

Educational Underachievement - Give us your views

Overview

On 28 July 2020, Education Minister, Peter Weir, MLA, announced the appointment of an Expert Panel to examine the links between educational underachievement and social disadvantage.

The panel has been established under the 'New Decade, New Approach' agreement which set out the requirement for an expert group *"to examine and address links between persistent educational underachievement and socio-economic background..."*

The chair and five panel members are: Dr Noel Purdy, Director of Research and Scholarship, Stranmillis University College; Mary Montgomery, Principal, Belfast Boys' Model School; Kathleen O'Hare, retired Principal, Hazelwood Integrated College and former Principal of St Cecilia's College; Joyce Logue, Principal of Longtower Primary in Derry/Londonderry; Jackie Redpath, Chief Executive, Greater Shankill Partnership and Professor Feyisa Demie, Honorary Professor, Durham University.

The key objectives of the review include the requirement to examine the links between persistent educational underachievement and socio-economic background and produce specific actions to address this particular gap.

How to respond

The Expert Panel is inviting written submissions from all interested parties who have experience of the issues associated with educational underachievement linked to socio-economic disadvantage through the supporting secretariat.

You are strongly encouraged to submit your views using this online survey.

If, for any reason, you are unable to access the survey, responses can be posted or emailed as below:

Department of Education - Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team

Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
Bangor
BT19 7PR

expertpanel@education-ni.gov.uk

Any queries about the survey, or requests for alternative formats, should be directed to the postal address or email address above.

The survey will run from Monday 14 September 2020 until midnight on Friday 16 October 2020 inclusive. Please note that responses received after the deadline may not be considered.

Freedom of Information, data protection and confidentiality

All responses to this survey from organisations and individuals responding in a professional capacity may be published. We will remove email addresses and telephone numbers from these responses; but apart from this, we may publish them in full. Your response, and all other responses to this survey, may also be disclosed on request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). However, any disclosures will be in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679.

If you want the information you provide to be treated as confidential, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard it as confidential so that this may be considered should the Department receive a request for the information under the FOIA or EIR.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, in this case the Department of Education. This includes access to information provided in response to a call for evidence. The Department cannot automatically consider information supplied to it during a call for evidence as confidential if that information is subsequently requested under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. However, if there is a Freedom of Information request for information submitted during this survey period, the Department will consider carefully whether it should be made public, or treated confidentially. If we are asked to disclose responses under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, we will take any requests for confidentiality into account. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

We will handle any personal data provided in accordance with current data protection legislation. For further information about confidentiality of responses, please contact the Information Commissioner's Office or visit their website at: http://ico.org.uk/about_us/our_organisation/northern_ireland

Educational Underachievement - Give us your views

1 What is your name?

Probation Board for Northern Ireland

2 Please provide an email address

Gail.McGreevy@probation-ni.gov.uk

3 Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

(Required)

An organisation

Please select only one item

- Organisation - Go to question 4
- Individual - Go to question 5

4 Please provide the name of your organisation and outline briefly its context/ aims and scope?

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland is a non-departmental body and its sponsor branch is the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland. Its aim is 'changing lives for safer communities' and it leads in the reduction of reoffending by tackling the root causes of reoffending behaviour and rehabilitating people. Probation works at every stage of the justice system – in communities, in custody, in courts and with victims of crime. Probation supervised over 4000 court orders and licences and prepares reports for Judges to assist in sentencing decisions. All probation officers are social work qualified and trained in assessing and managing risk. Many of the people under probation supervision have significant mental health and addiction problems. Many present with low levels of educational achievement and poor cognitive functioning. Many have been excluded from school for a range of reasons and this group of young people often who find themselves within the Criminal Justice System having committed offences. They experience very limited educational, training or vocational opportunities and we know from the research that young people who are excluded from school particularly at very crucial developmental stages in their lives, go on to make poor decisions and choices which include antisocial behaviour. PBNI deal with many individuals who have experienced significant trauma and Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE). Many of these traumas begin in early childhood and go either unrecognised or untreated. Therefore many of the people probation work with have significant vulnerabilities which require early intervention to prevent further reoffending.

5 Are you responding as? Please choose from the options below:

Please select only one item

- Child/ Young Person
- Parent/ Carer/ Family member
- Education Professional
- Member of general public
- Other (please provide details below)

6 What would you say are the main causes of educational underachievement?

(Required)

- Poverty and deprivation
- Poor parental support
- Parental imprisonment
- Low self-worth and self-belief
- Mental health problems/parental mental health/addiction problems

7 In your view, what is the main impact of educational underachievement?

We know from research that there are strong links between educational underachievement and related issues such as poor literacy and numeracy skills, marginalisation, lack of positive peer influence and crime and offending.

For example we know that more than half the number of people entering prison have the literacy skills of an 11-year-old. We also know that many of those who offend have a history of being permanently excluded from school and a sizeable proportion of young people in custody have learning difficulties. This highlights the importance of education when it comes tackling the causes of offending.

We believe that it is extremely important to look in particular at the reasons why children and young people are excluded from school, to consider if it is possible to identify issues that could put them at greater risk of following a criminal or offending pathway in the future. This could be an exclusion resulting from a violent incident or a theft, for example, both patterns of behaviour that can potentially lead to a criminal conviction.

1

2

3

4

5

Greater focus on early
years development
including language
development

3.

*Please select only one
item*

Improving local
employment
opportunities

5

*Please select only one
item*

Stronger links between
school and community

*Please select only one
item*

Greater investment in
schools - capital/
buildings

*Please select only one
item*

Effective intervention for
Special Educational
Needs

*Please select only one
item*

A relevant and engaging
curriculum

1 2 3 4 5

*Please select only one
item*

Provision of educational
opportunities or life long
learning skills for parents

4

*Please select only one
item*

Other

9In your experience what has worked to address educational underachievement?

Any links to supporting evidence will not work through Citizen Space so links/ copies of external documents should be emailed to expertpanel@education-ni.gov.uk

(Required)

10 How has the Covid-19 lockdown impacted on educational underachievement?

Covid has had a significant impact on educational underachievement:

- Absence from school and the learning environment
- Separation from friends and the critical support education provides
- Poverty and disadvantaged family circumstances
- Stress on parents to provide home teaching
- Lack of resources for children to learn
- Anxiety and mental health of children

11 Please add any other comments that you would like the panel to consider.

The need to focus on early years interventions and to understand the link between educational underachievement and offending behaviour and impact on the individual, families and communities.

The need for Education to collaborate more with Justice so that each can learn from each other on the effects and impact of underachievement to develop early years strategies and early interventions to protect our young people and maximise their opportunities to learn and achieve their goals in life.