processes and structures which have been developed and implemented in west Belfast to other areas in both Belfast and regionally, recognising that this is a longitudinal process. We have continued to build upon, strengthen and further develop the robust internal education infrastructure and strategic and operational delivery in west Belfast, which has been aligned with the 8 outcomes listed in the NI Executive and Department of Education Draft Children and Young People’s Strategy 2018 – 2028.

The innovation of the WBPB Education Programme lies in the wraparound support approach that has been inclusive of parents, and families, schools, the local community and statutory stakeholders, building on the existing work in the local area and further afield and adding value to that work, ensuring through partnership working and consultation that duplication or displacement is minimised.

Whilst disseminating best practice and sharing learning, WBPB have continued to build, and strengthen structures and partnership approaches in west Belfast. WBPB have also continued to develop and implement a range of services and activities which have also been designed to facilitate the creation of a seamless education pathway for children and young people.

For example, WBPB has been;

* Further assisting other areas in Belfast and regionally to build the capacity of schools and community to work together and support each other to raise aspiration and attainment levels across the education spectrum.
* Promoting an ethos of non-isolation and interdependency by assisting areas to break down barriers and boundaries internally in school settings and between schools and community.
* Further supporting other areas of Belfast and regionally to begin to develop / further develop the processes and the associated structures which currently exist in west Belfast.
* Further promoting, developing and strengthening internal relationships within schools with teachers / management / Boards of Governors and external relationships between schools and schools and community, which will facilitate professional development, trust building, sharing best practice and structural development.

This process has been in place throughout the period of Sharing the Learning (2016 to date) with solid foundations laid through the Belfast Area Partnerships, local and regional Post Primary Area Learning Communities and local community organisations.

**5. Outcomes**

***Belfast Wide / Regionally***

* Ensured dissemination of embedded supports in 4 areas regionally
* Continued to with work city wide to develop and implement 3 Easter Schools regionally.
* Developed the use of WB Transition resources from Primary to Post Primary in additional areas, including use of Bridging Units for Literacy and Numeracy
* Developed the use of WB Transition resources to Nursery and Primary in additional areas.
* Increased work with partners in North, South and East Belfast and Greater Shankill.
* Provided all other areas with an opportunity to attend training offered by WBPB. This has included schools partnered with schools in west Belfast through Shared Education.

***West Belfast:***

* Increased parental engagement at Nursery level, including transition to Nursery and from Nursery to Primary School.
* Increased parental engagement and reading at home in line with DE Give Your Child a Helping Hand Strategy.
* Increased interface with Early Years providers, including Sure Start, Nursery, Primary and community-based providers through WB Early Years Cluster.
* Increased interface with Health, including between Pastoral Care and SENCOs in Primary and Post Primary and with WBPB Health Department.
* Produced a joint training CPD calendar for community, Nursery, Primary and Post Primary staff based on needs identified, including observation opportunities.
* Increased Literacy and Numeracy improvement KS2-KS4.
* PTE/PTM/Stanines at KS2 – collection and measurement of data at KS2 year on year to measure improvement or otherwise.
* Increased GCSE attainment levels: 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\*- C, including equivalent qualifications and GCSE English and Maths - target of reaching and maintaining over 70% success rate Grade C or above in Maths and English next 10 years with a target of 68% by 2022.
* Closed the gap between FSME and non-FSME children in terms of the 5+ GCSEs (A\*-C) incl. equivalents incl. GCSE English and GCSE maths by 2 percentage points to a target of 13.9 by 2022.
* Increased the number of Post 16 students remaining in Post Primary Education with % increase linked to GCSE attainment levels year on year.
* Increased interface with Post 16 providers in FE and HE in line with 14-19 Policy.
* Ensured seamless transition at all stages extended to include Post 16 progression as a new piece of work, in line with 14-19 Strategy and in partnership with FE, HE and West Belfast Post Primary CEIAG Cluster to assist the pathways and progression of young people.
* Increased interface with employers and businesses.
* Interface with Health and Economic Development departments in West Belfast Partnership Board