



**Time Travel through the Crystal Labyrinth**

Dunadry Hotel, Antrim  
7th March 2025







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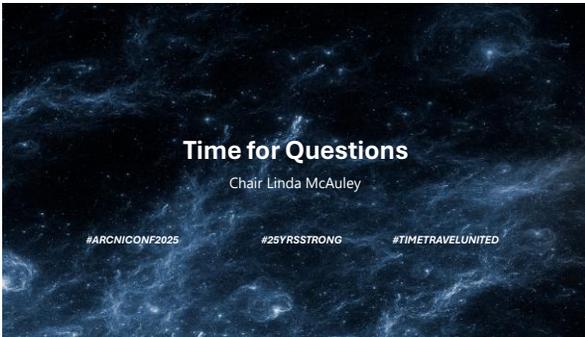
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ARC NI Conference

Laura McDonald  
Deputy Director  
Strategic Funding Division




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**What does Success Look Like?**

**Children and Young People** Our Children with SEN enjoy the benefits of inclusion and have the same opportunities as their peers without SEN

**Parents and Carers** Parents and Carers are assured and confident in the SEN Processors & Delivery Approach

**Staff and Schools** Staff and Schools are confident in and capable of meeting needs

**Services** Child and young person centred, high quality, timely, effective and efficient

**Success, in practice will look like:**

**Right Support** High quality, efficient and effective support that is evidence-based

**Right People** Having confident and highly skilled teaching and support staff who can access additional support to complement and enhance their practice

**Right Time** Effective early identification of needs and early intervention to meet those needs

**Right Place** Appropriate and timely placements that effectively meet the needs of every child and provide an appropriate learning environment

Our vision is that "children and young people with SEN get the right support, from the right people, at the right time and in the right place", thus enabling them to be happy, learning and succeeding (in line with the department's corporate vision for EVERY Child).

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**EARLY and PRIORITY YEAR ONE ACTIONS**

Delivery on this Reform Agenda will require sustained funding; however, change cannot wait. Some actions are already underway or due to begin imminently, others are subject to the outcome of a bid to the Northern Ireland Civil Service Transformation Fund – these are outlined in the table, below.

Early Actions	
Subject to funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Task and finish group to examine nomenclature around SEN</li> <li>Digitisation of the statutory assessment and review process</li> <li>Streamlining of statutory assessment and review process to meet statutory timeframes which will facilitate ensuring timely confirmation of school placements</li> <li>Strategic Area Planning for special education provision across the continuum of provision, based on projected need, ensuring full pathways across all key stages and a SEN first approach to operational plans (OP) - OP2 2024/25 has been published with a SEN First approach</li> <li>Resource pre-school education settings to support children undergoing statutory assessment</li> <li>Publication and implementation of a child-centred Graduated Response Framework</li> <li>Implementation of child-centred Local IMPACT teams</li> <li>Review of quality and appropriateness of specialist provision in mainstream schools including evaluation of Specialist Provision Early Years Foundation classes</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transform the support model for children with a statement of SEN</li> <li>Establish and deliver a pilot early childhood intervention programme</li> <li>Trial and implementation of a Speech, Language &amp; Communication Programme including the introduction of Toolkits (with IT &amp; AI interventions)</li> <li>Trial and implementation of an Inclusive Play Programme approach to provide wrap-around services including enhanced therapeutic services</li> <li>Trial and implementation of a 'Nurture Plus' approach to provide wrap-around services including enhanced therapeutic services</li> <li>Design and trial a 'Resource Hub' model which harnesses the expertise within Special Schools and develops their role to support inclusion across the wider school system</li> <li>Research, design and trial of Inclusion methodologies to promote equitable inclusive learning experiences</li> </ul>

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# ARC NI Conference

Graeme Wilkinson  
Director of Skills in the Department for the Economy

Creating a globally competitive economy that works for everyone

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## Improving Equality and Inclusion



**Financial Support:**  
**Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)**  
 A supplementary allowance available to students who incur extra expenses from attending a higher educational course as a direct result of a disability, a mental health condition, or specific learning difficulty.

**Additional Support Fund (ASF)**  
 FE colleges provide £5m annually to support students with learning difficulties and disabilities access further education.

**Careers Support:**  
 Impartial and personalised advice and guidance on an **all-age, all-ability** basis.  
 Professionally qualified careers advisers, through partnership working with post-primary schools, including **special schools**, the Department's careers services are prioritised for pupils with barriers and those who are considered vulnerable and most in need.

**Programmes:**  
**Skills for Life & Work (SfLW)**  
 Stepping stone for participants leaving school with **low or no qualifications** to access further training and employment.  
 Participants with a **disability** can access the programme **up to age 22** and receive an additional year on the programme.  
**Step Up (Disability Access Route to Education and Employment (DARE))** - Delivered by **FE sector**  
 Support measures for those who require **additional support** because of disability to enhance the skills and employability opportunities.  
**Peace Plus Youth Programme (Six projects)**  
 7,500 young people who are not in education, employment or training and who as a rule, do not readily engage or sustain engagement in other programmes.  
**Mencap NI** is leading **HEROES** project - bespoke, learning programmes to young people with a diverse range of abilities.

**Post School - Special Educational Needs (SEN):**  
 • Review of current skills and training provision and legislative protections for young people with SEN - due to report to Ministers in the Spring  
 • Working with **DC on the Delivery Plan** commitment to improve transition for young people with SEN

**Widening Participation:**  
**Ministerial Priority** - all those who have the ability to benefit from higher education have the **opportunity** to do so.  
 Target **emerge** groups include areas of high deprivation, those with a **disability (physical, sensory or learning)**, adult returners and those who have experience of the care system.

Creating a globally competitive economy that works for everyone

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# ARC NI Conference

Mark McGuicken  
Director of Disability and Older People



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## Department of Health



### Health & Social Care

- £500 million per annum to support 9,000 adults
- We support lots of people well, but there is room to improve....
- Interfaces across government
- Learning Disability Service Model
  - Evidence base
  - Our approach
  - Next Steps

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**ARC NI Conference**  
 David Lennox  
 Head of Corporate Communications and  
 Engagement Division

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## Key Points



- Participation in JAM Card scheme
- Autism: a guide for criminal justice professionals
- Registered Intermediaries Scheme
- NI Appropriate Adult Scheme
- Examples of actions taken within the Northern Ireland Prison Service and Youth Justice Agency.

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 Communities  
 for  
 People  
 with  
 Disabilities  
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

# ARC NI Conference: Panel Discussion

7<sup>th</sup> March 2025

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**Deirdre Ward**  
 Director for Work and Wellbeing, DfC  
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## Improving Equality and Inclusion

**Key areas from Department for Communities (with a focus on Work and Wellbeing)**

- **Executive Social Inclusion Strategies:**  
 Leading development of a new Executive Disability Strategy for Northern Ireland, with a primary aim of improving the lives of people living here who are deaf or disabled, so that they can play a full and active role in all aspects of society.
- **Delivery of Employability Provision:**  
 Offering a range of provision to support disabled people and those with health conditions to move closer, enter, and progress in employment – across programmes, frontline services, commissioning research, and delivering training and support.
- **A new Disability and Work Strategy for NI:**  
 Co-producing a new strategy with a wide range of partners to set a 10-year target for increasing our disability employment rate – focusing on 'Personalised Support', 'Inclusive Skills, Careers and Educational Transitions', 'Supporting and Enabling Employers', and 'Strategic and Structural Enablers'.
- **Collaborating to 'Join the Dots':**  
 Working with many partners to join-up agendas, break down silos, and take a holistic approach to improving the support to individuals with barriers to work - driving change that will see greater equality and inclusion across the labour market.

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