



Northern Ireland
Executive

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OUR PLAN:

Doing What Matters Most

Programme for Government
2024-2027

Annual Report
2025-2026



**Programme for Government
Annual Report
2025-2026**

To find out more visit
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Foreword of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Over the past year, we have continued to do what matters most for the people that live here. When we launched the Programme for Government, we committed to working together, to deliver meaningful progress and improve everyday life for individuals, families, and communities.

That commitment has guided our work throughout the year and we believe that our 2025–26 annual report shows that the Executive has delivered significant progress across all nine PfG priorities and laid firmer foundations for the future, despite ongoing financial pressures.

The achievements in this Annual Report reflect a collective endeavour, with departments, local government, the voluntary and community sector, and businesses across Northern Ireland all playing vital roles. Through our Missions of People, Planet and Prosperity, underpinned by our commitment to Peace, we have strengthened public services, supported communities, invested in infrastructure and innovation, and taken action to protect our environment.

Central to this work is the Wellbeing Framework, which helps us to understand and take action to improve quality of life here. By recognising the social, economic, environmental and democratic factors that shape wellbeing, the Framework allows us to analyse long-term progress and continues to guide how we respond to the most pressing issues affecting our people.

As we move into the final year of our mandate, the current global context

presents undoubted risks, from ongoing conflict, mounting cost of living pressures and wider economic and geopolitical uncertainty. Whilst we recognise the challenges ahead and know that our financial position remains very difficult, we remain committed to improving wellbeing for everyone.

The progress that we have achieved this year demonstrates what can be delivered through partnership and shared ambition, and it is important to recognise that there have been positive developments despite the challenges. The local labour market performed strongly, and output in the local economy has performed well. Of course, the longer-term economic issues we face still remain, with economic inactivity, low productivity and ongoing economic and geopolitical uncertainty posing challenges. However, we remain committed to shaping a better, fairer, and more prosperous future for everyone. Whilst we know, that there is still some way to go and that financial constraints will set limits on what is possible, we are confident that we are moving collectively in the right direction.



Michelle O'Neill MLA,
First Minister



Emma Little-Pengelly MLA,
deputy First Minister

Overview of PfG Commitments



The Programme for Government for 2024–2027, 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most' outlined commitments for this mandate, aimed at making real improvements across society, both today and in the years ahead.

Our nine key priorities are focused on doing what matters most within this mandate:



These nine priorities are underpinned by a longer-term commitment to work towards 'Building New Foundations', by investing in our public infrastructure and reshaping how our public services are delivered.

There has been significant progress made across all priorities this year. These achievements demonstrate just some of the work happening every day as we strive for meaningful delivery that people can see and feel in their lives. Many

are as the result of working in partnership across departments, local government and the community and voluntary sector.

The Programme for Government is also underpinned by long term Missions that set our direction.

An update on progress across our nine key priorities can be found on pages 6–23, and updates on Building New Foundations and our Missions can be found on pages 24–36.



Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy

Our Commitment:

To create an economy that works for everyone, we said we would address four key areas: **Productivity, Good Jobs, Decarbonisation and Regional Balance.**

Our Progress:

We have worked to support growth across the most innovative, productive and export-orientated parts of the economy through our Sector Action Plans, including significant investment in the Cluster Acceleration Programme. Streamlining the City and Growth Deals process has allowed smoother progression of business cases and faster transition of projects into delivery.

The Skills Fund supports upskilling in priority growth areas, with Tourism and Hospitality Careers Programmes and Childcare Skills Academies planned by the end of the mandate.

Progress has been made to improve job quality and work-life balance, including a package of proposed upgrades to our employment law framework.

Carbon reduction efforts are accelerating the transition to net zero, with work ongoing on the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme, to drive efforts towards a 40% increase in renewable electricity. We are on target to invest £15m for energy efficiency and £75m for public sector energy transition. Sustainability is also being advanced through the Marine Environment & Fisheries Fund, the £330m Sustainable Agriculture Programme and the approval of legislation in November 2025 to deliver the Farm Sustainability Payment Scheme and Farm Sustainability Standards in 2026.

Ensuring everyone has a fair chance to succeed remains a priority, delivering the Economy Department's Sub-Regional Economic Plan and putting in place Local Economic Partnerships with each local government district, continued progress on expanding the Ulster University Magee campus up to 10,000 students and our innovative Tourism Strategic Action Plan.

Key Achievements This Year:



Regional balance

£27m investment

for Ulster University **Magee Campus** with student numbers growing to **6,505** with a **21% rise** in applications

Continued investment in Further Education campuses:

£55m

new Northern Regional College **Ballymena Campus** opened September 2025



£15m

build for the new Southern Regional College **campus in Newry has started**, with operations commencing on site in March 2026



Tourism Strategic Action Plan

Funding for **7 projects** including: The Gobbins Phase 2, Destination Royal Hillsborough, Belfast Stories and the DNA Museum

11 Local Economic Partnerships

established during 2025/26





Productivity

City and Growth Deals: over **£490m** funding for **22** projects approved

- ▶ **£7.5m Digital Transformation Flexible Fund** provided 197 offers, totalling £3.2m to support small and microbusinesses to adopt advanced digital technologies in 2025/26
- ▶ Opening of the **£31m Studio Ulster** in June 2025
- ▶ **£22m** approved for flagship innovation and research facility, the **Centre for Food and Drug Discovery**
- ▶ **Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation Centre** construction completed in March 2026, while construction continues on **iReach Health** and **Momentum One Zero**
- ▶ **Regional Research and Innovation Strategy** call for evidence and pre-consultation with policy leads completed
- ▶ **Innovation Action Plan** launched October 2025
- ▶ **Apprenticeship Inclusion Challenge Fund**, launched April 2025 addressing under-representation across women, individuals with a disability, and people from disadvantaged areas



£11m

invested through the ten-year **Cluster Acceleration Programme**



£767k

allocated to **14 active projects** across priority sectors in this financial year



Decarbonisation

- ▶ **Renewable Electricity Price Guarantee** published September 2025
- ▶ Consultation on the first draft **Climate Action Plan** completed in October 2025
- ▶ **Enhanced Investment Zone:** a £150m programme to unlock advanced manufacturing potential, focusing on biotechnology and photonics. Endorsed by the Executive in January 2026, with UK Government Ministerial approval in March 2026



Good Jobs

£20m

invested in Skills Fund Delivery from July 2024, across **27 key schemes** with a focus on raising productivity and regional balance

Supported

- ▶ **17,000 individuals** to upskill and reskill, primarily online for those aged 25+
- ▶ **and 1,100 employers** have accessed tailored training interventions
- ▶ The key programmes supported are: Skill Up, Union Learning Fund, SME Productivity Booster, Inclusive Futures, Green Skills, Post School SEN Reform and Apprenticeship Academies





Deliver More Affordable, Accessible, High-Quality Early Learning and Childcare

Our Commitment:

By the end of this mandate, we committed to having a comprehensive Early Learning and Childcare Strategy in place. This will set out plans to transform early learning and childcare by supporting children’s development, easing financial pressures on working families and ensuring the early learning and childcare sector is stable and sustainable.

Our Progress:

Whilst we develop our longer-term approach, we committed to taking some immediate action to introduce a balanced package of measures. These actions have the interests of children at their core and are easing the current pressure on providers and families, as well as laying the foundation for the Early Learning and Childcare Strategy.

We also committed to taking action to give every child the best start in life, including

those children facing disadvantage or with additional needs. We said we would do this by supporting existing childcare and early years programmes which are focused on children facing disadvantage and creating solutions for early support for children with additional needs. We also know that in those early years, pre-school can have a positive impact on children’s social and emotional development and in preparing them for school. For this reason, we are taking steps to standardise our Pre-School Education Programme.

Key Achievements This Year:



Early Learning & Childcare Strategy

Public consultation on the **draft Early Learning and Childcare Strategy** completed on 24 March 2026



Investment in Immediate Action within Childcare and Early Years Provision

£55 million invested in childcare and early years provision



Tackling the Cost of Childcare

27,238 children and 20,206 families benefitted from the extension of the **15% Childcare Subsidy Scheme***

Families are estimated to have saved £26m through the scheme. When combined with Tax-Free Childcare, this amounts to a saving of approximately £57m

* Extended to children aged 0-11 and aged 16 for those with additional needs/disability



Standardised Provision of Full-Time Pre-School Places

105 settings transitioned to **full-time pre-school education** provision in September 2025, benefitting **2,500** children. Over **50%** of all funded pre-school places are now full-time



Enhanced Support for Children Facing Disadvantage and Children with Additional Needs/Disabilities

Sure Start programme expanded to an additional **22 areas**, increasing access to **2,500** children and their families. Furthermore, a new outreach model has meant an additional **1,800** children and families are also able to access Sure Start services



Pathway awards to settings supporting children at risk of educational underachievement increased from £30,000 to £40,000 maximum



Enhanced funding ensuring the Toybox project provides developmental support for **over 150** Traveller and Roma children



Additional funding to **support more children with a disability outside term-time** including the Fair Play Grant Scheme and Bright Start School Age Childcare Scheme



Funding for over **650** childminders and Approved Home Childcarers who provide targeted early years support



640 settings availed of Pre-School Inclusion funding in 2025-26 to **support children who have or may have SEN**



Pilot established to increase accessibility for children with additional needs/ disabilities through the enhanced **Approved Home Childcare Scheme**



A Stable and Sustainable Childcare Sector

- ▶ Research report published on the key issues impacting the **financial sustainability of childcare providers** and support required
- ▶ Ongoing data monitoring to determine effectiveness of the **Childcare Subsidy Scheme**

- ▶ **Increased funding rate for non-statutory pre-school sector** participating in the Pre-School Education Programme
- ▶ Funding provided to train **85 participants to become a registered childminder** or Approved Home Childcarer, in addition to skills academies, training and online micro-courses within the childcare sector



Cut Health Waiting Times

Our Commitment:

To tackle waiting times, we have invested £135m this year to treat additional patients and we are continuing to tackle the backlog of patients waiting by increasing elective care capacity through expansion of elective care centres and mega clinics.

Our Progress:

We also pledged to increase capacity within our Health and Social Care system through service reform and reconfiguration. This is ongoing through a detailed efficiency programme under the Elective Care Framework.

We wanted to develop a refreshed approach to improving health and addressing health inequalities. To this end, work is ongoing

through the Live Better Approach and Making Life Better Thematic Plan.

To meet our ambition to improve health through primary, community and social care, we have developed the Multi-Disciplinary Team Implementation Plan, supported by £61m Public Sector Transformation Board funding. We also commenced work to develop a new model for Neighbourhood Health and Wellbeing.

Key Achievements This Year:



Reduce waiting lists

Invested £135m

to treat additional patients with **over 237,000** additional outpatient, diagnostic and inpatient procedures delivered

100%

reduction in waits of more than four years for a colonoscopy



reduction in numbers waiting over four years for:

- tonsillectomies ▶ 94%
- primary hip replacements ▶ 92%
- laparoscopic cholecystectomy ▶ 91%
- knee replacements ▶ 90%



87%



reduction in children waiting over a year for an endoscopic scope

50%



reduction in total outpatients waiting over four years

66%



reduction in endoscopy backlog since the 2022 peak

62%



reduction in total inpatients/day cases waiting over four years



Development of elective care centres and mega clinics

Invested **£6.5m** in 2025/26 to increase elective care capacity

Within this, **£2.7m** allocated for GP Federations to perform **additional procedures in primary care settings**

Nearly **11,000** additional procedures completed



Expansion of pre-operative assessment and increased clinical training places



Funding for grant schemes to the charity sector to support patients on waiting lists or receiving cancer treatment



Ongoing work

► Steady progress is ongoing to address **health inequalities**, with positive evaluation and recommendation reports published on **'Live Better'** which tests an approach to address health inequalities through targeted health support to communities which need it most

► 10-year **Reforming Adult Social Care and Support** Strategic Plan and 3 Year Delivery Plan have been published in March 2026

► Stakeholder engagement has supported development of the **Neighbourhood Model of Health and Wellbeing** with 183 responses received from a Call for Evidence. Findings from this, along with a policy Framework were published in March 2026



Service Reform and Reconfiguration

The **Elective Care Framework** sets out a detailed efficiency programme:

88%

theatre run time. Increased run times enabled patients to be treated and reduced waiting list backlogs



47,683 patients



were removed from a consultant-led outpatient waiting list of defined specialties following administrative or clinical validation

Work ongoing to improve number of 'Did not attend'/cancellations on the day. This year:



- 7.5% for newly referred outpatients
- 8.2% for outpatient review appointments

87%

average of weekly commissioned theatre sessions being delivered by both Regional Day Procedure Centres from April 2025 to January 2026, and continuing to improve



Multi-Disciplinary Teams

► **MDT Implementation Plan** published July 2025 and **1.1m** citizens are now accessing physiotherapy, social work or mental health services in their local GP Practice. There are now **over 412** whole time equivalent front-line staff working across 165 GP practices in 12 GP Federation areas in the Primary Care MDT programme, reducing hospital waiting lists



Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

Our Commitment:

Delivery continued on the first Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Delivery Plan for 2024-2026, including 14 actions centred on prevention, protection, justice and partnership.

Our Progress:

To raise awareness of the issue of violence against women and girls (VAWG), we pledged to ensure strong, consistent messaging so everyone here understands the issue and knows how to help end VAWG. To this end, we are implementing campaigns such as 'Power to Change'.

We have invested through Local and Regional Change Funds to provide on-the-ground support for the vital work of communities and the sector. This included Momentum Funding to allow councils to continue to

raise awareness of EVAWG using a locally informed approach, tailoring support and prevention efforts to the unique needs of their community.

The Challenge Fund was launched to invest in organisations to use technological innovation to improve understanding and prevention of VAWG, increasing and improving the physical and psychological safety of women and girls.

We are continuing to work collaboratively across departments and with external stakeholders to support delivery, communications and stakeholder networks.

Key Achievements This Year:



The Change Funds

Funding of over **£5m**

provided to support the Local and Regional Change Funds, including Momentum Funding

Local Change Fund



supporting 164 projects, including a diverse range of activities such as, awareness raising and the provision of information and training on causes of VAWG and what healthy relationships are

Regional Change Fund



supporting eight EVAWG expert organisations with regional reach



Awareness Raising Campaigns



The **Power-to-Change Campaign** launched in January 2025, challenging unacceptable attitudes and reducing harmful behaviours of men and boys

10m

campaign impressions, achieving a significant reach

500

teachers and safeguarding officers received Power to Change Toolkit training

Pilot phase of **Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes** coercive control campaign completed **December 2025**



Media campaign on **Coercive Control** and training initiative developed in partnership with Ulster University



A **training toolkit** delivered to 97 frontline service providers with training on how to support women and girls with cascade training reaching an additional 70+ professionals



Challenge Fund

- ▶ **Four suppliers have created products to improve safety of women and girls**
- ▶ A wearable safety device to enhance physical and psychological safety of women and girls
- ▶ An AI based application to address online violence against women and girls
- ▶ A digital application to support women and girls travelling during the hours of darkness
- ▶ An AI-powered, trauma-informed solution, to support professional training relating to women's safety



Stakeholder Engagement

- ▶ **Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy** published in March 2026 and an action plan has been developed. This Strategy seeks to increase confidence in the justice system for all victims and witnesses of crime, using a trauma-informed approach
- ▶ Implementation of a domestic abuse offence which covers **controlling or coercive behaviour and work continues on the introduction of Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders**
- ▶ Working with delivery partners under the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2024-2031, significant progress has been made towards delivering a new multi-agency **Domestic Abuse Risk Response** and developing a model for piloting **Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders** to enhance protections for victims. Alongside this there has been increased investment in behaviour change programmes and emphasis on promoting the **Domestic Violence and Abuse Disclosure Scheme**



Better Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs

Our Commitment:

Over the past decade, the number of children identified with Special Educational Needs (SEN) has risen steadily to almost one in five pupils, alongside increased expenditure on provision. However, this has not always been matched by clear improvements in outcomes for these children and young people. We are committed to transforming the education system to deliver high-quality, efficient and sustainable services that better meet these children's needs.

Our Progress:

Central to SEN reform is investment in the education workforce. Work is underway to identify SEN-specific training gaps for teachers and classroom assistants.

We committed to enhancing in-school support and resources so that child-centred interventions can be implemented at the earliest presentation of need. Work is ongoing on a number of targeted early intervention programmes.

The SEN Capital Investment Programme was developed to transform capital investment to support children with SEN. Capital plans for each special school have now been published. The collection, sharing and analysis of data is also essential to plan and design an effective system that meets our children's needs. Longer-term work is underway, including scoping a SEN data dashboard to support planning and early intervention, for completion by the end of this mandate.

Key Achievements This Year:



SEN Reform

£27.5m funding secured

from the Public Sector Transformation Board for SEN reform with delivery underway

- ▶ Graduated Response Framework to support children with SEN published
- ▶ New Local IMPACT Teams were launched in September 2025 providing expert advice and support to schools
- ▶ Inclusive Play programme commenced providing support and training to pre-school, primary and special schools in supporting inclusive play for children with SEN



Enhanced in-school support and resources to enable intervention at the earliest presentation of need

▶ **Programme to support 60 2–3 year-olds** with emerging SEN commenced in September 2025

▶ **£4.5m** investment in the **Pre-school Inclusion Fund** and **640** settings receiving support through expansion of the fund



Investment in our educational workforce

► **120 SEN training places** in Further Education Colleges offered to Early Years Assistants* through tailored training project

* in pre-school education and primaries 1 and 2



Strategic area planning and investment planning for the school estate

Circa **£65m capital** invested in SEN infrastructure



System to **Digitalise the Statutory Assessment and Review** process rolled out



Special Schools' Plans of Action published on 16 September 2025



Delivering improved outcomes for children, with **157 additional classes** created for **1,374 pupils**, across **123 schools**



Improved sharing and analysis of data

Working group established to consider data sharing arrangements to support strategic planning for school leavers with SEN



Enabling actions that better support schools



SEN Reform Outcomes Framework published



SEN Policy Statement to clarify policy and legislation published



Accessible version of the SEN Reform Agenda published



SEN Reform governance structures agreed and first meetings held in October 2025



Provide More Social, Affordable and Sustainable Housing

Our Commitment:

In response to an increase in social housing waiting lists and housing stress, we committed to transform housing supply and improve quality across the system, in a collaborative way. Work is underway on an Action Plan following the launch of the Housing Supply Strategy in December 2024, which provides a long-term framework for delivering thousands of new, good-quality homes.

Our Progress:

We committed to continuing our programme of reform of the private rented sector. Work is also ongoing to review grants, including those which deal with housing in the private sector, and the Disabled Facilities Grant in collaboration with health professionals.

To support increased investment in homes, we continue to engage with Treasury on negotiations to secure a full fiscal framework for Northern Ireland, including treatment of borrowing powers which will enable the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to invest.

We remain committed to ensuring that the planning system supports housing delivery. In collaboration with local governments, many actions in the Planning Improvement Programme have been completed, with most others on track. A cross-departmental approach is also helping to unlock wastewater connections, paving the way for building much needed homes.

We have taken steps to work collaboratively on solutions for those in need and to reduce the risk of young people leaving care becoming homeless.

Key Achievements This Year:



Started Work on New Build Social Homes

£210.7m allocated to the Social Housing Development Programme

▶ **1,765** new build social homes started this year



Fuel Poverty

Warm Healthy Homes Strategy* launched in February 2026, with work ongoing on development of a 3-year Action Plan for the Strategy

* previously consulted on as the draft Fuel Poverty Strategy



Affordable Homes

940 Co-Ownership intermediate homes delivered



Planning system and wastewater network that supports appropriate supply of housing

5,300 additional properties able to connect to the **wastewater infrastructure** through investment in the network



Second Stage of the **Water, Sustainable Drainage and Flood Management Bill** completed in September 2025

Living with Water in Derry/Londonderry Plan published



Public consultation for **Sustainable Drainage Systems** in new housing developments completed

£15m Public Sector Transformation Funding secured for four-year **urban drainage transformation pilot** with work underway to develop nature-based drainage and flood interventions

Lowest processing times for major planning applications since the introduction of new system in 2017-18



Regional Trainee Planner Scheme launched to address workforce levels in January 2026 with eleven new trainee planners recruited

£3m Public Sector Transformation Funding secured towards the **Transforming Planning Programme**, to improve the systems and processes surrounding planning decisions such as 'Hear and Report'



Working collaboratively to prioritise housing solutions for those most in need

£83.7m provided in housing support services to help **20,000 vulnerable individuals and families** to live independently, via the **Supporting People Programme**



NI Housing Executive's draft '**Supporting People: Strategic Intent 2026-31**' consultation closed on 26 January 2026, setting strategic direction for the future development of the Supporting People Programme

£3m allocated to support delivery of the **New Foundations programme** launched in December 2025, to secure 30 homes with housing support to help young people leaving care avoid homelessness

£15.95m

allocated for 2025-26 delivery of NIHE-administered private sector grants, including the Disabled Facilities Grant



Reform of the Private Rented Sector

Through the Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022:

- Implemented restrictions on frequency of rent increases
- Introduction of mandatory electrical safety checks in private rented accommodation
- Consultation on Notice to Quit regulations for private tenancies closed on 29 March 2026



Safer Communities

Our Commitment:

We are committed to keeping our communities safe and improving outcomes for those who engage with the justice system. Work is underway to speed up justice including consideration of enhanced sentencing powers for magistrates' courts and other potential reforms, alongside collaboration with criminal justice agencies to implement the second phase of committal reform.

Our Progress:

Recognising the levels of trauma in our post-conflict society, we are working across the Executive to embed trauma-informed, responsive systems. We also recognise that wider societal and economic challenges can increase vulnerability to crime and criminal exploitation, with clear links to paramilitary harm. We are therefore committed to tackling paramilitarism and organised crime, as well as preventing people from entering the justice system, and reducing reoffending.

This includes a focus on ensuring the youth justice system improves outcomes for affected children, families, victims, and communities. Work is ongoing with the Youth Justice Agency, PSNI and the Public Prosecution Service to deliver a pilot scheme aimed at diverting more children who commit low-level offences from the system without a criminal record.

To support these aims, we are seeking to ensure that justice agencies are adequately resourced and investing in much needed reform, including enhanced digital capability.

Key Achievements This Year:



Progress on Speeding Up Justice Programme

£20.5m funding secured from the **Public Sector Transformation Board** to help reduce delays and free up capacity in the courts for more serious cases



Strengthened governance arrangements for the **Speeding Up Justice Programme**



Consultation on use of out of court disposals completed in September 2025,

with secondary legislation being progressed

- ▶ The Out of Court Disposal – No File Decision pilot has been completed, with evaluation findings proving positive and focus now on mainstreaming this approach
- ▶ Pilot underway to support PSNI with implementing a digital approach to Community Resolution Notices via an app



Working to ensure adequate resources within our justice agencies

▶ **£7m** allocated to meet the full cost of Year 1 of the PSNI workforce recovery plan with recruitment underway

Digital transformation



£2m funding secured from the Public Sector Transformation Board to support electronic monitoring



Implementation of the Strategic Framework for Youth Justice Action Plan



Tackling Paramilitarism and Organised Crime

Executive agreement secured to extend the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime until March 2027 and work is ongoing to consider post 2027 options

Creation of a Ministerial Advisory Group and refreshed Political Advisory Group to strengthen political oversight

Consultation on development of a single community order for children to simplify the community sentencing framework completed



Embedding Trauma-Informed systems

250

Training provided to over 250 Trauma-Informed trainers and lead trainers

Over 1,300

frontline workers trained in Trauma-Informed Practice

Resources developed to support children and their families through the youth court process

NI Trauma-Informed practice resources developed and training made available across the NI Civil Service



Youth justice provisions included in the Justice Bill which aim to strengthen the automatic presumption of bail for children



Reducing offending and reoffending

Strategic framework and action plan for reducing offending and reoffending developed for 2026-27



Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment

Our Commitment:

Lough Neagh is a vital natural resource, providing drinking water, supporting fishing and eel industries, whilst contributing to tourism and recreation. Severe blue-green algae blooms have been driven by a range of factors including long-term nutrient pollution from agriculture, wastewater, septic tanks and industry. We committed to taking targeted action through implementation of the Lough Neagh Action Plan and are exploring innovative solutions to address and treat algae blooms.

Our Progress:

The issues at Lough Neagh are part of wider environmental and climate challenges. Tackling climate change and improving our natural environment is essential to prevent future crises. We also need to protect our wellbeing and economic opportunities. Work remains ongoing on delivery of the Environmental Improvement Plan and a proposed way forward following a review of our Environmental Governance. Engagement is also ongoing on the Third NI Climate Change Adaptation Programme.

We are committed to reaching net zero in a fair, just and affordable way for households and businesses, while ensuring environmental action supports economic growth. Our agri-food and fishing sectors are vital to our economy and play a key role in meeting climate obligations and protecting public health. We continue to implement an effective Sanitary and Phytosanitary regime to safeguard human, animal and plant health and support trade through promotion of our agri-food supply chain sustainability.

Key Achievements This Year:



20 of the 37 actions
in the Lough Neagh Action Plan
delivered with the remainder currently
being progressed

- ▶ Six Lough Neagh stakeholder forums held

To view actions,
the Lough Neagh
Report and
Action Plan can be
downloaded here:





Small Business Research Initiative to explore potential solutions to treat/reduce blue-green algae blooms

Up to £2m awarded across four suppliers in Phase 2 of the Small Business Research Initiative to refine and pilot solutions

The **Sustainable Utilisation of Livestock Slurry** project has facilitated slurry separation on over 70 farms with 6 anaerobic digestion plants using slurry solids as a feedstock. This research and development project is one year into the four-year project and is continuing to deliver learnings for the department to support this sector



Climate Action Plan

Consultation on the first draft Climate Action Plan completed in October 2025



Transition to Net Zero in a fair and balanced way

- ▶ Draft regulations to establish a **Just Transition Commission** progressing to the next stage of the legislative process, following Executive and Committee agreement
- ▶ Centre for Advanced Sustainable Energy engaged to support **biomethane policy development**, informing decisions on industrial decarbonisation as we work on plans to produce a community energy innovation project



Implementation of a Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) regime to protect public health, animal health and welfare and plant health, as well as to support trade and agri-food supply chain sustainability

Implementation of official **SPS controls** have ensured high standards of animal, plant and public health are maintained



International visits from USA and South Korea food hygiene and safety authorities to support and **expand market access** for our agri-food produce



Improving our natural environment

Draft Nature Recovery Strategy consultation underway and the first strand of the **Farming with Nature Package** launched



First Annual Progress Report for the **Environmental Improvement Plan** laid in the Assembly on 26 January 2026





Reform and Transformation of Public Services

Our Commitment:

We recognised the need for urgent reform and transformation of public services. Many sectors have been in critical need of investment and reform to improve the quality and efficiency of services.

Our Progress:

We committed to ensuring that our priorities got the focus needed to bring about lasting change and have set up a Delivery Unit at the heart of government to oversee this.

We committed to begin to deliver a range of new transformation projects to bring about real improvements in service delivery across the Executive's priority areas. £129m has been allocated to projects across Health, Justice, Infrastructure and Education.

Work continues to strengthen digital capability across the public sector. The Office of Science and Technology, led by the Chief Scientific and Technology Adviser continued to progress the Executive's Research and Innovation Strategy and Areas of Research Interest, strengthening coordination across science, technology and artificial intelligence.

We also pledged to bring forward a wider package of reform to help deliver the investment and transformation of our public services.

Following an agreement with Treasury on 11 June 2025, the needs-based adjustment factor of 124% was applied to the Barnett consequentials arising from the Spending Review announcement.

Engagement has also begun with Treasury on the process for progressing a full Fiscal Framework. Negotiations will include access to borrowing for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Professor Holtham's independent review of the Executive's relative need, which provided a central estimate of need at 128%, taking agriculture into account.

Key Achievements This Year:



Delivery Unit

A Delivery Unit has been established and the Executive agreed its initial priority was supporting work to tackle health waiting lists. The Unit has been focusing specifically on driving delivery of the health transformation projects.

The Unit is also overseeing all transformation projects, ensuring connections are made across the wider transformation programme, and assessing other opportunities to add value to discrete cross-cutting issues across the public sector.



Public Sector Transformation Projects

£129m allocated to projects, which are being monitored and supported by the Delivery Unit. Departments were encouraged to involve other sectors in the design and delivery of transformation projects, and there is already early evidence of impact. A full annual report has been annexed.



£61m

In **Health**, **£61m** provided to support the expansion of multidisciplinary teams in GP practices, allowing better access to preventative care and faster intervention



£22.5m

In **Justice**, **£20.5m** allocated to Speeding Up Justice aimed at reducing court delays and case backlogs and modernising the justice process. Just over **£2m** has also been allocated to Electronic Monitoring Modernisation



£18m

In **Infrastructure**, **£15m** is going towards the Natural Solutions Urban Drainage Programme, to reduce flood risk and **£3m** towards the Transforming Planning Programme, to improve the systems and processes surrounding planning decisions



£27.5m

In **Education**, significant investment of **£27.5m** is supporting the Special Educational Needs Transformation Programme

The Public Sector Transformation Board, supported by the **Delivery Unit**, has provided advice and recommendations on allocation of the remaining **£102.6m**

The Sustainability Plan



Publication of 'PfG Alignment to the 2025-26 Budget'

Departments have been provided with guidance and support to develop longer term financial sustainability plans

Digital Transformation



Work is ongoing to improve NI Civil Service (NICS) digital capabilities to enable wider reform and transformation

Office of AI and Digital established in June 2025 to lead on a collaborative AI Strategy to guide AI adoption across the public sector

A draft AI Strategy is in development with a clear focus on skills, collaboration across departments, strong human oversight and ethical integration of AI in public services

Building New Foundations

The “Building New Foundations” section of the Programme for Government sets out the structural reforms and enabling actions that underpin delivery of the nine immediate priorities. It focuses on creating the conditions for long-term transformation and resilience across public services, the economy, and society.

In addition, the Strategic Asset Management Unit is strengthening how our public sector land and property assets are planned, managed and used, supporting more efficient use of the public estate to enable public service transformation and deliver better value.

Boosting Housing Funds

Commitment

Revitalising the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) so that it can invest in its homes.

Progress Update

In June 2025, the UK Government’s Spending Review confirmed that the scope of the NI Executive Fiscal Framework negotiations would include NIHE borrowing. Engagement continues with Treasury on the treatment of NIHE borrowing and the need for an urgent solution to the NIHE’s investment need.

Improve the Planning System

Commitment

Implementing a planning improvement programme with local government and other stakeholders.

Progress Update

Collaborative working, both internally and externally, is ongoing to help identify challenges, blockages and delays.

Supported by £3m funding from the Public Sector Transformation Board, Phase 2 of the Planning Improvement Programme is underway. Several programme actions are completed and most others on track for delivery, including:

- A regional trainee planner scheme was launched in January 2026.
- Improvements to the pre-application community consultation process and streamlining of the pre-determination hearing process came into operation on 1 August 2025.
- Workshops and sessions facilitated on key planning topics to strengthen skills of professional staff.
- Year to date results for the second quarter of 2025–26 showed 78% of all statutory consultations returned on time, helping to improve efficiency.
- Revision to renewable and low carbon energy published within the Strategic Planning Policy Statement.
- Public consultation completed on introducing charges for planning services that are not currently subject to fees.



Deliver Better Public Services

Commitment

Equipping our public sector staff to make smarter, informed, value for money spending decisions, that consider environmental and climate impacts.

The Enabling Action Plan associated with the draft Investment Strategy for NI sets out actions to improve delivery and unlock persistent infrastructure challenges, including actions to streamline business case processes and focus on developing social license for major projects. Much of this work is already underway as good practice.

Progress Update

Aligning Spending with Priorities: A Comparison of Programme for Government with 2025–26 Budget Allocations published and ongoing internal engagement continues on longer-term financial sustainability.

Updated guidance within ‘Better Business Cases NI: Incorporating Environmental and Climate Considerations into Business Cases’ is embedding sustainability into decision making.

Delivery of the NICS People Strategy remains broadly on track, with 39 of 57 interventions progressing as planned. Key advances include:

- People Strategy Hub launched; NICS wide Comms & Engagement Network and a new workforce model of job families established.
- 30+ HR policies being reviewed and Senior Civil Service Strategy developed and out for consultation.
- Strategic Workforce Planning toolkit launched; Community of Practice established.
- Design and implementation of the HR Target Operating Model underway.
- Digital Capability Framework created, to define the digital skills and knowledge of NICS staff.



Support Our Net Zero Future

Commitment

Ensuring our long-term strategy for 2024–2035 delivers **smart investments and education and skills initiatives to maximise green economy opportunities** and move us towards a fairer, more sustainable net zero future.

Progress Update

- Delivering the Green Skills Action Plan to build the workforce needed for net zero sectors.
- Updating apprenticeship frameworks and Further Education curricula to embed green competencies.
- Promoting green career pathways to grow the talent pipeline for emerging low carbon industries.
- Working with industry, Further Education and Higher Education and government partners to align skills with future net zero needs.



Manage Our Water

Commitment

Continuing to work to increase capacity, to ensure that investment can proceed across urban and rural communities without adverse environmental impacts.

Progress Update

- **5,300** additional properties able to connect to the **wastewater infrastructure** through investment in the network.
- **£15m** Public Sector Transformation Funding secured for four-year **urban drainage transformation pilot**.
- Second Stage of the **Water, Sustainable Drainage and Flood Management Bill** completed in September 2025.
- Published the **Living with Water in Derry/ Londonderry Plan**.
- Public consultation for **Sustainable Drainage Systems** in new housing developments completed.



Upgrade Stadia and Support Local Sports

Commitment

Continuing to work with the UK Government and other funders to **finish our regional stadia programme**, making progress on the redevelopment of Casement Park and initiating investments in The Northern Ireland Football Fund and grassroots sports.

Progress Update

In addition to capital allocations from the Executive, the Irish Government committed £43m in Shared Island Funding in February 2024 and in Spring 2025, the UK Government allocated £50m in Financial Transactions Capital.

Performance and Grassroots Strands of The Northern Ireland Football Fund are underway, with the first cohort of projects to be taken forward under the Performance Programme identified in September 2025. A call for applications for Grassroots was launched on 4 March 2026.



Retrofit Homes

Commitment

Facilitating the **retrofitting of existing housing stock** through sustainable funding and partnership models.

Progress Update

- Several retrofit pilots undertaken by NIHE to identify renewable energy and insulation solutions.
- Ongoing engagement with the NI Federation of Housing Associations to explore options to access Financial Capital Transaction funding for a potential 5-year retrofit programme for Registered Housing Associations.
- £2.2m additional support provided to the NI Sustainable Energy Programme with measures installed in 761 low-income households this year.
- Response to the Consultation on Support for Low Carbon Heating in Residential Buildings was published in January 2026. Learnings from this alongside work taken forward with consultants from the Energy Saving Trust have produced a design plan for a new Domestic Energy Efficiency and Low Carbon Heat Programme.
- Work is also ongoing to develop the skilled workforce needed for large scale home retrofit including strengthening training and apprenticeships and coordinating with stakeholders to ensure skills supply matches demand.



Improve Our Transport Infrastructure for Safer Travel, Connected Communities and Sustainable Economic Growth

Commitment

Progress Update

Improving our road network to better connect on a North–South and East–West basis.

We have continued to deliver Structural and Essential Maintenance Programmes within available budgets and a new Road Maintenance Strategy has been published. Delivery is being progressed on the Major Roads Capital Portfolio, including City & Growth Deal Infrastructure Projects.

Progressing delivery of the A5 Western Transport Corridor.

Delivery of the A5 Western Transport Corridor is subject to legal challenge.

Publishing an annual Action Plan to support the Road Safety Strategy.

The Road Safety Action Plan to 2027 was published in January 2026.

Building upon the Union Connectivity Review, to improve transport connectivity, enhance quality of life and build economic opportunities across the UK.

In December 2025, Translink’s Shaping the Future document set out the feasibility study findings for four priority rail projects: reopening the Antrim–Lisburn line with a Belfast International Airport link; restoring the Portadown–Derry/Londonderry route with new intermediate stations; reinstating the Portadown–Armagh line; and advancing Phase 1 electrification of the Belfast–Border corridor. £1m has been allocated to progress priority development work and engagement with planning authorities to secure corridor protection.

Working with the Irish Government to **develop our rail networks and to provide more accessible public transport** for our rural and disabled communities, as well as considering the recommendations of the **All–Island Strategic Rail Review**.

Along with the Irish Government’s Department of Transport and supported by the European Investment Bank, a Rail Prioritisation Strategy was published in December 2025, setting out more detailed proposals on the adoption of the recommendations made in the All–Island Strategic Rail Review. A dedicated Rail Unit has been established in DFI to progress and bring together the relevant Regulation, Policy and Legislation work. Collaboration with the Irish Government is ongoing to agree on joint investments to modernise the Enterprise service, including the procurement of new trains.

Looking at how we can **develop new routes** and offer further support to our three airports.

We are engaging with Belfast International Airport to restore transatlantic flights and with the UK Government to explore pre-clearance, recognising its potential to support tourism, investment and innovation.

Missions

The Programme for Government is underpinned by long-term Missions that set the strategic direction for the Executive and shape our collective ambition: People, Planet, Prosperity, and our cross-cutting commitment to Peace. These Missions provide us with a lens through which we can ensure our policies, investments and actions contribute to sustained improvements in wellbeing and quality of life.

We have provided an update on commitments within our Missions but any achievements covered under our nine key priorities have not been included.



People

Working to support everyone at all stages of their life to ensure they have the chance to succeed by improving life opportunities.

► Physical & Mental Health

Progress includes the draft **Making Life Better Thematic Action Plan**, continued implementation of the **Mental Health Strategy 2021–2031**, and development of a Mental Health in All Policies approach. The **Live Better** initiative has tested a place-based approach to addressing health inequalities, with positive evaluation informing the **Neighbourhood Model of Care** due to launch in 2026. A report on integrating the community and voluntary sector into mental health service delivery has been published and **Mental Health Workforce Review** recommendations have been implemented. The initial phase of a regional **Mental Health Outcomes Framework** has begun, as has work on a three-year action plan focused on early intervention and prevention.

► Fair & Inclusive Society

To promote a fair and inclusive society, work is ongoing in relation to updating the **Race Relations Order (NI) 1997** and a **Framework for Race Relations** has been drafted. Published in May 2025, the **Refugee Integration Strategy** supports integration and access to skills, employment and advice and a **Community Cohesion Group** has been established to reduce community tension.

▶ Truth Recovery Programme

We are progressing access to justice for those affected by Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses through the **Public Inquiry and Redress Scheme Bill**, which was introduced to the Assembly in June 2025, with Committee Stage concluded in January 2026. Support is already being provided, including through the Victims and Survivors Service and community partners, digitisation of historical records by PRONI, and the work of the Independent Panel in enabling individuals to share their experiences in a supported way.

▶ Animal Welfare

To maintain high standards of animal welfare and secure the ongoing supply of veterinary medicines, we have worked with the UK Government to progress long-term arrangements. These include the publication of **Protecting Animal Health: The Government's Approach to Veterinary Medicines in Northern Ireland** in June 2025 and the introduction of new veterinary medicine schemes from January 2026, alongside participation in UK-wide supply coordination to identify and mitigate emerging risks.

▶ Social Inclusion Strategies

Public consultation on the **Draft Executive Disability Strategy 2025–2035** closed in March 2026 and responses are being analysed, while engagement on the **Active Ageing Strategy** has informed work on a new Action Plan. Consideration is also underway on next steps for the further development of **Gender Equality and LGBTQI+ strategies**.

▶ Children's Social Care Reform

A programme is underway, focusing on early intervention, workforce challenges and strengthening cross-sector working. The **Together for Families** model is being developed to improve support for families and reduce the number of children entering care. Work is also well advanced on new regional residential and foster care plans.

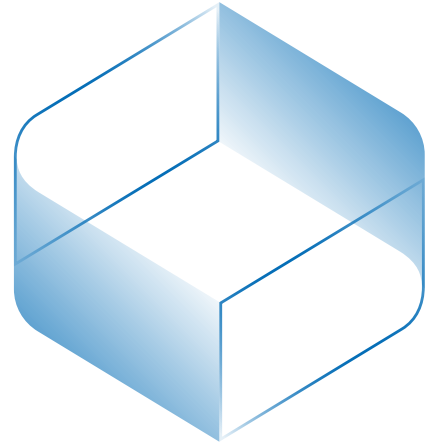
▶ Rural Communities

A forward-looking policy, **Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026–2041** has been produced through extensive co-design and is currently out to public consultation.



► Ageing Population

A baseline scoping exercise for adult palliative care is underway to assess current provision, population need and patient experience, with findings informing future commissioning within the **Neighbourhood Model of Health and Wellbeing**. This approach will support more people to receive palliative care in community settings, including at home. Financial support continues to be provided to bereaved families through the Pension Centre. An improved data-sharing process was introduced in January 2026, aimed at reducing overpayments to the Land and Property Service where the deceased was a homeowner or private tenant.



► Identity and Language (NI) Act 2022

New offices for the Irish Language, Ulster-Scots and Ulster British Tradition, and Identity and Cultural Expression have been established with the **Irish Language Commissioner, Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British Tradition** and **Director of Office of Identity and Cultural Expression** appointed. Work is progressing to develop the Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy and Irish Language Strategy.

► Sport & Physical Activity

Through delivery of the **Active Living Sport and Physical Activity Strategy**, we are supporting greater participation and community engagement within sports and physical activity and investing in shared and inclusive spaces. Targeted funding of **£5.1m** has been provided to Sport NI for the Olympic Legacy Fund and the Your School Your Club Programme. This work is complemented with alignment to the Healthy Futures Obesity Strategy to embed sport and physical activity within the wider health improvement agenda.

► Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) in Northern Ireland: Blueprint for Eradication

Bovine TB in Northern Ireland: Blueprint for Eradication was published in April 2025, with work ongoing to progress actions through stakeholder collaboration.

► Poverty

Consultation launched on the draft **Anti-Poverty Strategy**, with subsequent consideration ongoing to improve and finalise the draft Strategy. The draft **Making Life Better Thematic Action Plan** was developed to address health inequalities. Action under the **Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework** has supported an estimated 200,000 rural dwellers, with £10.4m invested through rural grant schemes and continued funding for key programmes. Partnership working with the **Consumer Council** and enforcement bodies is ongoing, aimed at targeting consumer exploitation, promoting fair markets, and tackling fuel poverty and wider cost-of-living pressures, particularly for vulnerable and rural households.

► Inequality

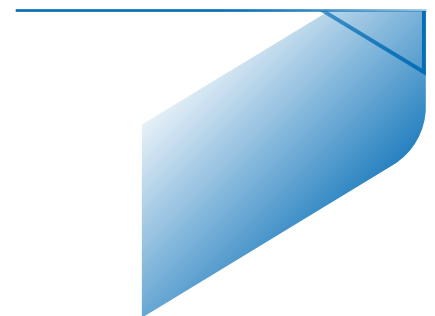
Joined-up action is addressing issues including poverty, crime, substance misuse, mental health and wellbeing. Delivery of the **Urban Villages** programme includes the updated Capital Plan approved in January 2026 and work continues on finalising the **Anti-Poverty Strategy**.

► Educational Disadvantage

Programmes such as **RAISE** operating in 18 localities aim to tackle educational attainment gaps. Funding also continues to be provided to schools through initiatives such as **Extended Schools** and **Targeting Social Need** as well as a range of other targeted programmes such as **Sure Start**. Through a review of the eligibility criteria for free school meals and uniform grants, the relevant income threshold for those in receipt of Universal Credit was increased to £15,390 in the 2025/26 academic year. The **School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Act (NI) 2026** aims to address affordability of school uniforms for parents/guardians.

► Food Action Plan

The **Food Action Plan** was launched in May 2025, following publication of the NI Food Strategy Framework in 2024, to recognise the interconnection between food, health, the economy and the environment.





Planet

Harnessing the potential of a green growth economy while ensuring we provide an equitable transition to a sustainable and affordable society as we take responsibility for decarbonising our economy and society.

► Water Quality

To deliver sustained improvements, we have progressed key actions to strengthen evidence, planning and transparency. This includes publication of the third-cycle **River Basin Management Plan** in June 2025, the launch of a public consultation on **Significant Water Management Issues** in December 2025, and the introduction of the **Lough Neagh Water Quality Dashboard**, providing near real-time monitoring data to support informed action.

► Net Zero Infrastructure

We are removing barriers to low-carbon investment and strengthening the policy framework for net zero. November 2025 saw a decision to reform electricity grid connection charging, lowering costs for renewable generation and other low-carbon technologies such as electric vehicle charging. The Utility Regulator is implementing the required licence changes with NIE Networks. This work is complemented by the development of a **Net Zero Accelerator Fund** to support investment and emissions reduction, informed by an independent market needs analysis commissioned by Invest NI.

► Flood Risk Management

To respond to the impacts of climate change we have created an outline business case for a new **Flooding Forecasting Service** and commenced procurement for Phase 1 of the **Portadown Flood Alleviation Scheme**. We have also updated **Technical Flood Risk Guidance** to allow for climate change in the design of road drainage, storm drainage and river infrastructure.

► Affordable Renewable Energy

The **Mid-Term Review of The Path to Net Zero Energy**, published in December 2025, assessed progress against 2030 targets and refreshed the evidence base. Progress has also been made on energy efficiency, and we are on track to invest £15m through the **Energy and Resource Efficiency Support Scheme**. Legislative work is underway to implement the **Renewable Electricity Price Guarantee**, which will help our renewable energy self-sufficiency.



Prosperity

Improving our economic productivity while making sure that we have an economy that works for everyone, and our story continues to be an inspiration to others.


► Global Investment

We are maximising the benefits of our unique global position to grow exports, attract Foreign Direct Investment and support higher productivity. Over the past year, we have deepened international relationships through extensive ministerial engagement and the work of our overseas offices in Washington DC, Brussels and Beijing. In parallel, we continue to represent our interests in London and Brussels to navigate the opportunities and challenges arising from our trading arrangements under the Windsor Framework.

► Boosting Productivity

We are boosting productivity across key industrial sectors by supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to adopt technology through the **Artificial Intelligence Collaboration Centre (AICC)**, **City and Growth Deal investments**, and a streamlined approach to progressing projects into delivery. Delivery of major innovation continues at pace, including approval of the £22m **Centre for Food and Drug Discovery** in Coleraine and progress across **Belfast Region City Deal** innovation projects, with Studio Ulster opening in June 2025 and further facilities nearing completion. Through its **Transformer Programme** the AICC has supported 68 SMEs to adopt AI, strengthened collaborative research and development, and expanded access to practical tools and skills to drive productivity and innovation across the region.





► **Strengthening North–South, East–West Relationships and Boosting Trade**

We continue to strengthen relationships North, South, East and West, through building on existing institutions such as the **North South Ministerial Council**, the **British–Irish Council** and **InterTradeIreland**, and through engaging with new institutions such as the **East–West Council** and **Intertrade UK**.


In much of this engagement, we work to support our SMEs in maximising trade with Great Britain (GB), Ireland and the rest of the European Union (EU) and beyond.

We also hosted the inaugural symposium for the PEACEPLUS-funded **Developing Irish Sea Cooperation** project in May 2025 and research has been commissioned on governance frameworks, barriers and opportunities for cooperation across the Irish Sea.

► **Social Enterprise Sector**

A one-year implementation update on the **Social Enterprise Action Plan** was published in February 2026. Key achievements include the appointment of social enterprise champions across all councils, Invest NI regional offices and InterTradeIreland, the launch of a bespoke leadership programme for the sector, and targeted work to raise awareness of social enterprises and their access to public procurement.

This aims to increase the commercial capacity of social enterprises and strengthen their overall impact, supporting their important role in society.





Peace

Our cross-cutting commitment to Peace will make sure that everyone feels the benefit of a growing economy, improved environment and a safer and fairer society.

► Sharing our Peacebuilding Experience Globally

Our peacebuilding experience continues to inform international engagement. This has recently included work with Western Balkan countries following a meeting with their Foreign Ministers as part of the 'Berlin Process' meeting in Hillsborough in October 2025. In the past year, we have supported over 80 official visits from more than 30 different countries, many of whom have been inspired by our story and want to learn how our experience can help them address challenges in their own countries.

► Good Relations

Investment totalled around £19m across **central and local programmes, T:BUC Headline Actions, the Community Relations Council and the Minority Ethnic Development Fund**, to positively impact those most in need.

► Race Relations

A public consultation on a draft Framework for an initial two-year Delivery Plan commenced in March 2026, building on the **Racial Equality Strategy 2015–2025** and setting a clear direction focused on removing structural inequalities, tackling racism and hate crime, ensuring fair access to public services, and strengthening community cohesion.

► PEACE PLUS

€110m has been allocated to councils to deliver co-designed **Local Area Action Plans**, with €16.37m match funding provided by TEO, while €34.4m has been allocated to 15 **Building Positive Relations projects**, supported by €5.12m in match funding, with all projects now at implementation stage.



► **Urban Villages**

In January 2026, the updated **Urban Villages Capital Plan** was approved, which will now deliver an estimated total investment of £132m up to March 2031. In 2025–26, two projects were completed, three started on site, one restarted following changes to the design and planning approval was secured for another. Collaboration is ongoing with the Community Academy to advise and support organisations managing capital facilities.

► **Trauma-Informed Public Sector**

We are progressing work to equip NICS staff at all levels with the skills needed to work in partnership and support people to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. In February 2026, two trauma-informed e-learning packages were launched to all NICS staff, alongside an intranet article highlighting the importance of trauma-informed practice.

► **Together: Building a United Community**

This year approximately 118,500 people were engaged through delivery of the Central Good Relations Fund, District Council Good Relations Programme, and the T:BUC Camps programme. Across T:BUC Headline Actions, a further six shared housing neighbourhoods were completed, work progressed at another three interface sites, 2,000 participants commenced the UNITEDYOUTH programme, and work continued on three shared education campuses projects. A review of the T:BUC Strategy has been completed following extensive stakeholder engagement and is informing consideration of a refreshed strategic approach to Good Relations.

► **Communities in Transition**

Phase 3 began in April 2025, with 35 projects, across eight areas, focused on building resilience and reducing paramilitary influence, supported by regional programmes including personal transition and restorative practice.

Our Impact

The Wellbeing Framework

The Wellbeing Framework sits alongside the Programme for Government 'Doing What Matters Most' 2024–2027. The Framework provides a long-term view of the various elements that contribute to the wellbeing of our society.

Within the Framework, the four overarching Missions are broken down across ten strategic domains of wellbeing. These domains describe the overall state of wellbeing in Northern Ireland. Each domain is supported by a selection of indicators, all of which are high-quality official statistics. The Framework is comprised of 52 indicators, which are updated throughout the year as new data becomes available, and they are reported on via the Wellbeing Framework Dashboard, which is maintained by the NI Statistics and Research Agency.

52 indicators across 10 strategic domains, all linked to our four overarching Missions:



People



Planet



Prosperity



Peace

Wellbeing Framework Performance

As at the end of March 2026, of the 52 indicators in the Framework, 14 were improving, 22 were showing no change, 15 were worsening, and 1 had insufficient data to assess change.

For a detailed view of performance across each of the 52 indicators, download the Wellbeing Report March 2026 here:





Aligning Spending with Delivery of our Programme for Government

The 'Aligning Spending with Priorities: A Comparison of Programme for Government with 2025–26 Budget Allocations' report provided initial links between the PfG and high-level spending areas within departments.

Its findings indicated that the 2025–26 Executive budget was closely aligned to delivery of both the PfG Priorities and longer-term missions. Beyond the earmarked funding for specific PfG priorities within the 2025–26 budget, analysis showed that individual Ministers and their departments were also spending considerable general budget allocations across delivery of the PfG:

Around

42% of the **Resource Budget** and
78% of the **Capital Budget**

▶ was identified as directed towards the **9 PfG Priorities**

97% of the **Resource Budget** and
99% of the **Capital Budget**

▶ is directed towards our **Missions**

'Extract from Aligning Spending with Priorities: A Comparison of Programme for Government with 2025–26 Budget Allocations'

This indicates an overall connection between budget allocations and the Executive's PfG Priorities, Missions and long-term wellbeing goals.

There are caveats with this report as aligning budgets to PfG Priorities is not as straightforward as it may appear due to the complex nature of governance, fiscal constraints, and the limitations of budget classification systems. However, this report represents a significant first step in aligning budget allocations with the strategic objectives outlined within the PfG. It indicates a strong overall connection between budget allocations and the Executive's PfG priorities and long-term wellbeing goals.

A full copy of **Aligning Spending with Priorities: A Comparison of Programme for Government with 2025–26 Budget Allocations** can be downloaded here:





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