Baseline Report: Connected Learning@Youth Work

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1.0 Youth Work in Northern Ireland

Youth work in Northern Ireland (NI) helps young people to identify their social and development needs and involves them in shaping the services designed to meet those needs to impact both their own skills and life chances in order to create a better future for themselves and their communities. Unlike school, participation in youth activities is voluntary. The Department of Education (DoE) invests in youth work to support and encourage children and young people as they mature and reach their potential as valued individuals and responsible citizens. The Department has overall responsibility for the Youth Service. Specific duties include:

- policy development for the Youth Service
- governance and accountability of the Education Authority Youth Service
- governance and accountability of the Youth Council of NI

The Youth Council of NI (YCNI) operates as an arms-length body from the DoE, and its remit is to:

- advise the Department of Education, the Education Authority and other bodies on the development of the Youth Service.
- encourage the provision of facilities for the Youth Service and facilities which are especially beneficial to young persons.
- encourage cross-community activity by the Youth Service.
- encourage and assist the co-ordination and efficient use of the resources of the Youth Service.

The Shared Education Act (NI) 2016 also instructs YCNI to:

- encourage and facilitate shared education and to consider shared education when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans; and designing and delivering public services.

The Youth Service in NI is composed of both the voluntary sector and the statutory sector. The statutory sector is under the control of the Education Authority and consists of a number of youth clubs and outdoor education centres, the voluntary sector is by far the larger sector and is composed of many different organisations. Notwithstanding, consensus does exist in that youth work is regarded as being almost exclusively centred on non formal education and development of young people.

The statutory provision for the Youth Service is contained in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which sets out the requirements in regard to providing youth services, and the Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 which established the Youth Council.

During 2013-14[1] the Department allocated approximately £33million resource and £5million capital into youth services, which it must ensure is used efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of young people. On an annual basis, this funding is distributed via six different funding schemes, one in each Education and Library Board (ELB) and one in the Youth Council, each operating independently of one another. Each of the five ELBs and the Youth Council receive revenue budgets of approximately £5m to £6m. Funding is currently allocated to ELBs to support local delivery, maintain statutory units or programmes and to provide funding to local voluntary youth units who satisfy registration criteria and are eligible for funding. Most organisations funded by the Youth Council use the grant to support the day-to-day running of their regional office, salaries and/or the delivery of regional programmes. There are 108 statutory youth facilities and 11 Outdoor Education Centres controlled and managed by ELBs, with over 1,700 voluntary groups supported either by the ELBs or the Youth Council (uniformed/non-uniformed units; church related and secular units; headquarter and umbrella bodies; residential centres).

In many ways NI is unique given it's troubled past, and this impacts on all service provision including youth work. Youth work has been going on all through 'the troubles.' Indeed, there are many excellent examples of youth work going on behind the scenes and picking up the pieces of young people's lives and supporting them to understand issues that no one talks about. Alongside typical youth work, in NI much has focused on young unemployed, young homeless, ethnic minorities, young people underachieving at school, young people involved in crime, joy/death riders, teenage mothers and young fathers, young people abusing drugs and alcohol, young people with behavioural problems, young people with mental and sexual health problems, young people identified as marginalised within communities characterised by paramilitary influence, sectarianism, violence and marital breakdown. Typically, this work took place in contested spaces such as interface areas, city centres, on the streets, schools, parks and in communities with little or no youth provision. This focus on social exclusion has been determined by the changing social and political context in Northern Ireland over our thirty-five years of sectarian violence and political unrest. general consensus however that the nature of funding sources and funding requirements have played a key role in the direction that youth work has taken over the past decade. Often in order to get funding now you have to demonstrate ways in which you are working with 'disadvantaged young people'. This has meant that the focus of youth work has switched from a focus on all young people to a focus on disadvantaged young people. The danger therefore is that youth work becomes issue focused rather than young person focused.

1.1 Structure of Youth Work in Northern Ireland

There are approximately 140,000 young people who are registered participants in the Youth Service. There are almost 1,600 registered youth service providers, the regular running of which is reliant on a workforce of 20,881, of whom over 90% are volunteers.

Uniformed organisations make up 57% of the total number of youth units and account for 37% of the young people who participate in youth service activities on a regular basis. (Source: A Statistical and Geographic Report of the EA Registered Youth Service in Northern Ireland 2017 Data Cycle). To date in NI, no single definition of youth work exists, however, classifications as shown below in Table 1 are commonly used.

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[1] Latest figures etc as the devolved Assembly has been in recess for a number of years, and later details unavailable.

Table 1: Youth Work Classifications in NI

Classification	Provider
Controlled	Statutory provision
Church based	
Community	Voluntary provision
Other	
Uniformed	Uniformed

As may be seen from Table 2 below, the most commonly occurring type of youth provision in 2017, as in previous years, is Uniformed, accounting for 37% of the total membership and 57% of the total number of units. This is followed by Community-based voluntary provision.

Table 2: Counts of youth facilities (type of provision) 2017

	Count of units	Percent of Count	Membership totals	Percent of Membership
Controlled (Statutory)	84	5.1%	13,687	9.8%
Church (faith) Based	276	16.9%	27,119	19.5%
Community	322	19.7%	45,200	32.4%
Uniformed	922	56.5%	51,836	37.2%
Other	28	1.7%	1,547	1.1%
Total	**1,632**	**100%**	**139,389**	**100%**

Table 3 overleaf shows the age distribution of Youth Service membership throughout NI using the age categories prescribed in the *Priorities for Youth* policy document. From this information the most commonly occurring age band for membership is 9-13 which accounts for approx. 37% of the overall membership (Band membership is generally associated with the Protestant denomination). In contrast, age group 22-25 accounts for less than 2% of the total membership. Please note, the figures for the 19- 25 age ranges

analysed in this section collates the membership age 19-21 and 22-25 only and not the young leaders age 18-25.

Table 3: Age distribution of Youth Service membership throughout NI

Age (Band)	Count of units n	Percent of Count %
4-8	41,948	30.1%
9-13	54,460	39.0%
14-18	36,351	30.6%
19-21	**4,269**	**3.0%**
22-25	**2,361**	**1.7%**
	139,389	100%

The extent of youth work in the regions naturally follows the population trends, as maybe seen from Table 4 below[2]. Table 4 shows population statistics and rates of Youth Service participation at age 4-25 and age 4-18 for each legacy LGD area. From this information, there is considerable geographic variation in participation at age 4-18, from 23.5% in Strabane to 57% in Craigavon. What is notable is that in all LGD areas there is a drop off in participation rates for young people aged 19-25, which is consistent between both urban and rural locations.

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[2] Note these are the latest available figures – 2016, and Local Government Districts have since rationalised to

Table 4: Youth Service participation age 4-18 and 4-25 (2016 Population Estimates)

LGD	Population age 4-18	Population age 4-25	Youth provision age 4-18	Youth provision age 4-25	Participation rate age 4-18 (%)	Participation rate age 4-25 (%)
ANTRIM	11330	15885	3629	3658	32.0%	23.0%
ARDS	14356	20229	4755	5014	33.1%	24.8%
ARMAGH	12780	17918	4760	5101	37.2%	28.5%
BALLYMENA	12304	17734	5196	5461	42.2%	30.8%
BALLYMONEY	6263	8769	2015	2140	32.2%	24.4%
BANBRIDGE	10195	13864	4754	4871	46.6%	35.1%
BELFAST	49826	85788	21986	23406	44.1%	27.3%
CARRICKFERGUS	7017	10228	2885	3063	41.1%	29.9%
CASTLEREAGH	12237	17700	4237	4377	34.6%	24.7%
COLERAINE	10850	16827	3215	3392	29.6%	20.2%
COOKSTOWN	7825	11218	1732	1799	22.1%	16.0%
CRAIGAVON	20085	28760	11424	11954	56.9%	41.6%
DERRY	22745	33019	7797	9238	34.3%	28.0%
DOWN	14085	19877	4853	5088	34.5%	25.6%
DUNGANNON	13096	18429	5413	5555	41.3%	30.1%
FERMANAGH	12667	17366	3292	3362	26.0%	19.4%
LARNE	5750	8303	1685	1732	29.3%	20.9%
LIMAVADY	6865	9760	2694	2789	39.2%	28.6%
LISBURN	25249	35917	8187	8444	32.4%	23.5%
MAGHERAFELT	10096	14234	2768	2840	27.4%	20.0%
MOYLE	3284	4592	1054	1066	32.1%	23.2%
NEWRY AND MOURNE	22670	31568	6142	6734	27.1%	21.3%
NEWTOWNABBEY	16344	24071	6714	6822	41.1%	28.3%
NORTH DOWN	14169	19728	5296	5475	37.4%	27.8%
OMAGH	10990	15267	3664	3867	33.3%	25.3%
STRABANE	8220	11590	1930	2141	23.5%	18.5%
Total	361298	528641	132114	139389	36.7%	26.4%

Table 4 shows population statistics and rates of Youth Service participation at age 4-25 and age 4-18 for each legacy LGD area. From this information, there is considerable geographic variation in participation at age 4-18, from 23.5% in Strabane to 57% in Craigavon. **What is notable is that in all LGD areas there is a drop off in participation rates for young people aged 19-25, which is consistent between both urban and rural locations**.

Table 5 shows the proportions of the total Youth Service membership within each former LGD area in terms of the total membership within each area attributed to each of the four main types of provision. Clear regional differences emerge. The highest proportion of membership in any one former LGD area is for Uniformed provision in Larne (69%) which compares to the overall regional average of 37%. In contrast, only 14% of all Youth Service participants in Newry & Mourne and also in Derry are in Uniformed provision. Notably, only 2-4% of all membership is attributed to Church based provision in Limavady and Derry, compared to the regional average for this type of provision of 19%. In areas where the percentage of Uniformed provision accounts for the smallest proportion of the total, there is a correspondingly high proportion of participation in Community (voluntary) provision, as illustrated in Omagh and Derry where at least 55-65% of Youth Service

membership is attributable to this type of provision (the average is 32% for all NI). Antrim (30%), Carrickfergus and Strabane (22-24%) are the areas where the highest proportion of Youth Service membership participating in Controlled provision are to be found, followed by Limavady (20%). Nevertheless, in Ballymoney, Cookstown, Newry & Mourne, Larne and North Down there is no currently registered Controlled (statutory)provision.

Table 5: Youth Service membership within each former LGD area in terms of the total membership

LGD	Controlled	Church Based	Community Based	Uniformed
ANTRIM	30%	14%	9%	46%
ARDS	1%	22%	18%	60%
ARMAGH	7%	28%	15%	47%
BALLYMENA	8%	19%	9%	63%
BALLYMONEY	0%	25%	27%	46%
BANBRIDGE	9%	24%	27%	40%
BELFAST	15%	23%	39%	21%
CARRICKFERGUS	22%	10%	14%	49%
CASTLEREAGH	13%	21%	12%	54%
COLERAINE	12%	18%	9%	59%
COOKSTOWN	0%	17%	33%	47%
CRAIGAVON	7%	23%	46%	24%
DERRY	16%	4%	65%	14%
DOWN	4%	14%	46%	35%
DUNGANNON	11%	35%	28%	26%
FERMANAGH	4%	7%	32%	57%
LARNE	0%	8%	23%	69%
LIMAVADY	20%	2%	42%	36%
LISBURN	3%	31%	23%	43%
MAGHERAFELT	10%	5%	39%	43%
MOYLE	12%	11%	27%	50%
NEWRY and MOURNE	0%	25%	61%	14%
NEWTOWNABBEY	12%	16%	11%	59%
NORTH DOWN	0%	26%	13%	60%
OMAGH	12%	8%	55%	19%
STRABANE	22%	5%	32%	41%
Grand Total	**10%**	**19%**	**32%**	**37%**

2.0 Education in NI

The Northern Ireland Curriculum was introduced in 2007 and covers all 12 years of compulsory education. Some of its key features include the following:

- It focuses on the learning process as well as the outcomes of education.
- Schools and teachers have more flexibility to decide the topics and approaches that best suit their pupils; 'the curriculum' no longer implies a mandatory list of subject content that everyone must cover.
- It gives equal emphasis to knowledge, understanding and skills – so while pupils are acquiring knowledge and skills, they also have opportunities to apply their learning practically.

The education system in Northern Ireland begins statutory education when a child is aged 4. All children must begin school in the September following their 4th birthday, and has five compulsory stages, see Table x overleaf.

Third level education is broken into two streams – Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE). FE in the United Kingdom, including NI and Ireland is education in addition to that received at secondary school, that is distinct from the higher education (HE) offered in universities and other academic institutions. It may be at any level in compulsory secondary education, from entry to higher level qualifications such as awards, certificates, diplomas and other vocational, competency-based qualifications (including those previously known as NVQ/SVQs) through awarding organisations including City and Guilds, Edexcel (BTEC) and OCR. FE colleges may also offer HE qualifications such as HNC, HND, Foundation Degree or PGCE. The colleges are also a large provider of apprenticeships, where most of the training takes place in the apprentices' workplace with some day release into college. In the academic year 2017/8 there were 66, 305 students enrolled (54,460 in FE and 11,848 in HE).

Table 6: Compulsory School Age in NI

Stage	Ages	Years
Pre-School (not compulsory)	*3 - 4*	*For children in the year before they start Year 1*
Foundation Stage	4 - 6	Years 1 & 2

Key Stage 1	6 - 8	Years 3 & 4
Key Stage 2	8 - 11	Years 5, 6 & 7
Key Stage 3	11 - 14	Years 8, 9 & 10
Key Stage 4	14 - 16	Years 11 & 12

In NI, there is no formal need for a youth work qualification, although several such qualifications do exist, albeit in a fragmented manner. In 2019, the Education Authority (EA) has launched a (paid, but non accredited) Trainee Youth Support Worker Scheme for young adults aged 18 to 25 years old which aims to support those who wish to work within the Youth Service through the delivery of youth work training and direct experience working in a youth work setting. Both accredited and non accredited qualifications exist from the Level 2 Certificate in YW Practice**,** the Level 3 Award in Youth Work Practice (Open College Network), through to Level 6 Community Youth Work - BSc (Hons) Degree at Ulster University.

Currently, there is a considerably higher proportion of staff in Controlled provision who are qualified at least to the standard of OCN Level 2 or 3 (77%), a significant increase compared to 2016 (68%) and 2015 (57%). Church based (voluntary) provision has the highest proportion of unqualified staff and the lowest proportion of all categories of qualified staff.

2.1 Volunteering by young people in NI

Information re Part time working and volunteering by young people in NI is not readily available. However, in the annual *Young Life and Times* survey[3] (YLT) 2017 68% of respondents said they were involved in volunteering. The key findings from this indicate that:

Gender is the most significant determining factor volunteering activity. In 2017 53% of female respondents formally volunteered compared to 33% of males, and males (47%) were much more likely than females (23%) to say they had not volunteered. Around two thirds of young people involved in volunteering socialised or played sport with people from a different religious or ethnic background to themselves compared to 55% of those who did volunteer.

Family financial background is also a strong predictor for volunteering activity and motivations. Respondents from not well-off backgrounds were nearly twice as likely as their well-off counterparts to say they had not volunteered (44% and 23%

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[3] The *Young Life and Times* survey (YLT) is carried out annually and documents the opinions of sixteen year olds living in Northern Ireland on a wide range of social issues. YLT is a joint project of the two Northern Ireland universities

respectively).

The key inhibiting factor to participation is high levels of schoolwork and the evidence clearly suggests that balancing volunteering demands with other commitments is increasingly difficult.

Despite these difficulties levels of volunteering have increased, however, what emerges is the complex nature of the motivations of the young people as they seek to balance a strong desire to help others with more pragmatic concerns around career planning and skills building.

NI does not record Full time (FT) and Part time (PT) employment figures separately, nor do they normally break the employment statistics down, only using the 16-64 years classification, in order words the full labour force. Therefore it is not possible to fully establish levels of PT working among young people. Anecdotally, young people including students in further and Higher education do work PT jobs.

What can be said with certainty is that, there were 21,000 young people aged 16-24 years in NI who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in October to December 2018 (NISRA, 2019). This was equivalent to 10% of all aged 16-24 years.

- Of the 21,000 who were NEET, 11,000 were male and 9,000 were female.
- The number of NEETS has been on a general downward trend over the last 5 years and was 28,000 in October to December 2013.
- In October to December 2018 there were 14,000 young people aged 16-24 years who were not in education, employment or training and who were not looking for work and/or not available to start work (economically inactive).

3.0 National Youth Work Strategy and Priorities, NI

Every young person achieving to his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development

(DfE Vision Statement)

Aims

The strategic aims of youth work in support of the DfE vision are:

To contribute to raising standards for all and closing the performance gap between the highest and lowest achieving young people by providing access to enjoyable, non-formal learning opportunities that help them to develop enhanced social and cognitive skills and overcome barriers to learning; and

To continue to improve the non-formal learning environment by creating inclusive, participative settings in which the voice and influence of young people are championed, supported and evident in the design, delivery and evaluation of programmes.

Achieving the overall aims requires:

- **Alignment of youth work policy with the strategic priorities for education,** which will help shape and modernise provision in order to produce more equitable outcomes for young people;

- **The proportionate targeting of services based on need** with a clear focus on those most in need of additional support to achieve their potential, embrace diversity, and overcome disaffection; and
- **A clear focus on the provision of measurable, quality learning experiences** for young people.

Delivering the actions in the above policy provides the youth workforce, its sectoral partners, young people, the public, ESA, DoE and other Departments with a clear and unambiguous framework for the future policy direction of youth work which is supported and delivered within a broad educational framework, and prioritised to maximise its contribution to overall education aims.

The support of key statutory and voluntary sectoral partners is essential for the smooth operation. Delivering on the actions requires the collective effort of a range of workers, managers and volunteers across a range of providers. Policy makers acknowledge that young people themselves also need to be fully involved in deciding how the proposals can be implemented. Future resource requirements will be informed by the levels of need identified in the RYDP and prioritised within the available budget. (Currently uncertainty reigns re budgets given the fact that the NI Assembly is in chaos and is not sitting).

Delivery partners - ESA have a statutory duty to deliver and support youth work in line with DoE's priorities. DoE recognises that transition to the system here, may create uncertainty for groups currently in receipt of funding. ESA will collaborate with voluntary sector partners to ensure that high quality services are maintained during the transitional period.

Having a single body responsible and accountable for youth work funded by DoE will enable integrated planning and commissioning of the full range of youth work, both local and regional, from general participation and engagement through to more specialist and targeted support, structured around young people's needs.

Digital Skills and competences in NI

In the NI context, more people are online than ever before, with people spending 18.6 hours per week online, and 63% of adults accessing the internet via a smartphone (OfCom, 2016). Digital technologies bring the significant potential to drive growth and prosperity for business and for people. However, according to 2017 report A Brave New World? Priorities and actions for an inclusive digital revolution, the challenges are of equal, or maybe greater significance. Fully utilising digital technologies could see an increase in electronic waste; billions still remaining unconnected, and the prediction of millions of job losses due to automation. Many jobs are predicted to be lost due to digital, but research shows that talented, creative people will still be needed to make digital work.

Digital technologies have the power to be incredibly divisive; those with digital knowledge having more power than those who do not, and the gap between the rich and poor could grow even further. Today's young people, the post millennial generation, are very different to their predecessors. They are growing up digitally connected, surrounded by technology and media from across the globe. No longer do they wait to ask someone for an answer, but they rather search the internet. Books are downloaded, study is aided by globally available online resources, communication through social media, smartphones and tablets is widely accessible. This is our future workforce, a generation of learners that instinctively integrates technology into every aspect of their daily lives.

However, as well documented by industry, government and educational organisations, there is a shortage of digital skills within Northern Ireland and beyond, indicating the

potential issues that could evolve if the shortage is not addressed. The House of Lords report 'Make or Break: The UK's Digital Future (2015)' outlined that "changing demands from firms, consumers, students and communities mean that apprenticeships, vocational qualifications and degrees need to deliver more general and also specific digital capabilities." The recent NESTA – Young Digital Makers report (2015) also highlighted the need to 'mobilise a generation of young people … that know how to make new technology.'

The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in NI has a key role to play in equipping today's learners (School age) with the right qualifications to best fit the workplace in the digital age. Their work in curriculum and assessment helps to reach all learners from age 4 through to 18, making CCEA uniquely placed to ensure that progression in digital skills is connected from primary school through to GCSE and A level study (The compulsory school ages).

Earlier this year (2019), CCEA introduced a digital skills initiative to build the capacity and confidence of primary school teachers to deliver these skills to young learners, with the subsequent teacher workshops over-subscribed. Industry experts from companies such as Kainos, TotalMobile, Citi and Liberty IT, provided the teachers with further support in unlocking creativity with their pupils and building important skills such as numeracy and problem solving. This includes:

- training workshops on computational thinking and coding with Scratch in the primary classroom;
- C# and Python upskilling to support delivery of GCSE Digital Technology (programming); and
- Object Oriented Programming training to support the delivery of GCE Software Systems Development.

It is also important to recognise that voluntary groups, such as Coder Dojo, add significant value and are working alongside CCEA.

Whilst CCEA have undertaken revision of the A level and GCSE qualifications (September 2016); following feedback from industry, teachers, higher education representatives and students it became apparent that a simple refresh of the ICT content would not suffice. A rethink was required. Following work across CCEA's curriculum, regulatory and qualification functions they have moved away from traditional ICT qualifications and towards the introduction of a range of reformed qualifications in GCSE and A level Digital Technology.

CCEA's Digital Technology qualifications alongside A level Software Systems Design are a direct response to the calls for developing a new generation of learners who are **not just competent users of digital technology, but makers of digital technology.** As a result, learners here have the choice of courses that are, to date not available to their counterparts in the rest of the UK. For example, the new GCSE Digital Technology offers two pathways within the qualification: an ICT or a Computer Science specialism, giving learners the opportunity to choose their route of study and have clear progression to higher education and/or employment. CCEA continue to build a digital skills pathway for all learners, working in partnership with government, employers and schools.

The Digital Northern Ireland 2020 project was initiated by InvestNI following consultation with a number of players. There was a consensus of opinion that to realise the full potential of the investments made in NIs digital infrastructure, we should take a proactive leadership approach to its exploitation. Whilst acknowledging the role of education, for example recommendations included the exploitation of content developed under the auspices of the UK e-Skills programme, to ensure all school leavers have attained a certain level of e-skill capability on the e-passport scheme, which would equip

them to better exploit digital technology both in their work and their personal lives. However this initiative was primarily focused on business and FDI growth.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council have launched **Digital Youth (school ages)**, a new innovative programme that will not only encourage and cultivate a digital enterprise culture in the region but also enable over 500 students from 12 secondary schools to develop a stronger foundation in digital skills. This is supported by Young Enterprise NI (YENI), Students with strong interests and aptitudes in entrepreneurship are encouraged to explore the idea of setting up a digital business of their own in the future. Teams from schools pitch their digital projects to a panel of experts at a showcase event annually.

Non formal digital education in NI

The digital non formal training offering is fragmented and piecemeal, here in NI, and a widespread series of differing organisations are involved – municipalities, third sector social enterprises, consultancy firms, private educational organisations and enterprise centres. This non formal activity takes place apart from the formal digital education at school and FE/HE. The assessment of the training on offer is a mix of types, some accredited and more often non accredited. There does not seem to be a cohesive digital competency framework apart from that found in the formal education sphere. Costs vary, and those externally funded are often free of charge. See below, for example of indicative offerings, both accredited and non accredited, which include:

- **Youthlink NI** (Belfast), Digital Media and Community Mapping, 30 hours nonaccredited
- **Belfast City Council** (over 18), courses for all Microsoft software packages from basic to advanced level. Also courses on GIS (Mapinfo) and Snap surveys. ECDL and Advanced ECDL courses. They also provide the Urban Digital Futures' project aimed at secondary level schools.
- **Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action** (NICVA), mainly social media focused courses for the third sector, although the offering changes regularly.
- **Ignition Education**, third sector for solely young people, around digital and creative arts.
- **Headliners** (Belfast & Derry), Digital Citizens programme aims to fill the digital skills gap in the employment market by improving the digital skills, educational attainment and employability prospects of young people, currently running in London, ran NI 2012-2017

Usually, a certificate of completion is awarded to the learners.

There is little evidence to be found of transnational co-operation among the digital education providers, indeed there is little evidence of such co-operation on the island of Ireland or with the rest of the UK. One exception is where non formal training has been funded by a European project, where there is transnational co-operation by necessity, however, often such projects are of limited sustainability. Nor is there any real evidence of an ecosystem emerging re non formal digital education where activities become concentrated on a campus or physical (or virtual location), and where business start-up promotion agencies, freelancers, students, school children and entrepreneurs co-operate. This kind of activity is occurring chiefly in the purely business area, re the Digital Northern Ireland 2020 programme, and to a limited degree in non-formal where a few organisations collaborate locally to deliver training/entrepreneurial stimulus. Several are designed to fill employability gaps. However, a fairly limited curriculum is evident, such as, digital safety, web design and marketing. The majority are located in NIs two largest cities as would be expected.

Formal digital education in NI

As highlighted above CCEA are in the process of revitalising the school curriculum to reflect the needs of the digital economy, from primary through to school leavers, who attain a series of accredited learning outcomes, and enhanced employability skills.

This agenda is continued in both HE and FE here in NI. With regard to FE, digital skills are increasingly considered as a crucial complement to essential English and maths skills. This applies to all learners, not just those in technical education. The traditional view of literacy as the ability to read and write has expanded to encompass understanding digital tools and information for the whole workforce. However, a high proportion of adults in the UK lack the digital skills to engage fully as citizens, and England and **Northern Ireland is below the OECD average for digital skills related to work.**

Further Education sector in Northern Ireland consists of six regional colleges operating across 40 campuses, spread across the country. The sector employs over 4000 staff and has a turnover of around £250 million per year. The colleges are the main providers of vocational and technical education and training although there are now a growing number of private training providers entering the market. The curriculum offered is broad and diverse extending from A levels and GSCEs to BTECs, HNCs and Apprenticeships. They also offer higher education provision with nine % of students undertaking higher level awards. In 2016/17 there were almost 130,000 total enrolments with 78 % of those obtaining recognized qualifications. FE is of significant importance to the NI economy working directly with over 7500 businesses and a range of private, public and community organisations. The multi-campus nature of the sector with over 40 FE campuses regionally allows those from rural communities to access appropriate qualifications, including digital, whilst one of the key features of the FE sector is the diversity of the learners it attracts, ranging from those with no or very few qualifications to those who are following HE options. It is considered, therefore, that the colleges have a critical role to play in developing social cohesion and strategic leadership in the sector for rapid digital progress.

In the **HE sector,** NI has two high quality university and research centres (Ulster University and Queens University), which when working in collaboration with industry, are an essential component of the eco system of a future NI modern knowledge economy. NI universities are recognised as leaders internationally as is evidenced by the recently announced India-UK Advanced Technology Centre of Excellence in Next Generation Systems and Services at Ulster.

However, universities are organised in Faculties or silos, although cross Faculty collaboration is encouraged, this is none the les difficult. Learning is organised by Faculty and School, and in the main digital education, for example through the use of blended learning utilising a Virtual Learning Environment and Social Media tools are pervasive, the digital learning is occurring within the context of particular topics, for example, Buisness Studies (EG Digital services, Digital Marketing), AI, Robotics, Mathematics, Engineering, Informatics, Telematics, Communications, Architecture/Design, Nursing, Stratified medicine etc.

Marginalised communities in NI

NI is quite unique, and everyone in Northern Ireland is part of an ethnic group. People who consider themselves to be Irish or British often express signs of dissimilarity in their culture, religious and political beliefs and many people consider these differences as being

ethnically different. However, in order to unravel some of the complexities of ethnicity we now examine the minority ethnic communities who live in NI.

Table 7: White ethnic group as a proportion of UK population, Census 2011

Country	Population (all Ethnic Groups)	White Ethnic Group [1] (%)
United Kingdom	63,182,178	87.1
England	53,012,456	85.3
Scotland	5,295,403	95.9
Wales	3,063,456	95.5
Northern Ireland	1,810,863	98.2

Source: ONS (2013) Table KS201UK
[1] Figures do not include Gypsies and Irish Travellers

The 2011 Census[4] identified 1.8 per cent (32,400) of the resident population belonged to minority ethnic groups. NI, however, remains the least ethnically diverse region in the United Kingdom.

Table 8: Ethnic Group by Age, Census 2011

	Total	White (%)	Traveller (%)	Asian (%)	Black (%)	Mixed (%)	Other (%)
All Residents	1,810,863	1,778,449	1,301	19,130	3,616	6,014	2,353
Aged 0 to 15	379,323	20.8	38.5	25.2	25.1	54.8	21.3
Aged 16 to 24	227,634	12.6	14.4	11.9	9.2	15.5	11.7
Aged 25 to 44	498,046	27.3	25.1	45.2	52.9	22.2	43.3
Aged 45 to 64	442,140	24.6	15.6	14.7	11.6	6.4	18.2
Aged 65 +	263,720	14.8	6.4	3.0	1.3	1.1	5.4
Aged 0 to 44	1,105,003	60.7	78.0	82.3	87.2	92.5	76.3

Source: NISRA, NINIS (2013) Table DC2101NI

The table above illustrates the latest ethic grouping (other than white) in NI is Asian, with Mixed, and Black coming second and third. The Traveller community is relatively small.

Asian, Black, Mixed or Other main ethnic groups have younger age profiles than residents of White ethnicity. For example, on Census Day 93 % of residents with Mixed ethnicity were aged under 45 years, compared with 87 per cent of Black origin, Asian (82 per cent), Other ethnic groups (76 per cent) and White (61 per cent).

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[4] @011 was the last census date for NI, next census is 2021

In contrast, 15 per cent of Whites were aged 65 and over, compared with 5.4 per cent of those from Other ethnic groups, 3 per cent of Asian ethnicity, 1.3 per cent of people who were ethnically Black, and 1.1 per cent of Mixed ethnicity. The relatively small proportion of minority ethnic groups in the older age groups is largely a result of migration (migrants tend to be younger than the host population), making them particularly relevant to this project given the higher numbers of young people. A striking feature of the Census results is the age profile of the Irish Traveller community in relation to the White population. While 78 per cent of Travellers are aged under 45, (61 per cent of Whites), only 6.4 per cent (83 persons) are aged 65 or over, compared with 15 per cent of those who are of White ethnicity.

The Traveller community is long established in Northern Ireland and its history and traditions stretch back many years. It is against the law to discriminate against the Irish Traveller community, which is protected under Race Relations legislation. The small number and proportion of older Travellers is a reflection of their much lower life expectancy. The recent All Ireland Traveller Health Study (2010) found that male Travellers in Ireland (including Northern Ireland) had a life expectancy at birth of 61.7 years, equivalent to that of the general population in the 1940s. For female Travellers, life expectancy was 70.1 years, similar to that of the general population in the 1960s. According to the Equality Authority (2011), the low life expectancy of Travellers is a consequence of their "difficult living circumstances"

Ethnicity and Highest Level of Qualifications: The Asian ethnic group contains the highest proportion of residents in Northern Ireland with a degree level qualification or higher. Across the five main ethnic groups, Asians have the largest proportion of residents with level 4 or higher qualifications (44 %), followed by the Mixed (35 %) and Other (34 %) ethnic groups. The White population have the lowest proportion (23 %). No information was available re Travellers qualifications levels.

In NI there has been a rise in racist incidents and crimes. Research has highlighted an increasing trend in negative/prejudicial attitudes in Northern Ireland. Prosecution for racist hate crime also remains low and the lack of joined-up 'end to end' data to track the progress of hate crimes through the criminal- justice system remains an issue. The Equality Commission has identified a range of key inequalities and/or barriers to integration for minority ethnic groups in Northern Ireland across a range of areas – employment, education, health, housing, public participation; and social protection. In Northern Ireland the policy response to addressing key racial inequalities has however been mixed. Despite some welcome developments (such as the decision to consult on a Refugee Integration Strategy), minority ethnic groups continue to face key inequalities across a range of social policy areas. The Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2015-2025 is designed to address these.

With regard to the British/Irish ethnicity issue, **Co-operation Ireland** delivers a range of youth programmes which facilitate young people from different community backgrounds in NI and the Republic of Ireland to meet, work together and build positive relationships. The programmes aim to prepare young people for living in a shared society by widening social networks, challenging negative attitudes and behaviours, and developing skills for working with others from diverse backgrounds. In 2017, they delivered 12 youth projects with over 800 young people taking part. Programme themes included positive youth development, youth leadership, shared history, and preparation for further education and employment.

The Arts Council NI, also plays a key role, as 79% of Arts Council investment goes to the most deprived areas, and 53% of the work undertaken by the Arts Council's Regularly Funded Organisations takes place in Neighbourhood Renewal areas. In addition:
- 68% of the work undertaken by the Arts Council's RFOs is delivered on a cross-community basis

- 55% of the work undertaken by the Arts Council's RFOs takes place in hospitals, schools and with community organisations
- Arts-led community regeneration programmes, such as the 'Building Peace through the Arts – Re-imaging Communities Programme' have engaged over 1,500 individuals in arts-based activity, helping local neighbourhoods across NI to tackle sectarianism and racism and find positive ways to express community identity

There was little evidence of particular programmes to support Travellers or other minority groups in NI. However, **Belfast City Council (BCC)** were making some inroads. This is vital as the Traveller community is the most disadvantaged community NI. Only five % of Travellers live to be 50 years old. Less than 10 % of adult Travellers have ever been in gainful employment. Most adult Travellers have a very low level of educational attainment and their children rarely complete their education. Travellers are the only indigenous ethnic group protected by legislation (Race Relations (NI) Order 1997). Although this law affords them protection in the delivery of goods and services, they continue to suffer discrimination.

- **Traveller outreach,** In 2015 BCC supported a group of Traveller women to take part in a series of creative workshops with artist Carol Kane. The resulting publication 'thribli – keepsake narratives by Travellers' shares their memories of life on the road, education experiences, crafts, attitudes towards them, the importance of family, a move towards settled Travellers and how traditions are passed between generations.
- **Traveller forum,** In 2013, an interagency forum was established to look at how BCC can contribute to working more effectively with the Traveller community. The forum is made up of public sector and voluntary agencies in the greater Belfast area who are seeking to improve the services they provide to the Traveller community.

Best Practices, NI

Recently some best practice has emerged, often driven by industry, for example.

Kainos the UK IT services and platforms provider, has a partnership with Queen's University Belfast exploring new and innovative ways to deliver flexible education and IT skills development. Using distance learning techniques, an initial pilot group involving nine staff from Kainos will seek to develop their existing technical proficiency by equipping them to deal with potential cyber security threats. By collaborating in this way, both organisations are exploring how best to offer innovative, flexible, and accessible ways to study cyber security subjects in a postgraduate format. This includes refining course design, production, and delivery of cyber security learning resources. The distance learning pilot will allow employees at all levels to work towards additional qualifications while continuing with their workplace commitments and maintaining good work/life balance. They will work towards recognised qualifications, with the eLearning pilot modules covering condensed course content from a full Master's Degree programme.

Kainos support the Academy model of learning, for example: A.I.Camp will welcome 20 undergraduates from the UK and Ireland for a two-week masterclass in all things relating to AI, with the specific objective of developing machine learning technology to improve lives. Over the course of the two-week camp, Kainos engineers and data scientists will provide advice and mentoring to students, helping them to create their own solutions and offering valuable industry insight into working on digital project teams. **A.I.Camp joins AppCamp, CodeCamp and the Earn as you Learn apprenticeship scheme as the latest addition to the Kainos Academy**, which comprises a suite of acclaimed training and recruitment initiatives developed by the company to attract talented people and help them achieve their full potential in the digital industry.

The Assured Skills Academy Model, Under this model, where a company or a consortium of companies have an identified skills need, DfE will consider developing a short-term pre-employment training intervention to meet that need. This typically involves a six to eight week pre-employment training programme delivered by a local college (FE) or university and, where applicable, this may be followed by a four to six week placement with a participating company. The intervention is designed to lower the recruitment risk for companies by providing candidates trained with the initial skills for the opportunities that are available. The Academy Model is flexible and versatile, and has been used to help companies recruit new staff in digital skills areas such as:

- data analytics
- financial services
- sales
- software development
- software testing
- cyber security
- control numerical control machining,
- 2D animation
- game development

Digital Northern Ireland, 2020 Initiative (DNI 2020), The primary premise of the DNI 2020 initiative is that NI stands to reap considerable benefits in terms of both economic and social uplift as a result of the advanced communications capability which has been and continues to be deployed in the province.

Recognition of this has led the government bodies of NI to invest in ambitious Digital Platform enhancement initiatives in partnership with industry, and a number of these have now come to fruition, notable amongst these are:

- The direct transatlantic Kelvin link, in collaboration with Hibernia, which complements the existing link of the island of Ireland to North America and also the numerous links via the mainland UK to the rest of Europe and the world.
- The Next Generation Broadband programme being undertaken in collaboration with BT, which extends fibre to a significant proportion of the exchanges in Northern Ireland and onward to the street boxes.
- Previous waves of investment in core fibre capacity across Northern Ireland, resulting in a situation where approximately 95 per cent of the population is within three km of fibre access.

These investments result in a number of potential benefits to businesses and citizens in NI, which a proactive approach to realisation will accelerate over the coming years. It is important to understand that there are a number of aspects, rather than any single one, which together give Northern Ireland what might be termed a "pole position" in the race to achieve economic success in the 21st century digital age. However, these benefits will not be realised to the full unless leadership is given to facilitate collaboration and to pursue a proactive approach to maximising the realisation of the many opportunities which can be enabled by the Digital Platform, which given the fact that the devolved NI Assembly is not sitting may hold back this superb potential.

APPENDIX ONE

Baseline Report Key Questions: Connected Learning @ Youth Work

1. What are the key statistics regarding YW in the partner country (numbers, growth, employed/unemployed, school leaver statistics, etc.)?
2. Are young people in the partner country qualified, experienced, in service, undertaking part-time work, volunteering, etc.?
3. What types of non-formal digital education exists in the partner country and what qualifications are offered?
4. What types of formal digital education exists in the partner country and what qualifications are offered?
5. What types of formal learner (FL) digital education providers exist within the partner country? Who are these including size, location, ownership, educational offering, activities organised, etc.
6. What types of non-formal learner (NFL) digital education providers exist within the partner country? Who are these including size, location, ownership, educational offering and activities organised, etc.
7. What is the National Youth Work Strategy (or similar policy provision) in your partner country and the key priorities regarding work? How does this policy support developing digital competencies?
8. In your partner country what is the state of play regarding digital skills and competencies? What is the level of attainment and gaps identified by employers and/or young people? What is the national strategy to support development of these strategies?
9. What is the type and size of marginalised communities in your partner country? What support is being developed/provided by government, social economy and voluntary sector to support these communities in their learning?
10. What accreditation is given for Formal (FL) and Non-Formal (NFL) digital Learning in your partner country? Are these widely recognised by employers? Are there any digital competencies frameworks for young people to use to accredit their skills, learning and/or experiences?
11. Are there any examples of best practices/learning cities/learning maps within your partner country?