



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

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Programme for Government commitments: Department of Education

1 Introduction

A Draft Programme for Government (PfG) was introduced to the Assembly on November 17th 2011, setting out the Executive's plans and priorities for the period 2011-15. The overall priorities of the PfG are:

1. Growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future;
2. Creating opportunities, tackling disadvantage and improving health and well-being;
3. Protecting our people, the environment and creating safer communities;
4. Building a strong and shared community;
5. Delivering high quality and efficient public services.

The Executive also published a Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland. This briefing note provides an overview of the main commitments and priorities set out within these documents in relation to education and the investment allocations in this regard.

2 Key commitments

The Draft PfG makes a series of commitments that lie within the remit of the Department of Education, and further commitments that may have implications for the work of the Department. The commitments are highlighted in the following tables, together with their specified milestones or outputs.¹

Educational infrastructure

| Priority | Commitment | Milestones/ outputs | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| | | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 |
| 5: Delivering high quality and efficient public services | Make the Education and Skills Authority operational in 2013 | Bring forward for scrutiny and approval by the Assembly the legislation necessary to establish a single education authority | Take forward structural, financial and other actions required for establishing a new non-departmental public body and for winding up existing Non-Departmental Public Bodies | Single Education Authority established and fully functional |

Early years education and care

| Priority | Commitment | Milestones/ outputs | | |
|--|---|--|---|---------|
| | | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 |
| 2: Creating opportunities, tackling disadvantage and improving health and well-being | Ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it | Develop proposals for a change programme to deliver the pre-school education | Arrangements in place to deliver pre-school education on demand | - |

¹ Northern Ireland Executive (2011) *Draft Programme for Government 2011-15* Belfast: OFMDFM

Literacy and numeracy

| Priority | Commitment | Milestones/ outputs | | |
|--|---|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 |
| 1: Growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future | Increase the proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who achieve at least five GCSEs at A*-C or equivalent including English and mathematics | 42% | 45% | 49% |
| 2: Creating opportunities, tackling disadvantage and improving health and well-being | Improve literacy and numeracy levels among all school leavers, with additional resources targeted at areas of educational underachievement | Develop proposals to significantly improve literacy levels and address multi-generational disadvantage | Implement and monitor programme | Implement and monitor programme |

Shared education

| Priority | Commitment | Milestones/ outputs | | |
|---|---|---|---------|---------|
| | | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 |
| 4: Building a strong and shared community | Establish a Ministerial advisory group to explore and bring forward recommendations to the Minister of Education to advance shared education | Establish group and produce report with recommendations | - | - |

| Priority | Commitment | Milestones/ outputs | | |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| | | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 |
| 4: Building a strong and shared community | Ensure all children have the opportunity to participate in shared education programmes and substantially increase the number of schools sharing facilities | Define the objectives in terms of children participating in shared education programmes and in terms of schools sharing facilities | - | - |
| 4: Building a strong and shared community | Significantly progress work on the plan for the Lisanelly Shared Education campus as a key regeneration project | Develop a business case and plan for the new campus | Secure funding and initiate the development programme | Substantial construction on the first phase |

Cross-departmental commitments

The following commitments involve other Departments; however, it is possible that they will have implications for the work of the Department of Education:

- By 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode of transport (milestones: 33% primary and 21% post-primary in 2012/13; 34% primary and 21% post-primary in 2013/14; and 36% primary and 22% post-primary in 2014/15)
- Increase uptake in economically relevant Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) places (milestones: 180 additional places by 2012/13, 360 in 2013/14 and 540 additional places in 2014/15).

3 Draft Investment Strategy

The Draft Investment Strategy specifies 'a schools/ college system producing a well-educated workforce' as one of a series of 'essential must haves' for encouraging investment and helping local businesses to grow and compete in an increasingly global marketplace.

The Strategy highlights new school buildings used by pupils and communities as an example of how planning in one area of government can help to deliver the wider objectives in the Executive's Programme for Government.

The document notes the Minister for Education's plans for the strategic planning of education provision on an area-basis and states that this will be a key determinant of priorities for new capital investment. It also discusses the potential for estate rationalisation in educational infrastructure and highlights the development of plans for the Lisanelly campus.

Investment allocations

Overall, funding for the first four years is consistent with the figures published in the Executive's final budget. The Strategy states that funding for the period from 2015/16 to 2020/21 assumes an increase of 2.7% per annum within the Block Grant that will be made available for capital investment.

With regard to education, the Strategy sets out the investment allocation (as highlighted in the table below) for the Department of Education. The Strategy also sets out a series of 'investment priorities' – with the 'Schools and Youth' priority pertaining to education. The allocation for this priority is exactly the same as that specified for the Department of Education, as set out below, and is not broken down or detailed any further.²

Amounts allocated to the Department of Education

| Department | 2011/12 to 2014/15 | 2015/16 to 2020/21 | Total |
|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Department of Education | £512m | £1,032m | £1,544m |

The Strategy notes that the figures and allocations for the 2015/16 to 2020/21 period are indicative only, and will be determined by the Executive through a subsequent budget process.

In terms of the percentage allocation to education, the total Investment Strategy budget is £12,594m, therefore the Department of Education's allocation makes up 12% of the total.

² Northern Ireland Executive (2011) *Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21* Belfast: OFMDFM