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# TransformED NI

**Transforming Teaching and Learning:**  
A Strategy for Educational Excellence in  
Northern Ireland

April 2025

**Delivery Plan**

# TransformED Delivery Plan

## Introduction

The TransformED Delivery Plan represents a bold and ambitious roadmap to transform teaching and learning in Northern Ireland, as outlined in the Department of Education's TransformED strategy launched in March 2025 ([TransformED NI layout.pdf](#)).

This plan translates the strategy's vision for educational excellence into actionable steps, focusing on curriculum reform, assessment, qualifications, school improvement and tackling educational disadvantage, all underpinned by significant investment in teacher professional learning. It sets out a clear delivery approach, key delivery partners, indicative timescales and estimated costs to ensure effective implementation of each of the actions within TransformED. Key actions have been further refined during development of the Delivery Plan. All of the actions within the Delivery Plan link directly to the strategic commitments in the 10 Point Plan for Educational Excellence that accompanied the TransformED Strategy ([TransformED NI 10 Point Plan.pdf](#)).

By fostering collaboration across the education sector and drawing on global best practices, this delivery plan aims to create an equitable, inclusive, and world-leading education system that empowers every child and young person to thrive in an ever-changing world.

It has been developed following consultation with the Education Authority (EA), the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), Higher Education Institutions, the Department for the Economy (DfE) and other key partners. Collaborative delivery will underpin the implementation of the strategy.

The TransformED Delivery Plan should be read alongside the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Reform Agenda and Delivery Plan that sets out the key actions to transform services for children and young people with SEN. It is also vital that the support required to meet the needs of pupils with SEN is carefully integrated into all aspects of educational reform set out in this plan.

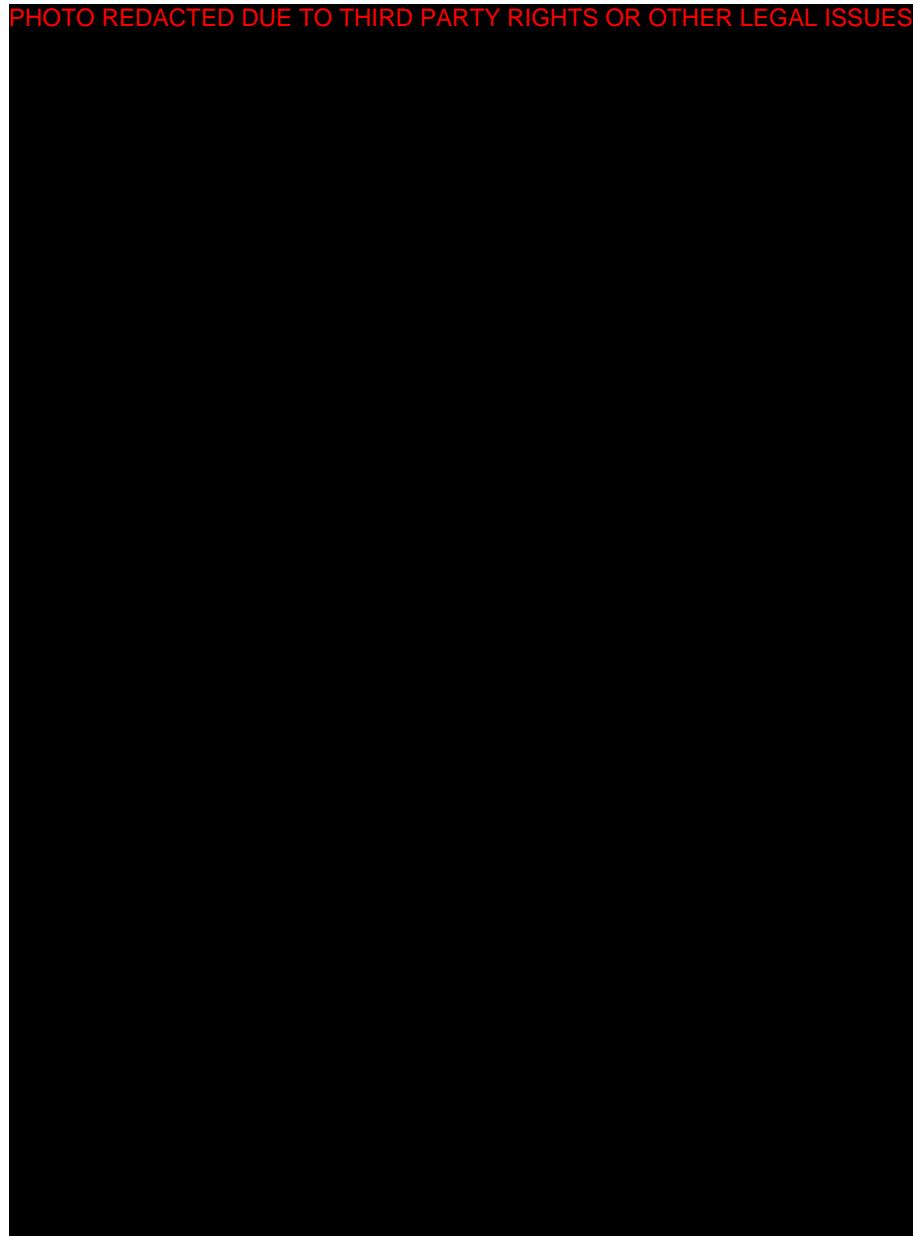
## Monitoring, Evaluation and Governance

The Department of Education (referred to as the Department or DE) will now establish a TransformED Programme Board to ensure that there is a clear focus on delivery. This will be led by a Senior Officer within the Department and report directly to the Minister. Delivery partners including EA, CCEA, CCMS, Higher Education Institutions and other sectoral support bodies will be represented. The ETI will provide ongoing professional advice to the Senior Officer. The recently established International Ministerial Advisory Panel as well as the Department's TransformED Principals' Panel and Academic Panel will also provide advice, guidance and support on implementation.

Embedding a culture of monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance will be woven through all aspects of implementation. The Department will report on progress at key milestones notably through an Annual Progress Report. The first Annual Progress Report will be published in May 2026.

Integral to success will be consistent improvement in pupil attainment and the Programme Board will consider further appropriate system measures and targets, as we take forward work on curriculum and qualifications review, Key Stage assessment and literacy and numeracy. Inspection evidence will also inform the need for and development of measures and targets.

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Action	Delivery Approach	Delivery Partners	Indicative Timescale	Estimated Costs
<b>1. Research Function for Education</b>	<p>Northern Ireland lacks a unified education research function aligned with policy priorities.</p> <p>The aims of the new function will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>summarising the global evidence base across key areas of education;</li> <li>supporting the dissemination of research across the education sector in Northern Ireland to use evidence in ways that really make a difference;</li> <li>generating high-quality, locally relevant research to inform education decision making; and</li> <li>support the piloting, development and evaluation of new approaches and interventions, including the application of digital skills and technologies.</li> </ul> <p>The first stage of delivery will be the scoping of functions and options for delivery followed by design, planning and implementation, including recruitment of staff and development of an initial three-year business plan. It is envisaged that the research function will be located within the Department to work closely with NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and minimise operating costs.</p>	DE, EA, NISRA, CCEA, Higher Education Institutions, ETI.	Education research function for Northern Ireland to be established by early 2027.	Estimated annual operating costs are approximately £2 million per annum.

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	<p>It will be critical to ensure close collaboration with the Northern Ireland academic community as well as key stakeholders such as EA, ETI and other education Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs).</p> <p>A new research steering group with the Department, EA, local university academics, ETI and other key stakeholders will be established in autumn 2025 to advise on the development of the education research function.</p>			
<b>2. Teacher recruitment and retention</b>				
Put in place medium and long-term strategic monitoring of teacher supply to anticipate and remediate issues.	<p>In recent years there have been increasing challenges with teacher recruitment and retention, particularly at post-primary level. Subject areas which have the most severe shortages are mathematics, science subjects (notably chemistry and physics), information technology (IT) and technology and design.</p> <p>A working group led by the Department, supported by NISRA, GTCNI, EA and CCMS, will be established to identify key data requirements; establish appropriate data collection mechanisms; and put in place appropriate annual monitoring and analysis of supply and demand trends.</p>	DE, NISRA, GTCNI, EA, CCMS, Higher Education Institutions.	<p>New monitoring arrangements in place for 2026-27 academic year.</p>	<p>No significant costs anticipated.</p> <p>Long term cost of an established workforce planning function to be determined.</p>

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Implement effective strategies to attract high-quality graduates to subject shortage areas.	<p>The Department, working with the Higher Education Institutions, will develop and launch a Northern Ireland Initial Teacher Education Recruitment Strategy by mid-2025.</p> <p>The strategy will include actions around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>development of alternative entry pathways for Initial Teacher Education including part-time pathways;</li> <li>developing pathways that provide a focus and specialism in teaching children with SEN;</li> <li>development of financial incentives for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students in subject shortage areas;</li> <li>consideration of annual ITE intake numbers in subject shortage areas; and</li> <li>a targeted marketing campaign to boost recruitment in subject shortage areas.</li> </ul> <p>Key aims will be to boost recruitment to ITE in subject shortage areas and to develop a specialist SEN pathway for September 2026.</p>	DE, DfE, Higher Education Institutions, GTCNI.	Northern Ireland Initial Teacher Education Recruitment Strategy to be published by mid-2025.	Estimated annual costs for financial incentives to support teacher recruitment are approximately £1.5 million per annum.
Develop a Core Content Framework for ITE which is subject and phase specific and equips teachers to meet the learning needs of pupils with SEN.	Development of the Framework will be led by the Department in partnership with the Higher Education Institutions.	DE, Higher Education Institutions GTCNI, Employing Authorities.	Draft framework to be developed by December 2025 for consultation and implementation from September 2026.	Estimated costs are approximately £100,000.

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Make induction a mandatory component of the professional learning journey of our teachers.	<p>The Department has carried out a short, focused Review of Teacher Induction, which will be published during May 2025. This makes a number of recommendations regarding teacher induction.</p> <p>It highlights that in the other UK jurisdictions and the Republic of Ireland induction is a mandatory component of the professional learning journey and in the rest of the UK, the GTCNI equivalent tends to be heavily involved in the approval of the completion of induction.</p> <p>Legislation to make induction mandatory will be drafted by the Department, with input from key stakeholders. The Department will also consider how the requirement for induction should link to teacher registration.</p>	DE, EA, Other Employing Authorities, Higher Education Institutions, Trade Unions, GTCNI.	New legislation and accompanying processes to be enacted during the current Assembly mandate.	No significant costs anticipated.
Agree compulsory content and expand the directed learning element of the induction programme to ensure our early career teachers receive comprehensive and structured support.	<p>As recommended in the Review of Teacher Induction, ETI will evaluate the arrangements for teacher induction during the 2025-26 academic year. This will inform key areas for development in both directed learning and at school level and will inform compulsory induction content.</p> <p>The Department, working with EA and the Higher Education Institutions and informed by practitioners and other key stakeholders, will progressively develop and implement the expansion of the direct learning element of induction over the next three academic years. This will include identifying and agreeing compulsory content within the programme. It will be important to ensure there is a significant emphasis on inclusion and meeting the needs of pupils with SEN within the induction programme.</p>	DE, ETI, EA, Other Employing Authorities, Higher Education Institutions, GTCNI.	Staged expansion to begin in September 2025, followed by further refinement and expansion in subsequent years.	Estimated costs are approximately £1 million per annum.

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<b>3. Teacher Professional Learning</b>	<p>Refresh the 2016 Learning Leaders Strategy and implementation plan to reflect current challenges and priorities, including the need for SEN specific professional learning.</p> <p>The Department will carry out a refresh of the Learning Leaders Strategy and implementation plan, supported by a working group of key stakeholders. The proposed timeline for development of the refreshed strategy will be as follows:</p> <p><b>Phase 1:</b> Research on the current wider professional learning landscape including international best practice and stakeholder engagement including workshops – May-September 2025.</p> <p><b>Phase 2:</b> Strategy Design – development of strategy with accompanying action plans and targets – October-November 2025.</p> <p><b>Phase 3:</b> Public Consultation – December 2025-January 2026</p> <p><b>Phase 4:</b> Publication of refreshed Learning Leaders Strategy – February 2026.</p> <p><b>Phase 5:</b> Implementation – February 2026 onwards.</p>	DE, EA, CCMS, other ALBs, GTCNI, Higher Education Institutions.	A revised strategy will be issued for consultation in autumn 2025.	The revised strategy will focus on the key deliverables within the TransformED strategy given its focus on Teacher Professional Learning. Additional actions will be costed as identified.

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<p>Provide additional funding for schools to purchase high-quality professional learning to meet their needs.</p> <p>Develop a high-quality professional learning procurement framework for schools to supplement the core 'professional learning' offer from EA.</p>	<p>The Department will establish a Teacher Professional Learning Fund to provide earmarked funding to schools. Funding will commence in the 2025-26 academic year with initial allocations available from September 2025.</p> <p>The Teacher Professional Learning Fund will directly support school leaders and teachers in their pursuit of excellence. By providing funding for high-quality professional learning, the fund will help raise teaching standards, strengthen leadership and enhance classroom practice, which are key elements of school improvement. It will also contribute to addressing barriers to learning by equipping educators with the skills to support diverse student needs, promote inclusion and drive continuous improvement.</p> <p>The Department will work in partnership with EA to develop guidance for schools and a high-quality professional learning procurement framework to support implementation of the fund. This will help schools to access Teacher Professional Learning from a list of approved providers on a range of curricular themes and also SEN specific professional learning.</p>	DE, EA, CCMS, other ALBs, Higher Education Institutions.	<p>Teacher Professional Learning fund will be available from September 2025 for additional funding to schools.</p> <p>Procurement Framework to follow.</p>	<p>£27 million across 3 financial years as follows:</p> <p>2025-26: £7 million</p> <p>2026-27: £10 million</p> <p>2027-28: £10 million</p>

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Improve access to education research for teachers.	<p>The Education Minister announced a new Making Best Practice, Common Practice Programme on 24 March 2025 (<a href="#">Givan launches Making Best Practice, Common Practice programme to increase access for teachers to the latest education research   Department of Education</a>).</p> <p>The programme aims to bridge the gap between cutting-edge educational research and everyday classroom practice, empowering teachers with the tools and knowledge they need to enhance pupil outcomes. It has three key elements set out below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Research Informed Conferences</b> – funding will be provided to support schools/school clusters to host a research informed conference which will provide a number of benefits including the opportunity for teachers to stay updated on research informed pedagogy; refine and improve their instructional methods; connect with other educators and researchers; and learn about new ideas. Schools will be invited to apply for funding.</li> <li><b>Monthly Newsletter on Science of Learning</b> – provision of a monthly newsletter to all teachers in Northern Ireland over a 12-month period, with each edition focusing on a specific aspect of research and its practical application, with a link to a short video.</li> <li><b>Quarterly publication on education research</b> – summarising key research useful for the teaching profession. Each issue will consist of a review of one or more relevant recent studies.</li> </ul> <p>EA will support dissemination of the programme.</p>	DE, EA, Higher Education Institutions, schools and a range of Teacher Professional Learning providers.	<p>Programme launched in March 2025 and will run throughout 2025-26, with consideration then given to its design in future years.</p> <p>Call for applications for conference funding to launch to schools during summer term 2025.</p>	The total estimated costs for the programme are approximately £82,000 in 2025-26.

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	<p>The Department will roll out an online professional learning programme for post-primary teachers on the Science of Learning. The programme will provide educators with research-informed strategies to enhance teaching and learning, supporting evidence-based classroom practices that improve student outcomes.</p> <p>With the growing emphasis on cognitive science, neuroscience, and psychology in education, this programme will equip teachers with practical, research-backed techniques to support memory retention, attention, metacognition, and effective learning strategies.</p> <p>This programme will be available to schools during the 2025-26 academic year. It will combine a core online programme of 30-40 hours including live webinars with a number of face-to-face sessions. Each school will have flexibility about delivery of the programme over 2-3 terms.</p> <p>An independent evaluation of the programme by ETI to ascertain the extent to which it has impacted on instructional practice and teacher confidence will be completed.</p> <p>It is envisaged that a Call for Applications will issue during summer term 2025.</p>	DE, external Teaching Professional Learning provider.	Programme to be available to post-primary schools during 2025-26 academic year.	Estimated Programme costs for the pilot are envisaged to be £300,000.

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Pilot investment in supporting groups of schools to create or further embed collaborative professional learning communities working with the research community.	<p>The Department will work with EA to develop a pilot programme for Collaborative Professional Learning Clusters in partnership with Higher Education Institutions.</p> <p>The initiative aims to support clusters of educators in designing and delivering a structured professional learning programme that enhances teaching practice, promotes innovation and inclusion and improves learner outcomes.</p> <p>This collaborative programme will support sustainable, inclusive and research-informed professional learning communities, ensuring continuous growth in teaching practice. By leveraging the expertise of Higher Education Institutions, the clusters will gain meaningful professional development opportunities that directly impact educational outcomes.</p> <p>It is recognised that there are multiple layers of clustering in place and that this will complement and build on existing clusters as well as supporting new clusters.</p> <p>It is envisaged that a Call for Applications will issue during summer term 2025.</p> <p>The Programme Structure will be as follows:</p> <p><b>Phase 1 Needs Assessment and Co-Design of the Professional Learning Programme (c3 months)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs Assessment: Conduct surveys, focus groups, and discussions with cluster members to identify learning priorities.</li> </ul>	DE, EA, Higher Education Institutions and school clusters.	Programme to be rolled out during 2025-26 academic year.	£500,000 for pilot programme.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design: Work with EA and Higher Education Institutions to co-design a structured learning programme.</li> <li>• Customisation: Adapt content to align with local educational contexts, pupil profiles, policies, and priorities.</li> <li>• Monitoring and evaluation: design of metrics for monitoring and evaluation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Phase 2 Programme Implementation (c12 months)</b></p> <p>Each programme will be bespoke to the individual cluster but programmes are likely to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• facilitated learning sessions both online and face-to-face;</li> <li>• action research and inquiry-based learning to encourage teachers to engage in small-scale research projects;</li> <li>• coaching and mentoring;</li> <li>• creation of subject specific communities of practice; and</li> <li>• observation of practice and feedback.</li> </ul> <p><b>Phase 3 Evaluation and Sustainability (3 months)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact Assessment: Measure changes in practice and pupil outcomes.</li> <li>• Sharing of Learning: Encourage dissemination of findings through conferences, networks, and publications.</li> <li>• Embedding the Model: Establish structures to sustain collaborative learning beyond the programme's duration.</li> </ul>			

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Pilot investment in the renewal and creation of subject professional learning communities to support subject-specific professional practice.	<p>Subject-focused Professional Learning Communities are collaborative networks of educators who share expertise, resources and practices to enhance subject-specific teaching and learning.</p> <p>The Department will work closely with the Curriculum Taskforce and other key stakeholders including CCEA, relevant professional bodies, EA and the Higher Education Institutions to develop a programme to support subject-specific professional learning opportunities.</p> <p>There will be an initial review to look at best practice internationally and engage with key stakeholders to consider how best to design and deliver subject-specific training and the purpose and scope of the communities.</p>	DE, EA, CCEA, Higher Education Institutions and a range of Teacher Professional Learning providers.	Programme to be rolled out during 2026-27 academic year.	Costs of the programme are to be confirmed following design.
Review the use of Baker Days and School Development Days to ensure they are used effectively to support improvement and professional learning.	<p>The Department is undertaking a review of the use of Baker Days and School Development Days as part of the End-to-End Review of School Improvement.</p> <p>A survey issued to schools in 2024 as part of the review to ascertain how the days were being used.</p> <p>Officials are continuing engagement with school leaders and ALBs and will consult on proposals within the draft school improvement policy consultation in autumn 2025.</p>	DE, EA, CCMS.	<p>Policy consultation to be completed autumn 2025.</p> <p>Any new legislation to be enacted during the current Assembly mandate.</p>	No significant additional costs associated with the review.

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<b>4. Leadership</b>				
Develop a replacement qualification for headship to support our newly appointed and aspiring principals.	The Department will establish a formal project to develop a replacement for qualification for headship. The project will be led by EA and supported by the Higher Education Institutions to develop, pilot and launch the new qualification.	DE, EA, Higher Education Institutions, Trade Unions, other ALBs.	Project formally established during summer term 2025. Programme to be available for delivery in 2026-27 academic year.	c£1.25 million across three financial years. 2025-26: £250,000 2026-27: £500,000 2027-28: £500,000
Develop a professional learning programme for existing, experienced principals.	The Department will work with EA and other key stakeholders including the Higher Education Institutions to scope and develop a leadership programme for experienced principals that will be rolled out during the 2026-27 academic year.	DE, EA, Higher Education Institutions, other ALBs and other Teacher Professional learning providers.	Programme to be available for delivery in 2026-27 academic year.	Programme costs to be developed.
	The Department will provide a monthly newsletter to all school leaders in Northern Ireland over a 12-month period, with each edition focusing on a specific aspect of leadership, with a link to a short video. This will commence in September 2025.	DE, external provider.	September 2025.	£30,000 annually for newsletter.

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	<p>EA will continue to co-ordinate delivery of the Experienced School Leaders Associate Accreditation &amp; Professional Learning Programme facilitated by the Association of Education Advisers.</p> <p>Delivery of ETI Associate Assessor Programme to promote professional growth and leadership capacity by providing access to training and collaboration with experienced inspectors and enhancing leaders' skills in evaluation, feedback and strategic planning, as well as building effective collaborative networks.</p>	<p>EA, Association of Education Advisers.</p> <p>ETI.</p>	<p>Programme to be rolled out during 2025-26 academic year.</p> <p>Programme to be rolled out during 2025-26 academic year.</p>	<p>£114,000 for 2025-26 financial year.</p> <p>Estimated costs of approximately £250,000 per annum.</p>
Review, strengthen and invest in professional learning for middle leaders and co-ordinators.	The Department will work with EA and other key stakeholders including the Higher Education Institutions to scope and develop a leadership programme for middle leaders and co-ordinators that will be rolled out during the 2026-27 academic year.	DE, EA, Higher Education Institutions, other ALBs and other Teacher Professional learning providers.	Programme to be available for delivery in 2026-27 academic year.	Programme costs to be developed.

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<b>5. Curriculum</b>	<p>Review and redesign the Northern Ireland Curriculum to ensure every child enjoys an ambitious and knowledge rich curriculum that develops their learning in a well sequenced and explicit manner.</p> <p>A Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum by Lucy Crehan was announced in October 2024 (<a href="#">Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum   Department of Education</a>).</p> <p>The review will make a series of policy recommendations regarding the purpose, design, specification and implementation of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. It is also expected to provide a strategic assessment of the current curriculum within the international context.</p> <p>The review will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify emerging curricular themes and key issues of public/political/media interest;</li> <li>• consider the role of curriculum design in tackling educational disadvantage and reducing educational inequalities;</li> <li>• produce coherent proposals and recommendations to support the future development/reform of the curriculum; and</li> <li>• make recommendations on how the curriculum should be monitored, reviewed and developed with relevant experts in the field, key education organisations, schools and other key stakeholders.</li> </ul> <p>The strategic review will be completed by early May 2025.</p>	DE, CCEA, new Curriculum Taskforce to be established.	<p>Independent review of curriculum will be completed by May 2025.</p> <p>A new Curriculum Taskforce as recommended by the Independent Review of Education will be established by autumn 2025.</p> <p>The new statutory curriculum framework will be put in place by autumn 2026.</p>	<p>Costs for the Taskforce during the development and design of the new curriculum are estimated to be £2.4 million.</p> <p>Costs for the implementation phase of the new curriculum framework will be scoped during the design and development phase and will be dependent on the timeframes and phasing of implementation of the new statutory curriculum framework.</p>

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	<p>There will then be two core phases to curriculum reform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) development and design of the new curriculum framework leading to a new statutory curriculum content; and</li> <li>(ii) implementation of the new curriculum.</li> </ul> <p>In line with the recommendation of the Independent Review of Education, a Curriculum Taskforce will be established to lead on curriculum development and design, working closely with CCEA and the Department.</p> <p>In the period May to September 2025, the new Curriculum Taskforce will be established within DE to take forward curriculum reform.</p> <p>The design and development phase including evidence gathering, stakeholder engagement and consultation on the new statutory curriculum framework will take place between autumn 2025 and summer 2026.</p> <p>Most curriculum changes will not require new primary legislation but rather new secondary regulations, which can be made at pace by the Department and laid before the Assembly. It is envisaged that the secondary legislation required to amend the statutory curriculum content will, therefore, be in place by autumn 2026.</p>			

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Deliver high-quality curriculum advice and resources to support teachers in the classroom.	In parallel with the development and design stage of the new curriculum, the Department will give detailed consideration to how it can best support the development of training, digital and other resources, including textbooks, to support implementation of the revised statutory framework for the curriculum at pace.	DE, CCEA, EA. New Curriculum Taskforce to be established.	It is envisaged that the roll out training and resources to support the revised statutory framework will commence in 2026-27 academic year.	To be determined – a full business case will be prepared to examine the costs of training and resources to support implementation of the new statutory framework for the curriculum.
Develop new strategies for literacy and numeracy based on international best practice, to foster children's mastery of both literacy and numeracy at primary school which will enhance later learning and support both equity and attainment.	<p>The Department will lead development of new Literacy and Numeracy Strategies supported by working groups of key stakeholders.</p> <p>The proposed timeline for development of the new strategies will be as follows:</p> <p><b>Phase 1:</b> Research of current literacy and mathematics landscape including international best practice and stakeholder engagement including workshops – May-October 2025.</p> <p><b>Phase 2:</b> Strategy Design – development of strategies with accompanying action plans and targets – October 2025- February 2026.</p> <p><b>Phase 3:</b> Public Consultation – March-April 2026.</p> <p><b>Phase 4:</b> Publication of new 10-year strategies for literacy and numeracy – June 2026.</p> <p><b>Phase 5:</b> Implementation – September 2026 onwards.</p>	DE, EA, CCEA, Practitioner working groups, ETI.	<p>A literacy circular will be published during summer term 2025 to provide advice and guidance for the 2025-26 academic year.</p> <p>Draft strategies will be consulted on during spring 2026 for implementation from September 2026.</p>	<p>No significant costs beyond staffing associated with development of strategies.</p> <p>Proposed actions within the strategy will be costed separately.</p>

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<b>6. Assessment</b>	<p>From the 2025-26 academic year, introduce a system-level sample check for literacy and numeracy and disseminate the assessment results to highlight strengths and challenges for the education system.</p> <p>The Education Minister announced new arrangements for statutory Key Stage Assessment on 19 March 2025 (<a href="#">Given announces new Key Stage assessments in Northern Ireland   Department of Education</a>) for the period from the 2025-26 academic year to 2027-28.</p> <p>An annual system level assessment for pupils at the end of Key Stages 1-3 in literacy and numeracy (the Cross-Curricular skills of Communication and Using Mathematics) will be designed, administered and marked by CCEA. One third of schools will be sampled. There will not be an assessment in relation to the cross-curricular skill of Using ICT.</p> <p>Outcomes will not be used for individual school performance measurement nor published at school level. The data will, however, be available to schools for their own internal benchmarking purposes if they wish to have it.</p> <p>The assessments will measure national educational performance. This approach will allow robust measurement of standards over time enabling a much more authoritative picture to be established on our national educational performance than is currently possible.</p>	DE, CCEA.	<p>New arrangements announced in March 2025.</p> <p>System-level sample in place for 2025-26 academic year to 2027-28 academic year. Schools will be identified during summer term 2025.</p> <p>The first assessments will take place in March 2026 and system level outcomes published in June 2026.</p>	The total three-year costs for the assessment arrangements are £2.68 million.

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	<p>These types of large-scale evaluations of pupil performance are designed to measure the effectiveness of education systems without evaluating individual pupils or schools directly. Instead, they gather data from a representative sample of students to draw conclusions about overall educational quality, performance trends and educational policies. Such measures are used widely across many high-performing education systems including Canada, USA, Finland, Japan and Singapore.</p> <p>It is envisaged that the tests will provide data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of pupils performing at the expected level in literacy and numeracy at end of Key Stages 1-3;</li> <li>• Percentage of pupils performing above the expected level in literacy and numeracy at end of Key Stages 1-3; and</li> <li>• Outcomes for specific groups of pupils such as gender, those entitled to Free School Meals, SEN and Newcomer pupils (DE Statistics will work with CCEA to agree a data collection system to permit such analysis).</li> </ul> <p>The Communication tests will assess both reading and writing.</p> <p>The Using Mathematics tests should assess number, shape and space, data handling and measures.</p> <p>CCEA will use the outcomes of the test to report to the Department on strengths and weaknesses at system level and to inform development of additional resources and Teacher Professional Learning.</p>			

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	<p>CCEA are developing proposals on SEN access arrangements for the interim arrangements.</p> <p>CCEA has also been commissioned to develop proposals in regard to assessment for the Irish-medium sector which will be submitted to the Department during the summer term 2025.</p>			
Invest in upscaling and roll-out of CCEA's Computer Adaptive Assessments for literacy and numeracy as a free alternative to commercial assessments to inform effective formative and diagnostic assessment in schools.	<p>A phased approach by Key Stage will be used to upscale the CCEA Computer Adaptive Assessment.</p> <p>The adaptive test in literacy and numeracy will provide a standardised score, a numerical report and a skills report which identifies a list of competencies for the area of learning that have/ have not been achieved. This will identify pupils' areas of strength and improvement.</p> <p>The adaptive assessments in literacy and numeracy will be fully operational in schools by 2027-28 for Years 7-10 and by 2028-29 for Years 4-6.</p> <p>CCEA will further develop the tests item banks to increase its accessibility to all pupils ranging from gifted and talented to those with moderate learning difficulties, as it adapts depending on the child's answers and levels of proficiency.</p>	DE, CCEA, EA.	<p>Fully operational in schools by 2027-28 for Years 7-10 and by 2028-29 for Years 4-6.</p> <p>Irish-medium adaptive assessments will be fully operational for Years 7-10 by 2028-29, followed by Key Stage 2 in autumn 2029.</p> <p>The Irish-medium literacy assessment will commence its initial testing phase in 2026-27 for Years 7-10, with enhanced implementation phase in 2028-29.</p>	Approximate costs for the period from March 2025 to March 2028 are £2.9 million.

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			The testing and implementation timelines for years 4-6 will follow one year later.	
Review current arrangements for statutory assessment to develop a new system of attainment measures which set high standards and clearly defined learning outcomes for all pupils throughout both primary school and Key Stage 3.	<p>The Department will commission an independent review of assessment arrangements by June 2025.</p> <p>The review will consider best practice in Northern Ireland, other UK jurisdictions and internationally, as well as the purpose and nature of assessment within the education system and the coherence and effectiveness of current arrangements across Key Stages.</p> <p>It will consider the following key issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the need for a school readiness baseline assessment on entry to primary school; a phonics assessment; and a times tables check;</li> <li>high quality diagnostic testing of pupils on entry to secondary schools through a Year 8 baselining assessment;</li> <li>a value added or progress measure for schools;</li> <li>how best to improve formative assessment and share good practice in Northern Ireland;</li> <li>the overall coherence of assessment arrangements across all Key Stages;</li> <li>the appropriateness of the current Levels of Progression and the need for curriculum levels; and</li> <li>best practice in assessment for children with SEN.</li> </ul>	DE, CCEA, Independent Review Panel appointed by the Minister, Teaching Unions.	Independent Review Panel to be established by June 2025 and to report in early 2026.	Approximately £100,000 including Review Panel and resource for a supporting secretariat.

Action	Delivery Approach	Delivery Partners	Indicative Timescale	Estimated Costs
	<p>The Review will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work with CCEA and other education NDPBs to undertake a strategic assessment of current arrangements;</li> <li>• undertake appropriate engagement on the way ahead with the Teaching Unions, education organisations, professionals within the education sector, schools and other key stakeholders, including political representatives;</li> <li>• identify at an early stage key emerging themes and key issues of public/political/media concern; and</li> <li>• produce coherent proposals and recommendations to support the development of fit for purpose arrangements for assessment in Northern Ireland.</li> </ul>			

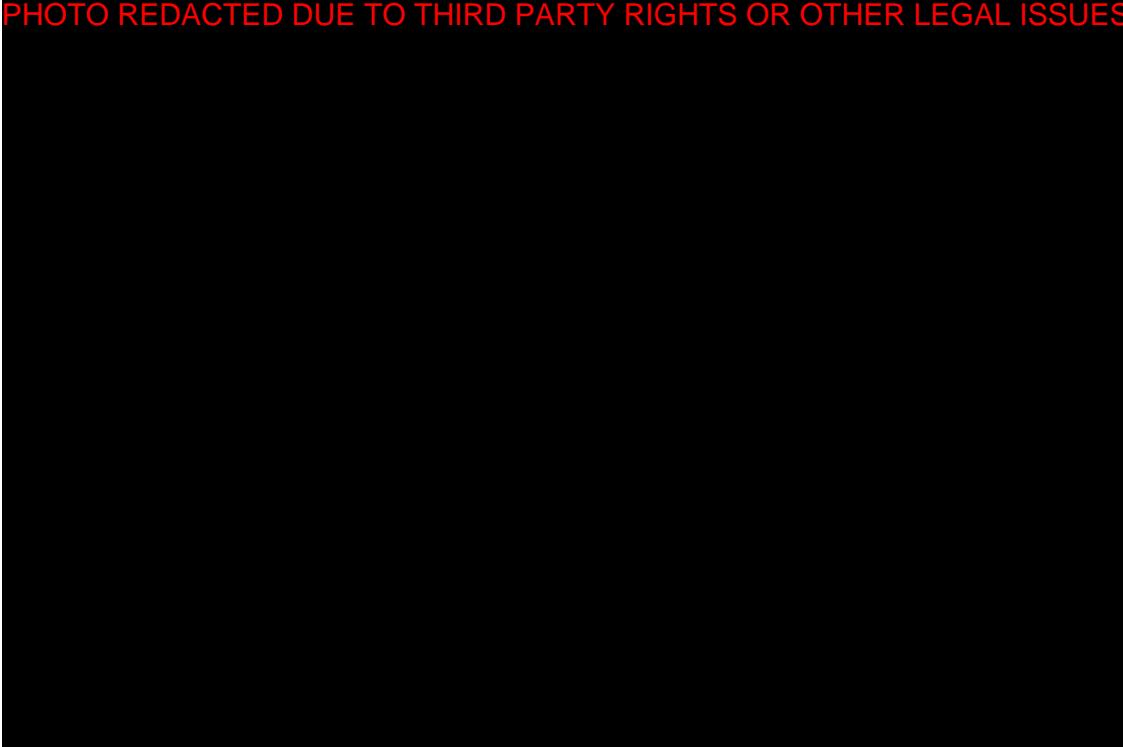
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Action	Delivery Approach	Delivery Partners	Indicative Timescale	Estimated Costs
<b>7. Qualifications</b>				
Take account of national and international research to consider the structure, volume and type of assessment at Key Stage 4 and post 16 and initiate a review of CCEA qualifications.	The Department will commission international research, engage with key stakeholders and carry out a public consultation to develop a revised policy framework for qualifications in Northern Ireland.  The consultation will consider the structure of CCEA qualifications (linear or modular), the volume of assessment (number of examinations) and the type of assessment included within qualifications (controlled assessment, coursework etc.) at Key Stage 4 and post 16. The consultation will also take account of the findings of the Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.	DE, CCEA Regulation, CCEA Awarding Organisation.	Consultation on the policy framework for qualifications in Northern Ireland will commence in autumn 2025, an assessment of the sustainability of low entry CCEA specifications will be completed in autumn 2025, with review and revision of CCEA specifications to commence in early 2026.	£10 million across three years.
Initiate a review of all qualifications approved for teaching in Northern Ireland schools and review the process for qualifications approval.	The revised policy framework for qualifications in Northern Ireland will establish the parameters for the review and revision of CCEA's suite of qualifications to ensure all CCEA qualifications are up to date, high quality, meet the needs of all learners and retain portability. CCEA will complete an assessment of the sustainability of low entry subjects in autumn 2025. The review and revision of specifications will commence in early 2026.		International comparative research on the assessment of literacy and	
Conduct a managed exploration of assessment innovation particularly regarding digital assessment.	Through engagement with key stakeholders, including employers and sectoral bodies, and in the context of any changes to the curriculum or Entitlement Framework, the Department will also develop a framework to review the full			

Action	Delivery Approach	Delivery Partners	Indicative Timescale	Estimated Costs
Initiate a wide-ranging civic conversation on more fundamental reform of qualifications to include consideration of the purpose, design and relevance of qualifications in a modern economy.	<p>range of qualifications approved for teaching in schools in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>In the context of ongoing reviews, including the curriculum review, and legislation relating to young people remaining in education until 18, the Department will develop a research and stakeholder informed policy on longer-term qualifications reform in Northern Ireland.</p>		numeracy in Key Stage 4 will be completed by autumn 2025.	

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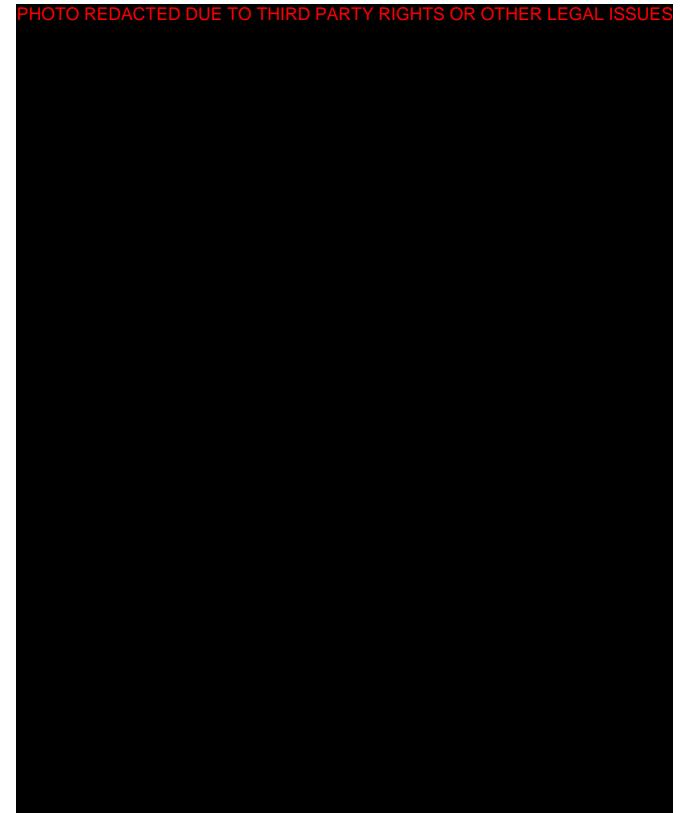



Action	Delivery Approach	Delivery Partners	Indicative Timescale	Estimated Costs
<b>8. Support and Accountability</b>				
Commission an independent review of accountability arrangements in Northern Ireland.	<p>An independent review of accountability will be commissioned after the reviews of assessment, funding targeted at disadvantage and the independent review of workload. This will ensure it reflects the latest position in these areas and takes account of the findings of these key reviews.</p> <p>Terms of Reference and appointments to the panel will be finalised by summer 2026.</p>	DE, Independent review panel selected by the Minister to be appointed.	<p>Independent Review panel to be established by summer 2026.</p> <p>Review to be completed by January 2027.</p>	Approximately £100,000 including review panel and resource for a supporting secretariat.
Develop a coherent accountability framework to demonstrate value to government, taxpayers and parents and drive improvement through responsibility and answerability.	The framework will be a key deliverable of the independent review of accountability.	DE, EA, ETI, all education ALBs, Trade Unions, Boards of Governors and school leaders.	Framework published by March 2027.	Approximately £100,000 including review panel and resource for a supporting secretariat.

Action	Delivery Approach	Delivery Partners	Indicative Timescale	Estimated Costs
Bring forward legislation to ensure that the statutory arrangements for inspection are robust and operate effectively in all circumstances.	<p>The Department of Education, with Executive agreement, will develop a standalone bill to safeguard the inspection process by making it an offence to obstruct inspection. This would align the legislative provisions for inspection in Northern Ireland with the education inspection frameworks in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland.</p> <p>A public consultation on the proposals will be launched during summer term 2025.</p>	DE, ETI, NI Executive.	<p>Consultation to be completed by summer 2025, with bill introduced autumn 2025.</p> <p>New legislation to be enacted during the current Assembly mandate.</p>	No significant costs associated with development of legislation.
Develop a new school improvement policy to provide a framework to support schools in driving excellence and an improved model of external support when needed.	<p>The Department, working collaboratively with EA as the key delivery agent of school improvement, will develop a new school improvement policy, alongside a delivery plan which will include a detailed and inclusive operational support model for schools. This will draw on existing services already provided in the EA.</p> <p>ETI will deliver an Empowering Improvement Programme (III) to support senior leaders in robust whole school self-evaluation including sessions on the inspection framework, gathering evidence, classroom observation and pupil participation. The programme will also disseminate evidence and insights into best practices to drive school improvement.</p>	DE, EA, CCMS, Controlled Schools Support Council, ETI.	<p>Consultation on draft policy to be completed by autumn 2025 with the new policy, processes and operational model effective from September 2026.</p> <p>Commencing in 2025-26 academic year.</p>	<p>No significant costs associated with policy development. The operational support model to be costed once developed.</p> <p>Approximately £100,000 per annum.</p>

Action	Delivery Approach	Delivery Partners	Indicative Timescale	Estimated Costs
Strengthen the provision of school-to-school support through a Northern Ireland Leaders of Education Programme.	The Department in collaboration with EA will develop a Northern Ireland Leaders of Education Programme. The programme will recruit experienced, strongly performing school leaders to provide targeted school improvement support to schools identified as requiring external support. They will provide coaching, mentoring and strategic guidance to raise standards and promote improvement.	DE, EA, CCMS, ETI.	Programme to commence from September 2026.	Programme costs to be scoped.

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Action	Delivery Approach	Delivery Partners	Indicative Timescale	Estimated Costs
<b>9. Tackling Disadvantage</b>				
Introduce legislation to provide for all learners to participate in education, apprenticeship or training until age 18.	<p>The Department of Education, with Executive agreement, will develop a standalone bill which provides for all learners to participate in education or training until they are aged 18.</p> <p>A public consultation on the proposals (<a href="#">16-18 Legislation   Department of Education</a>) was launched on 14 April 2025.</p>	DE, DfE, other Executive Departments, EA, CCMS, CCEA, schools, FE Colleges, employers, training providers, voluntary and community sector.	<p>Consultation response by autumn 2025.</p> <p>New legislation to be enacted during the current Assembly mandate.</p>	<p>No significant costs associated with development of legislation.</p> <p>Implementation costs to be considered as legislation is developed.</p>
Carry out a comprehensive review of all funding targeted at tackling educational disadvantage to ensure it is evidence-informed and well targeted.	<p>The Department will commission an independent review of funding targeted at tackling educational disadvantage, including examining international best practice in this area.</p> <p>The review will include all tackling disadvantage funding streams across all stages (Targeting Social Need funding within the Common Funding Formula, Extended Schools, Sure Start and locality-based programmes).</p> <p>The focus will be on the effectiveness and impact of spend and how best funding could be targeted going forward.</p>	Independent Review Panel selected by the Minister to be established.	Review Panel to be established by September 2025.	Approximately £100,000 including Review Panel and resource for a supporting secretariat.

Action	Delivery Approach	Delivery Partners	Indicative Timescale	Estimated Costs
Roll out the RAISE Programme in localities across Northern Ireland to invest in, monitor and evaluate whole community and place-based approaches to raise achievement and reduce educational disadvantage.	<p>The RAISE Programme has been established and will be delivered in 15 localities (18 areas) across Northern Ireland. It will target over 50,000 pupils within the identified areas.</p> <p>Using a whole community, place-based approach to tackle educational disadvantage and with children and young people at its core, the Programme will help to support families and carers to become more involved in children's learning, working with schools, education settings and the wider community to improve educational outcomes for children and young people.</p> <p>There will be two key delivery elements – locality Strategic Area Plans, with supporting projects and strategic Cross-Cutting Initiatives.</p> <p>A Locality Reference Group will be established in each RAISE locality and will be key in informing, shaping and developing the Strategic Area Plan for submission to the Department. The Strategic Area Plans will identify the context in each area, what is needed to support delivery against the strategic objectives of the programme and propose actions based on research and evidence of what works. They will be informed through consultation with stakeholders in each locality. The plans must have clear alignment with the RAISE Programme Strategic Objectives of Raising Aspirations and Raising Achievement.</p> <p>The second element of the Programme, Cross-Cutting Initiatives, provides an opportunity to pilot innovative proposals, support research methodologies and build evidence for change. These will be centrally managed projects that</p>	All education partners in 15 localities across Northern Ireland.	Funding secured for 2025-26 and 2026-27 with possible 2-year extension.	Funding of £20 million secured via Shared Island Initiative across the next two financial years.

Action	Delivery Approach	Delivery Partners	Indicative Timescale	Estimated Costs
	<p>complement locality led projects and provide additional opportunities for localities to tackle key common issues. The Minister will announce Strategic Cross-Cutting Initiatives during summer term 2025 and delivery will commence during the 2025-26 academic year.</p> <p>An independent evaluation will be undertaken during the lifetime of the Programme to assess its impact and to identify learning to help inform future activities and policy development.</p> <p>The Department working collaboratively with the Department of Education, Ireland, will also take forward delivery of the Creative Connections and North-South Shared Island Teachers' Research Exchange (T-Rex) Platform projects.</p> <p>The Creative Connections programme gives children and young people the unique opportunity to work with professional artists, bringing creativity and the arts directly into their learning.</p> <p>The programme will be delivered in schools in the 2025-26 academic year. 20 schools from Northern Ireland and 20 schools from the Republic of Ireland have been selected for the programme following a competitive application process. They will work in clusters of four, with two schools from each jurisdiction collaborating on bespoke creative learning projects. Each school will be paired with a professional artist, involving 40 artists in total. The programme will provide professional learning for teachers and artists, in-school residencies and grants for participating schools.</p>			

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	<p>T-REX (<a href="http://www.t-rex.ie">www.t-rex.ie</a>) is an online collaborative platform enabling effective evidence-based practice to be shared between educational professionals. This is a successful programme in the Republic of Ireland, the primary objective of which is to increase the impact of educational research within the classroom by facilitating an evidence-informed approach to teaching and learning.</p> <p>Through the Shared Island Fund, the programme is being extended to Northern Ireland with a view to supporting improved outcomes for children impacted by social disadvantage across both jurisdictions.</p> <p>Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, in collaboration with Stranmillis University College, will deliver the programme.</p> <p>The Northern Ireland pilot is expected to launch in September 2025 and will run until June 2026, with the potential for an extension.</p>			