

Overview of the Review of Public Administration – Main Policy Areas

The Department and the Education and Skills Authority (ESA)

The Department will focus on strategy and policy, and set priorities and standards for the ESA, schools and youth services. Operational functions and services will be delegated to the ESA, which will be responsible for the delivery of education support services to schools and youth providers.

The ESA will have responsibility for a wide range on functions, including performance management of schools, area planning, procurement, delivery and maintenance of the education estate, children's services and operational planning and delivery of school support services.

Papers: 1 - 3

Governance and Accountability

It is proposed that the ESA will have a small, highly skilled Board of 8 to 12 members, led by a Chairperson appointed by the Minister for Education. The Board will be accountable to the Minister, and the Minister in turn will be accountable to the Assembly. The ESA will be subject to the normal government accounting and accountability rules.

Paper: 5

The schools estate

All property currently held by the Education and Library Boards will transfer initially to the ESA. However, a policy team within the Department is currently exploring other options for ownership of controlled schools and this should be resolved in the second education Bill.

Papers: 6 (and 20 - not yet published)

The ESA will have responsibility for the school's estate, including appraisals, development proposals, area-based planning and investment plans. In the second Bill it is intended to modernise the legislation for this area of work.

Paper: 6

Ethos

The rights of schools and groups of schools to develop, maintain, define and interpret their own distinctive ethos will be recognised and supported.

Paper: Overview paper

New administrative arrangements for schools

All schools will operate within a common administrative framework, managed centrally by the ESA.

Paper: 5

Maximised Supported Autonomy for schools

The detail of how Maximised Supported Autonomy (MSA) will operate will be developed by a working group led by the Department.

The underlying concept is that administrative and management functions should be delegated to the lowest possible level within the education sector,

taking account of capacity, and with as much or as little support as is appropriate or required in each case. Schools will be supported by the ESA to build their level of expertise and increase their level of autonomy over time where this is appropriate.

Paper: 2 and Overview paper

The Employer and Employing Authority roles

Schools will continue to have an employer role for their own staff, but the ESA will be the single employing authority for all teaching and non-teaching staff in all schools.

Approximately 86% of staff will be covered in the first Education Bill with the remaining 14%, (working in voluntary grammar and grant-maintained integrated schools), covered in the second Bill.

Paper: 7

School Improvement

Raising standards and school improvement is to be addressed in the first Bill. The ESA will be responsible for monitoring the performance of individual schools, for challenging performance and for providing the required support, especially to under-performing schools.

Paper: 13

The Education Advisory Forum (EAF)

Education Advisory Forum (EAF) will be established to bring together expertise and knowledge from across the education sector, to work co-operatively for the good of the education system as a whole.

Membership is likely to include representatives of parents, young people, teachers and each of the school sectors.

Paper: 4 and Overview paper

Sectoral support arrangements

The Department will provide modest financial support to each of the sectors to enable them to contribute effectively to the new arrangements. Although publicly owned schools do not currently have a single representative voice, arrangements will also be in place for this sector.

Paper: Overview paper and 21 – not yet published

The Director of Children's Services

A Director of Children's Services will be appointed, to work with partners such as health and social services, criminal justice and local District Councils to develop arrangements for better integration of services to children.

The Director of Children's Services is likely to be the key contact on community planning within the ESA and will work to develop local partnership arrangements now that are capable of linking into the community planning process in each local council area as it evolves in the coming years.

Paper 12 and Overview paper