
GBA News – Friday 27th September



NI Draft Programme for Government

On 5th September 2024 the Northern Ireland Executive agreed a draft programme for government, 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most', outlining immediate priorities to be worked through this year and throughout the duration of the current Mandate (2022-27).

In the "Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy" chapter, the programme raises a *thriving Further and Higher Education sector* and a commitment to *build on, and support, our established Higher Education campuses at QUB, UU Belfast and UU Coleraine* (p.19).

Another key area is the delivery of more affordable childcare, including the development of the Early Learning and Childcare Strategy, with an investment of up to £25million this year

(p.20).

Better support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) is highlighted as an immediate priority (p.34), stating that *over the last decade, the number of children identified with SEN has risen steadily to almost one in five pupils alongside an increasing level of expenditure on SEN provision, not always matched by a demonstrable improvement to the outcomes for children and young people with SEN and disabilities.*

A link to the full document is included below.

Views on the draft document are currently being sought via an **online survey** (see link below) and a number of upcoming **in-person and online consultation events** - dates for the events and registration form are available [here](#).



Draft Programme for Government

Doing What Matters Most



Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy



Provide More Social, Affordable and Sustainable Housing



Safer Communities



Deliver More Affordable Childcare



Ending Violence Against Women and Girls



Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment



Cut Health Waiting Times



Better Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs



Reform and Transformation of Public Services

[Draft Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most' Public Consultation | Northern Ireland Executive](#) - Closing date: **Monday 4th November 2024.**

The GBA is currently developing a separate response to the draft programme for government and will share this with you in due course. If

you wish to forward any feedback to help inform the response, please [contact us](#).

GBA Political Engagement Update - VAT on School Fees Legislation

The GBA has raised significant concerns in relation to the UK Government's intention to introduce 20% VAT on education and boarding services from the 1st January 2025.

To date we have engaged with the NI Secretary of State, Chair of the Education Committee, NI Members of Parliament and BBC News to highlight the potential impact of the legislation on voluntary grammar schools in NI.

Speaking to [BBC news](#), Stephen Moore, Principal of Friends' School Lisburn said:

"It's legislation that's not really intended to capture schools like prep schools in Northern Ireland which do receive funding from government and which are very much departments of local grammar schools.

It also could have an impact on the sustainability of prep schools here and that could also have a knock-on effect on the grammar schools of which they're an integral part."

The Education Minister, Paul Givan MLA told BBC News NI that schools in Northern Ireland could not be directly compared with many private schools in England, and the new UK-wide approach did not reflect how the Northern Ireland education system is funded.

Speaking at the Assembly last week, the Minister said:

"I am making representations to the Labour Government on the issue. I

am very concerned about the direction of travel. To date, our representations have not been received effectively by London, so I encourage all Members, where they can raise these issues, to join me in making the case for the schools that will be negatively affected by the change."

The GBA continues to engage on the matter and will keep you updated.

GBA Responds to School Uniform Consultation

As you will be aware the Department of Education is currently consulting on school uniform policy - the consultation closes today at 5pm.

The GBA has submitted a [response](#) to DE based on key guiding principles and raising other important considerations.

If you would like to provide any further feedback on the matter, please [contact us](#).

Proposed Changes to Qualifications Performance Measures

The Department of Education is seeking the views of post-primary schools and special schools with post-primary age pupils on proposed changes to how qualifications are counted for system level performance measures.

The proposals are in relation to the following:

1. Level 2 qualifications graded as Pass or Fail.
2. Size equivalency of qualifications.
3. Capping of how qualifications are counted.

Further details on the proposals and the consultation survey are available [here](#). The survey closes on **Friday 25th October 2024**.

Education Committee Inquiry into Relationship and Sexuality Education in Schools

The Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Education is carrying out a Mini-Inquiry into Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) in schools, and would like to hear your informed views and experience on the matter.

The Committee's terms of reference are to:

Compare the approaches to and outcomes of RSE in these islands and of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) internationally; to assess provision in Northern Ireland; and to reach conclusions on the need for reform and make recommendations accordingly.

Comments can be submitted via email

to: committee.education@niassembly.gov.uk

There is also a survey tailored for parents and teachers available [here](#).

A questionnaire seeking the views of young people, prepared in co-operation with the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly, will be available soon.

If you have any queries, please

contact committee.education@niassembly.gov.uk

Chairperson Sought for the Board of EA

Chairperson for the Board of the Education Authority

Public appointments Competition



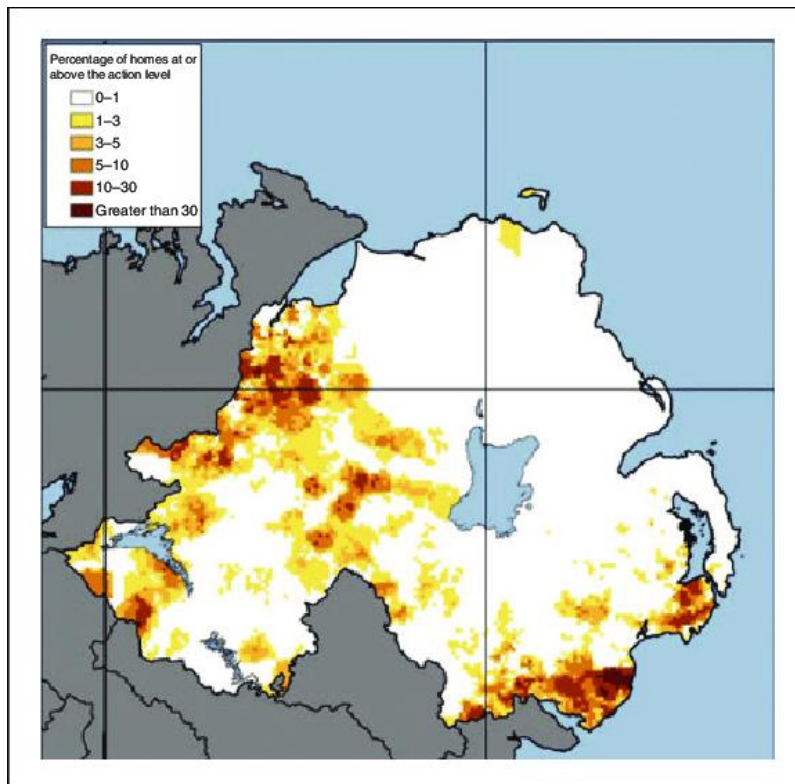
For further information please click on the graphic above.

The closing date for receipt of applications is **4pm on Thursday 3rd October 2024.**

Radon Levels and Employer Responsibilities

The GBA recently met with Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) to discuss the implications of radon levels in schools, employer responsibilities, and support for schools.

Many parts of Northern Ireland have high radon levels - the map below indicates where levels are likely to be higher. The darker the colour on the radon map below the greater the probability of a high radon level in a building.



Under the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978, employers must, so far as reasonably practicable, ensure the health and safety of employees and others who have access to their work environment.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work (NI) Regulations 2000 require assessment of health and safety risks including radon. This can be achieved through interrogating the map by inputting your postcode at this link: <https://www.ukradon.org/information/ukmaps> - Radon gas measurements are required to complete the risk assessment for all properties within radon affected areas.

Further information on the legal requirements for workplaces, testing for radon, and practical control of radon levels is available [here](#).

GBA will continue to engage with HSENI on health and safety issues and will update member schools.

St Mary's University College Seeking Board Members

The Department for the Economy is seeking to appoint four new members to the governing body of St Mary's University College.

An information pack, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and application forms are available [here](#).

Area Planning Updates

The pressure for places for pupils with SEN continues and this is expected to increase over the coming years.

The GBA will be participating in Area Planning workshops early next month focusing on Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools and highlighting particular areas of pressure for future places.

If you would like to express an interest or have any queries regarding specialist classes in a mainstream setting, please [contact us](#). Additional information is also available [here](#).

Northern Ireland Assembly Updates

Education Committee

Over the past few weeks, Education Committee MLAs have received briefings from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, Department of Education, Education and Training Inspectorate, EA, and CCEA in relation to their mini-inquiry into Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) (see article above for more details on the inquiry).

At this week's Committee meeting, the Chairperson raised school governance and complaints procedures and the committee's intention to invite the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman to an evidence session.

Next week the Committee will meet with the Children's Commissioner in relation to the RSE inquiry. Members are also scheduled to meet with DE to discuss the end-to-end review of SEN transformation and the EA to discuss the [Landscape Review](#).

Co-opted MLAs following UK General Election

- Colin Crawford MLA for North Antrim, Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), replacing Robin Swann MP.
- Michelle Guy MLA for Lagan Valley, Alliance, replacing Sorcha Eastwood MP.
- Timothy Gaston MLA for North Antrim, Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV), replacing Jim Allister MP.
- Peter Martin MLA for North Down, Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), replacing Alex Easton MP.

If you would like to receive our weekly political updates, please [contact us](#).

Shared Education News

Outdoor Learning Opportunity for Shared Education Partnerships

An Creagán have long been involved in education with biodiversity programs going back many years and involving local schools at both primary and secondary level. Peatland forms much of the local landscape and education programs have evolved to engage participants on the biodiversity, archaeology, ecosystem, and climate services of peatland, all

while providing a healthy mindful, activity-based visit to An Creagán Bog Nature Reserve.

An Creagán offer educational programs tailored to meet the needs of the Northern Ireland Curriculum from KS1 to KS5, focusing on 'The World Around Us' and 'STEM' education.

An educational visit may also form part of a Shared Education Programme. This would enable pupils, from your partnership, to explore learning in a new environment. The visit would compliment Shared Education activity and allow pupils to build their knowledge and understanding of specific themes or topics.

To find out more & book a visit for your Shared Education Partnership follow the link below.

[Environmental Education - An Creagán \(ancreagan.com\)](http://ancreagan.com)

Advertising of Teaching and Support roles on the GBA Website

The GBA provides a free advertising service for our member schools. Job vacancies are posted on our website and Twitter page. The Education Authority website also links to the GBA jobs section.

****PLEASE NOTE THAT OUR JOB TEMPLATE HAS BEEN UPDATED FOR THE 2024/25 ACADEMIC YEAR AND IS AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD [HERE](#)****

If you would like us to host a vacancy for your school, **please contact us, with the completed job template for each post, and allow at least TWO WORKING DAYS for posts to be uploaded.**



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