



Queen's University  
Belfast

The Centre for  
Shared Education

SCHOOL OF  
Education



# FINAL SUMMARY REPORT (Volume 3)



Queen's University  
Belfast



The  
Executive Office

## Research summary

In 2012, a team of researchers from Queen's University Belfast and Stranmillis University College was awarded funding for a three-year research project entitled 'Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation' (the ILiAD study).

- The ILiAD study aimed to understand some of the reasons for differential educational achievement within and between deprived areas in Northern Ireland (NI).
- Previous studies had concluded that there is a statistical relationship between deprivation and educational underachievement. As measures of deprivation and poverty increase, measures of educational underachievement also increase.
- Preliminary interrogation of secondary educational data sets for NI suggested that the factors involved in educational achievement within and between deprived areas may be more complex.
- This study aimed to plug this gap by exploring anomalies in educational performance among the most deprived Ward areas in NI.
- The ILiAD study is an in-depth, multi-level case study analysis of a sample of seven NI electoral Ward areas, selected on the basis of religious composition, measures of multiple deprivation and differentials in educational achievement.
- Findings obtained from the range of respondents within the seven Ward areas are supplemented by secondary data analysis of a variety of differential educational factors.
- Thematic findings associated with individual, home, community, school and structural factors are identified across the case sites that contribute towards understanding the dynamics and contributory factors to differential educational achievement for these seven Ward areas.
- Since qualitative, in-depth case study approach generates different kinds of insights from that of quantitative studies, no inferences or population-based recommendations can be made to Northern Ireland as a whole.

**This research forms part of a programme of independent research commissioned by the then Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) – now the Executive Office (TEO) to inform the policy development process. Consequently, the views expressed and conclusions drawn are those of the authors and not necessarily those of OFMDFM / TEO.**

Research for this report, Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation (ILiAD), was conducted by a team of researchers from the School of Education and the School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology at Queen's University Belfast, Stranmillis University College, and with independent research consultants:

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## Glossary

AEP	Alternative Education Provision
CCMS	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
DE	Department of Education
DE(NI)	Department of Education (Northern Ireland)
DSD	Department of Social Development
EA	Education Authority
EOTAS	Education Other Than At School
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
FSM	Free School Meals
FMSE	Free School Meals Entitlement
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
MDM	Multiple Deprivation Measure
NI	Northern Ireland
NIMDM	Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure
NINIS	Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency
PfG	Programme for Government (2016-2021)
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SOA	Super Output Area
T:BUC	Together Building a United Community

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- Those who attended presentations and conferences throughout the three years of this research and gave their comments and feedback on the data analysis presented;
- The project officers within the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), Janis Scallon and Michael Thompson, who provided guidance and support throughout. We would particularly like to thank OFMDFM for funding this entire study, without which this research would not have been possible.

## ILiAD Volumes

This report summarises the main findings of the project entitled: Investigating Links to Achievement and Deprivation (ILiAD).

Findings for the project are supported by two additional reports (Volume 1 and Volume 2), which are available online (through Queen's University Belfast – provide link)

**Volume 1: ILiAD Main Technical Report** provides a comprehensive account of the ILiAD study, including a full literature review, research rationale, methodology, sampling and analysis of the case study data.

**Volume 2: ILiAD Case Studies of Seven Electoral Wards** provides in-depth individual description and analysis for each of the seven case study electoral wards.

**Volume 3: ILiAD Final Summary Report** provides an overview of the key cross-cutting findings on patterns of differential achievement for the seven case study electoral wards.



## Section 1: Key Findings

The aim of the *Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation (ILiAD)* study is to understand some of the patterns of educational achievement within and between deprived Ward areas in Northern Ireland (NI).

### **Abbreviated summary of key findings for the seven case study wards:**

The *Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation (ILiAD)* is a qualitative case study of seven Ward areas that fall within the top 20% of high deprivation across Northern Ireland (NIMDM). These comprise Whiterock, The Diamond, Woodstock, Duncairn, Rosemount, Dunclug and Tullycarnet.

Findings from the study identify a number of immediate, school, and structural/policy level factors that are viewed as contributing to differential educational achievement (5 GCSE A\*-C including English and Maths) in the seven Wards.

While each of the seven Wards was found to present a unique picture of influences on young people's educational achievement, a series of common factors were identified as enhancing and/or inhibiting educational outcomes.

### **1. Common factors that were identified as *enhancing* educational achievement across the seven Wards included:**

#### **At Immediate (individual-home-community) level**

- Individual resilience
- Parental support and encouragement
- Sense of connectedness to local community
- Local youth and community input

#### **At School level**

- Visionary and collaborative leadership
- Effective school-community linkages and parental accessibility
- Provision of diverse curricula
- Positive teacher-pupil relationships
- Effective pastoral care and support for SEN pupils

#### **At Structural/policy level**

- Collaborative and proactive community services
- New and Improved school buildings and facilities
- High attainment performance of those that attend grammar school

**2. Common factors that were identified as *inhibiting* educational achievement across the seven Wards included:**

**At Immediate (individual-home-community) level**

- Young people's mental health issues
- Adverse home conditions and inadequate levels of parental support
- Inter-generational transmission of educational failure
- Low self-esteem and aspirations of some young people

**At School level**

- Low expectations on the part of some schools/ teachers
- Weak school-community linkages
- Perceptions of some schools as 'middle-class' and 'detached'
- High rates of absenteeism and exclusion in some schools
- Insufficient support for SEN and behavioural problems

**At Structural/policy level**

- Current economic climate
- Legacies of the recent conflict
- Spatial detachment of schools and the communities they serve
- Variability in availability of quality pre-school provision
- Academic selection - negative effects

**3. In addition to the common factors identified (above), each of the seven Wards presents a unique interplay of immediate, school and structural/policy level influences that are seen as contributing to young people's educational outcomes and resulting in differential achievement patterns.**

**4. Profiles of educational achievement (5 GCSEs A\*-C) alter considerably for Wards when the core subjects, Maths and English are included or excluded.**

**5. Variation across religious background, gender and FMSE provide some meaningful explanation of differentials in educational achievement between the case study Wards.**

## Headline Findings from the ILiAD Case Studies

### Immediate (individual/home/community) factors

#### **Immediate drivers of attainment**

The educational attainment outcomes of young people in the seven case study Wards are enhanced in the presence of: adequate levels of parental or familial support and encouragement; their own personal resilience; a sense of connectedness to their community; and effective local youth and community work.

#### *Parental support*

Parental/familial support and encouragement are viewed as an important determiner of academic achievement and children who receive the greatest home support are most likely to succeed at school.

#### *Individual resilience*

Individual characteristics of resilience and self-determination are seen as key to educational achievement particularly for young people who live in adverse home conditions and/or those who have limited parental support.

#### *Sense of connectedness to local community*

Young people having a strong sense of connection to their local community have a positive impact on attainment and on their attitudes towards learning.

#### *Local youth and community work*

The case studies evidence the value of effective local youth and community work input in terms of encouraging attainment in these areas.

#### **Immediate inhibitors of attainment**

The attainment prospects of some young people in the seven case studies were viewed to be inhibited by: adverse home conditions and inadequate levels of parental support; the inter-generational transmission of educational failure; the low self-esteem of some young people; and increasing levels of mental ill-health identified amongst young people.

#### *Adverse home conditions and inadequate parental support*

The case study data evidence a section of young people whose attainment prospects are limited because they live in adverse home circumstances and/or have inadequate levels of parental support.

#### *Intergenerational transmission of educational failure*

Parental early experiences of educational failure were associated with children's fear of failure, low expectations and negative attitudes to schooling.

### *Low self-esteem and aspirations of some young people*

A number of young people from areas of high deprivation suffer low self-esteem and lack aspiration as a result of negative community attitudes around education.

### *Young people's mental health*

Increasing levels of mental ill-health identified amongst young people are having a negative impact on attainment and are creating additional pressures for schools.

## School-level factors

### **School-level drivers of attainment**

The most important school-level drivers of attainment in the case study Wards are: visionary and collaborative school leadership; effective school-community linkages and accessibility to parents; provision of diverse curricula; positive teacher-pupil relationships; inter-school and inter-agency collaboration and Extended Schools provision; effective pastoral care and support for pupils with SEN.

### *Visionary and collaborative school leadership*

Visionary and collaborative school leadership can have a markedly positive impact on attainment.

### *Effective school-community linkages and accessibility to parents*

Attainment is enhanced when schools develop effective links with local communities and are viewed as accessible by parents.

### *Provision of diverse curricula*

The provision of diverse curricula was highlighted as an important driver of achievement. Participants across all Wards stressed the need for an inclusive system that afforded young people access to a broad-based education in which the value of different forms of knowledge and skills, not just those associated with academic achievement, was validated.

### *Positive teacher-pupil relationships*

The case study data confirm the crucial importance of the quality of teacher interaction with pupils to significantly enhance the potential for achievement.

### *Collaborative schools, inter-agency working and Full Service programmes*

Collaborative working between schools and locally-based groups and agencies and the provision of Full or Extended Schools programmes are viewed as an important enablers of attainment on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### *Effective pastoral care and support for pupils with Special Education Needs (SEN)*

Securing the social and emotional welfare of pupils was vital not only to help pupils effectively engage in learning through early detection and intervention but also to support a more holistic development of young people.

### **School-level inhibitors of attainment**

Attainment in areas of deprivation is often inhibited by: low expectations on the part of some schools; a perception among some parents of schools as “middle class” and “detached”; the high rates of absenteeism and exclusion in some schools; and insufficient support for SEN.

#### *Low expectations on the part of some schools*

It was frequently argued in the data that low expectations on the part of some schools and teachers were an inhibitor of academic success. Several parents held the view that some schools and teachers “give up” on pupils if they don’t see them “trying enough.”

#### *Perception among some parents of schools and teachers as ‘middle class’ and ‘detached’*

There was a perception amongst some parents (particularly in the Controlled sector) that some schools and teachers are “detached” and “middle class” and that this made it more difficult for these parents to play a fuller role in their children’s education.

#### *High rates of absenteeism and exclusion in some schools*

In the case study Wards, the schools with higher rates of absenteeism achieved lower rates of attainment. The data also highlight higher school absenteeism rates within mainly Protestant Wards compared to the mainly Catholic Wards.

#### *Insufficient support for SEN*

Rates of young people registered with SEN were higher in non-selective schools across the Wards and concerns were raised about the adequacy of provision for educational support.

## **Structural/Policy-level factors**

### **Structural/policy-level drivers of attainment**

Across the seven case studies, the most significant structural/policy drivers of educational attainment were: collaborative and proactive community services; new and improved school buildings and facilities; and the high attainment performance of the Grammar sector.

### *Collaborative and proactive community services*

Collaboration and interagency promotion of young people's engagement in and with education were identified as an important enabler of attainment in the case study Wards.

### *New and improved school buildings and facilities*

It was also commonly claimed that new and improved school buildings and facilities have a positive impact on young people in terms of encouraging learning.

### *The high attainment performance of those who attend the Grammar sector*

In the case study Wards, the high attainment performance of the Grammar schools is evident. The best performing schools in this study were Grammar schools; and the principals, teachers, parents and young people who attended Grammar schools were supportive of academic selection.

## **Structural/Policy-level inhibitors of attainment**

The most significant policy/structural inhibitors of attainment in these disadvantaged communities were: the current economic climate; legacies of the recent conflict; the spatial detachment of schools and the communities they serve; variability of availability of quality pre-school provision; insufficient SEN and EWO support; and some of the negative processes associated with academic selection.

### *The current economic climate*

The current economic climate, in particular the lack of employment opportunities, is having a detrimental effect in terms on educational aspiration for some young people.

### *Legacies of the recent conflict*

In some communities, legacies of the recent conflict continue to have a negative impact on attainment levels and some young people's attitudes to school and education.

### *The spatial detachment of schools and the communities they serve*

The spatial detachment of some schools from the communities they serve creates additional expense and logistical problems for parents, inhibits the engendering of close school-community relationships, and gives young people a sense that education is not something that is prioritised in their community.

### *Variability in availability of quality pre-school provision*

The availability of quality pre-school provision was seen as an important enabler of attainment. However, this provision was found to vary between the Wards.

### *Academic selection (negative effects)*

Notwithstanding the attainment performance of the grammar sector, some of the issues arising from academic selection were identified as inhibiting attainment among some young people in the case study Wards. Such issues were seen to include: the negative impact in terms of confidence levels and self-esteem of those pupils who fail or do not sit the transfer test; Grammar schools 'creaming' likely high achievers from non-selective schools – thus depriving pupils in the non-grammar sector of positive (peer) role models; and the ways in which the current system of selection favours those parents with the means to pay for private tuition.

## Differentials across Wards

### Attainment differentials across religious background

- There were marked differentials in educational achievement between predominantly Catholic (Whiterock, The Diamond and Rosemount) and predominantly Protestant Wards (Woodstock, Duncairn and Tullycarnet).
- The three predominantly Catholic Wards in the study (Whiterock, The Diamond and Rosemount) had higher levels of attainment in terms of five GCSEs A\*-C (2012/13) than the three predominantly Protestant Wards (Duncairn, Woodstock and Tullycarnet).
- In the case study Wards, attainment differentials across religious background were associated with: the relative value placed on education; perceived levels of detachment or attachment of schools; varying levels of community cohesion; and variances in school absenteeism rates.

### Attainment differentials across gender

- Out of the seven case study Wards, girls consistently outperformed boys at GCSE Grade A\*-C in all but one Ward area (The Diamond Ward). The data here suggesting that such differentials are related to varying levels of value attached to education, cultural expectations around educational achievement, self-esteem and absenteeism rates.

## Some Implications

Findings from the ILiAD case study Wards are not generalizable, nevertheless, common themes identified offer a number of potential implications for policy and practice consideration:

**Immediate (Individual-Home-Community) issues** suggest an important role for relevant agencies and policy makers with a responsibility for improving education and disadvantage to:

- Seek to build resilience in young people from these disadvantaged backgrounds from the earliest age by mitigating risk factors and actively supporting activities that engender higher levels of self-esteem and self-agency;
- Continue to support parents and caregivers to make a fuller contribution in the education of their children and to encourage high aspirations;
- Recognise and address the ongoing and complex learning needs of young people with mental health problems by properly resourcing services for young people with mental health problems; and
- Utilise and integrate the valuable assets (including the positive role models) of local youth and community work, which is directed towards encouraging learning and personal development in disadvantaged communities.

**School issues** highlight the need for schools, institutions and government departments with a responsibility for improving education and disadvantage in these Ward areas to:

- Facilitate visionary leadership in schools via capturing and sharing best practice models and ensuring that collaborative skills are integral to any review of headship qualifications;
- Acknowledge there is a need for schools in these disadvantaged Ward areas to work at having a 'presence' in the communities of the young people and families they serve. For example, where significant spatial distances exist (between schools and communities), schools need to increase their provision of outreach as appropriate;
- Support and encourage all schools continuously to monitor and evaluate (as part of school development planning) existing school-community and school-home linkages and make any necessary procedural changes to ensure that such linkages are as effective and accessible as possible;



- Induce and resource schools to network and engage collaboratively with each other, FE and HE and with external agencies in pursuance of shared, area-based learning/attainment goals, social mixing and reconciliation, and models of best practice around e.g. inclusive curriculum, pastoral care provision and support for SEN pupils;
- Support and mentor teachers who feel (or who are perceived as) 'detached' to find ways to increase their levels of understanding about social difference and improve connectedness with their school's pupils and the communities they come from;
- Recognise the strong pattern of relationship between attendance and attainment and properly resource the work of EWOs and other agencies in terms of early intervention and inter-agency support to address absenteeism.

**Structural/policy issues** highlight the need for institutions and government departments with a responsibility for improving education and disadvantage for these Ward areas to recognise:

- It is important to continue to reinforce the power of local community-based activity and the ethos of partnership that exists to benefit young people and families within these disadvantaged communities. Added to this, it is vital to encourage active citizenship, especially through youth engagement; and also for elected representatives to build strong relationships with these communities in order to represent more fully the issues of poverty and education;
- There is value in sustaining investment in new and improved school buildings and facilities. These investments have a significant and positive impact on young people from disadvantaged areas in terms of raising educational aspiration;
- Within some of the case study areas, legacies of the recent conflict are having a negative impact in terms of attainment. These communities require patient, proactive and ongoing support to help them mediate their post-conflict transitions;
- While access to a grammar school provides pupils from these Ward areas with distinct opportunities for success in terms of attainment, successful navigation of the academic selection process is often contingent on parents having the financial means to pay for private tuition, which remains an equity issue.

## Section 2 ILiAD Study: Context and Approach

### Introduction

This report presents summary findings from the *Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation* (ILiAD) research study, which was funded by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) between 2012 and 2015. Using a case study approach, the overarching aim of the study was to understand some of the patterns of differential educational achievement within and between a selected number of deprived Ward areas in Northern Ireland (NI).

### Rationale

An extensive review of the literature identified relationships between poverty and educational under-achievement (see Appendix 1 for a summary) including individual, family, school and community factors. What this review told us clearly was that quantitative studies, carried out within the UK<sup>1</sup> and globally<sup>2</sup>, demonstrate that there is a direct link between deprivation and educational underachievement. These studies show that as measures of deprivation increase, measures of educational success tend to decrease proportionately. For NI, a causal relationship between regional deprivation and school performance has been identified<sup>3</sup> at primary school level. Additionally, the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey (2012), which provides international benchmarks in mathematics, reading and science literacy, has demonstrated that the link between underachievement and socio-economic disadvantage is stronger in NI than in most other OECD countries<sup>4</sup>.

In 2012, at the outset of the ILiAD study, we carried out a preliminary baseline analysis of Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service (NINIS) data. This suggested that the factors involved in educational achievement within deprived areas in NI might be more complex than is suggested solely by statistical analysis. Patterns arising from this secondary data analysis indicated the existence of areas of high deprivation in NI, where achievement appeared to be higher (e.g. The Diamond) than in areas of less deprivation (e.g. Dunclug). Concomitantly, there were also areas of lesser deprivation (e.g. Tullycarnet) where achievement is lower than areas of high deprivation (e.g.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Sosu E & Ellis, S (2014) Closing the attainment gap in Scottish education, Joseph Rowntree Foundation. URL <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/closing-attainment-gap-scottish-education>

<sup>2</sup> For example, Chmielewski, A. K & Reardon, S. F (2016) State of the Union - The Poverty and Inequality Report 2016: Education; Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality; URL [inequality.com/sotu](http://inequality.com/sotu)

<sup>3</sup> Ferguson, N.T.N & Michaelsen, M M (2013) The Legacy of the Conflict: regional Deprivation and School Performance in Northern Ireland. HiCN Working Paper 151. University of Sussex..URL <http://www.hicn.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/HiCN-WP-151.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/pisa-2013.pdf>

Whiterock and Woodstock). This qualitative study was thus designed to explore the potential factors associated with such apparent deviations from the general trend. It did this by focusing on the educational performance and social and educational conditions of young people growing up in seven of the most deprived of the 582 Wards in NI. The unit of analysis we selected for the ILiAD study was larger electoral Ward<sup>5</sup> areas that we viewed as typifying more naturally occurring ‘communities’ in NI rather than the smaller, statistically comparable Super Output Areas (SOAs)<sup>6</sup>.

### Policy context

The ILiAD study identifies and explores some of the factors (immediate, school, and structural) that are seen as contributing to differential educational achievement in seven selected Ward areas of high deprivation within Northern Ireland (NI). The study has the potential to make a small yet significant contribution to underscoring the importance of the Northern Ireland Executive’s draft strategic *Programme for Government* (PfG) (2016-2012) by providing some supporting evidence. This ILiAD summary report provides a number of spatially focused findings and insights relating to these seven Wards that are relevant to the stated outcomes and indicators that address underachievement arising from socio-economic disadvantage in NI. As part of the PfG Framework 2016-2012<sup>7</sup> (p13-14), the interrelated summary outcomes – ‘Outcome 4: We enjoy long, healthy, active lives’ and ‘Outcome 5: We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential’ - make specific mention of tackling issues related to deprivation and poverty and reducing educational inequality. These are associated with relevant indicators and outcome measures identified below in Table 1.

Indicator	Outcome Measure
11 Improve educational outcomes	% of school leavers achieving at level 2 or above including English and Math
12 Reduce educational inequality	Gap between % of school leavers and % of FSME school leavers achieving at level 2 or above including English and Maths
13 Improve quality of education	% of schools where provision for learning is good or better

*Table 1: The Programme for Government Framework – Specific Indicators and Measures relevant to education and deprivation.*

<sup>5</sup> Wards are the smallest administrative unit in Northern Ireland and are set by the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner (n=582). Average population of 3,000 (range 700 to 9,500).

<sup>6</sup> Super Output Areas (SOAs) (n=8900 were created in 2011 to permit deprivation comparisons on a ward-by-ward basis taking into account measures of population size and mutual proximity. SOAs should have population counts that fall between a lower threshold of 1300 and an upper threshold of 2800, with a target size of circa 2000. (NISRA [http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/super\\_output\\_areas.htm](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/super_output_areas.htm))

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/newnigov/draft-pfg-framework-2016-21.pdf>

The findings also speak to the NI Executive's, *Delivering Social Change: Child Poverty Strategy* (2016),<sup>8</sup> which encourages joined-up working across departments and with those delivering programmes to mitigate the impact of poverty on children's lives and life chances. Additionally, aspects of the findings relate to another NI Executive strategy, *The Together: Building a United Community* (T:BUC) (2013), which outlines how government, community and individuals will work together to build a united community and achieve change and where one of the key priorities specifically refers to children and young people<sup>9</sup>.

More specific to aspects of schooling, a number of issues arising from the findings resonate with and underscore the goals of the Department of Education's policy for school improvement, *Every School a Good School* (2011)<sup>10</sup> that is striving to improve educational achievement, tackle underachievement and improve equity of access.

Although not generalizable to the wider population or to other Wards, the summary findings may be of interest to those concerned with understanding and improving educational achievement in other areas of high deprivation by offering some lessons on how certain Ward areas, despite adverse conditions, are managing to defy statistical expectations and improve the educational chances of many of their young people.

### Case Study Approach

The methodology for ILIAD, including the criteria and selection of the seven case study electoral wards, is summarised in **Appendix 2**. Fuller details are available in **Volume 1: ILIAD: Main Technical Report. Appendix 3** of this report summarises the case study Ward areas. Full case studies are presented in **Volume 2: Case Studies of Seven Electoral Wards**.

This ILiAD report represents the understandings derived from studying seven of the top 20% of deprived Wards (MDM) for NI. The seven case study sites selected for the ILiAD study are tabled below, according to their deprivation ranking on the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM)<sup>11</sup>, where rank 1 represents the most deprived Ward and rank 582 represents the least deprived Ward in Northern Ireland. The ILiAD case sample of electoral Wards ranges from rank 1 (Whiterock) to rank 109

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<sup>8</sup> Department of Communities, *The Child Poverty Strategy* (March 2016) <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/child-poverty-strategy>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/together-building-united-community>

<sup>10</sup> *Every School a Good School: A policy for school improvement* (2011) <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/every-school-good-school-policy-school-improvement>

<sup>11</sup> The NIMDM 2010 is made up from 52 indicators (2007-2009) grouped into 'domains' of deprivation: Income Deprivation; Employment Deprivation; Health Deprivation and Disability; Education, Skills and Training Deprivation; Proximity to Services; Living Environment and Crime and Disorder. The overall multiple deprivation measure comprises a weighted combination of these seven domains. Electoral Wards range from rank 1 (most deprived) to rank 582 (least deprived).

[http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/archive/Updateof2005Measures/NIMDM\\_2010\\_Guidance\\_Leaflet.pdf](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/archive/Updateof2005Measures/NIMDM_2010_Guidance_Leaflet.pdf)

(Tullycarnet), thus, all seven fall within the top 20% of deprived wards in Northern Ireland.

Electoral Ward Area	NIMDM Deprivation Rank
Whiterock	1
The Diamond	12
Duncairn	14
Woodstock	39
Dunclug	44
Rosemount	83
Tullycarnet	109

Table 2: Seven case study electoral Wards selected across Northern Ireland by their deprivation ranking according to NIMDM.

The geographic locations of the seven case study Wards across NI are shown in Figure 1 below.

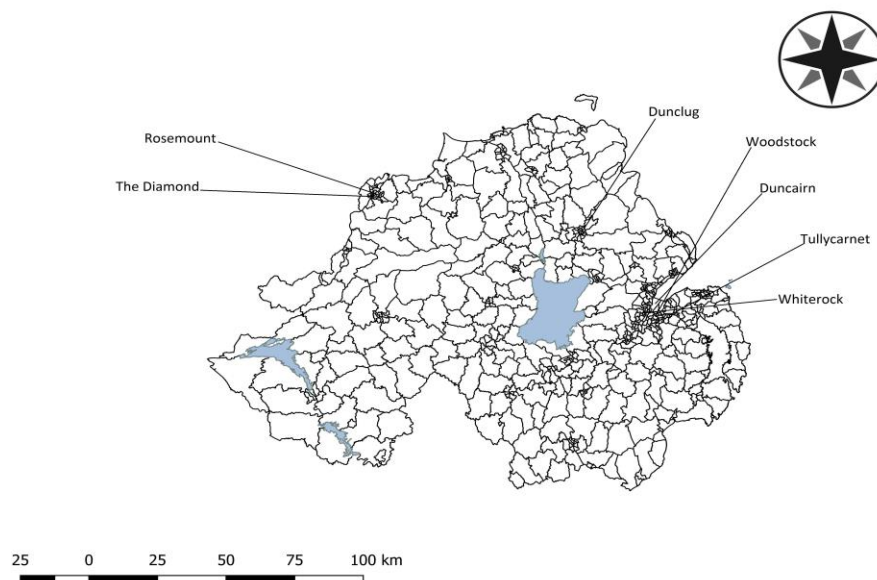


Figure 1: Location of the seven case study electoral Wards across Northern Ireland.

Figure 2 below presents a baseline summary of the differential patterns of relationship between the deprivation level (NIMDM ranking) and educational achievement, as measured

by the percentage of young people achieving five GCSEs grade A\*-C for 2012-2013, for each of the seven case study Wards.

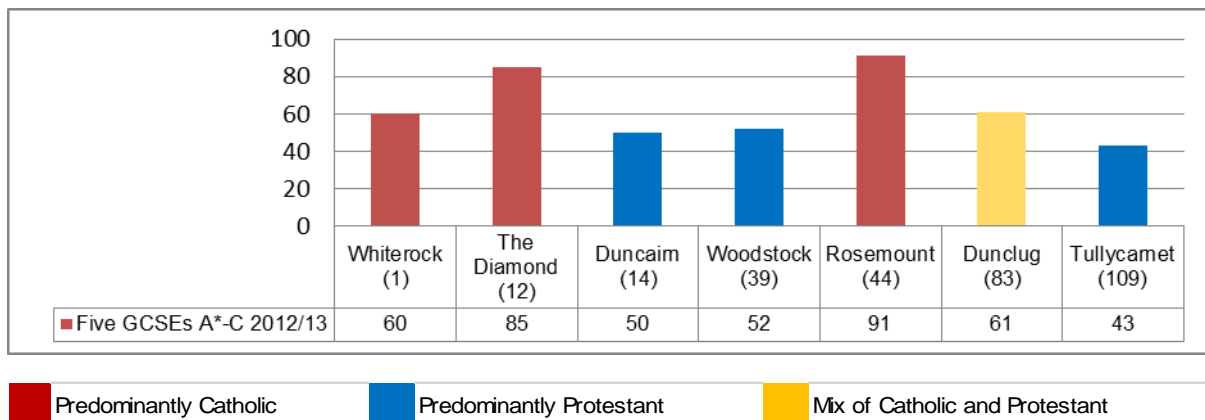


Figure 2: Percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE passes at Grade A\*-C (2012/13) including English and Maths by Multiple Deprivation Ranking (MDM 2010)

In terms of symmetry, 3 predominantly Catholic Wards (Whiterock, The Diamond, Rosemount), 3 predominantly Protestant Wards (Woodstock, Duncairn, Tullycamet) and 1 mixed (Catholic and Protestant) Ward (Dunclug) were chosen as the focus of the case studies.

## Case study approach – strengths and limitations

The goal of the ILiAD study was to generate rich, detailed data that could contribute to in-depth understanding of each of the Ward contexts in relation to some of the patterns of differential educational achievement within and between these deprived areas in Northern Ireland (NI). Although supported by relevant secondary data, the research was largely qualitative in nature, with evidence being drawn from a range of stakeholder and participant interviews and focus groups within each of the Ward areas (see Appendix 2, Table 8 page 77 for details).

Case study research emphasises the value of understanding the dynamic relationship between various social and cultural factors as they occur in natural settings and, in this case, in order to seek to identify the factors that promote and inhibit educational achievement in each Ward context. The qualitative data were systematically analysed<sup>12</sup> to determine salient thematic issues, drawing on a force-field framework to illustrate the

<sup>12</sup> Drawing on Attride-Stirling, J (2001) *Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research*, *Qualitative Research*, vol. 1(3): 385-405

key factors seen as enabling and inhibiting educational achievement at the different Immediate, School and Structural levels within and across Wards.

The strengths of the ILiAD study lie in the fact that it combines qualitative findings with statistical data over time and from a broad range of stakeholder representatives for each Ward. The triangulation of methods across multi-sites also adds to the robustness of the findings. Nevertheless, findings arising from the case study data cannot be generalised to other Wards or to the larger population of NI. Despite this limitation, it is hoped that the pattern of findings can contribute to a fuller understanding of the issues involved in the complex relationship between measures of educational achievement and multiple deprivation specifically as this pertains to these electoral Ward areas.

In the following section, the ILiAD case study qualitative findings are presented for the seven Wards. Enabling and inhibiting factors to educational attainment, derived from the qualitative data, are distinguished separately for the purposes of analysis and presentation of key findings at:

- Immediate level
- School level
- Structural/policy level.

In reality, however, the relationship and interdependence of these factors and levels is a dynamic one. The balance and profile for each of the Ward areas, in relation to these factors, is uniquely different. More holistic pictures of the Wards and the fluid, inter-relationship between these factors is presented in Ward case summaries in **Appendix 3** and more fully in **Volume2: ILiAD Case Studies of Seven Electoral Wards**.

## Section 3 Case Study Qualitative Findings

The seven qualitative case studies examine the immediate (individual-home-community) level, school-level and structural-level (including policy) factors, which are identified as having a local impact on educational achievement.

Across these three levels, a series of ‘drivers’ and ‘inhibitors’ to academic achievement has been identified. Respondents present the most commonly identified themes supported by indicative comments from the interview and focus group transcripts. These are supplemented, where appropriate, by reference to secondary data for the Ward areas. Further case study analyses of drivers and inhibitors of educational achievement for each Ward are illustrated in **Appendix 3**.

### The impact of Immediate level (individual-Home-Community) factors on attainment

This section presents a summary of findings on the main immediate (individual-home-community) factors that are viewed as acting as drivers and inhibitors to educational achievement across the seven Wards. These aim to illustrate the pattern of these drivers and inhibitors across the Wards as well as highlighting some of the unique features of individual, home, community characteristics that differentiate individual Wards.

#### *Immediate (individual/home/community) Level Factors*

Drivers	Inhibitors
<i>Individual resilience</i>	<i>Young people’s mental health issues</i>
<i>Parental support and encouragement</i>	<i>Inter-generational transmission of educational failure</i>
<i>Sense of connectedness to local community</i>	<i>Low self-esteem and aspirations of some young people</i>
<i>Local youth and community work input</i>	<i>Adverse home conditions and inadequate parental support</i>

*Table 3: Key drivers and inhibitors to educational achievement at Immediate (Individual-home-community) level.*



## Immediate (individual/home/community) factors

### Immediate drivers of attainment

**The educational attainment outcomes of young people in the seven case study Wards are enhanced in the presence of: adequate levels of parental or familial support and encouragement; their own personal resilience; a sense of connectedness to their community; and effective local youth and community work.**

### *Parental support and encouragement*

**Parental/familial support and encouragement are viewed as an important determiner of academic achievement and children who receive the greatest home support are most likely to succeed at school.**

In all seven case study Wards, the role of supportive parents in driving young people's educational aspirations was frequently cited. There was consensus among both school and community respondents that children with the most supportive home backgrounds were most likely to succeed in terms of attainment. For example, a principal argued that "supportive parents" were "the single most important factor" in terms of raising attainment; a parent spoke about "always having an interest in their homework and making sure it's done and making sure it's the best they can possibly do"; and a pupil claimed that she was motivated by wanting to "make my parents proud."

"If you get an A\*, I just love going home and telling my mummy and daddy." (Post-primary Pupil)

Parent respondents stressed a need to instill in their children a sense of belief in their own abilities, coupled with an appreciation of the rewards gained from hard work and the pursuit of high standards.

"I always say to my kids as long as you try your best at everything then at least you can walk away knowing that you've tried your very best." (Parent)

"We tell our kids every day, you can achieve what you want to achieve if you put your mind to it, you can be what you want to be ... that's the difference, we believe in our kids and we believe in their future ... and we'll not let nobody put our child down, no matter what". (Parent)

In terms of the nature of support provided, parents talked generally about the need to: ensure homework is done; provide help if required; ensure children eat and sleep well; get to school on time; and create a calm atmosphere in the home which is conducive to studying. More specifically, they spoke about the need for consistency in relation to homework routines and the associated setting of high standards.

"The children come in from school, the first thing we do is we have a wee drink or whatever ... and then the homework's done ... they don't play on anything until the homework is done". (Parent)

### *Individual resilience*

**Individual characteristics of resilience and self-determination are seen as key to educational achievement particularly for young people who live in adverse home conditions and/or those who have limited parental support.**

Not all children living in these disadvantaged Wards were seen as sharing the same characteristics or experiences. Across five of the ILiAD wards (Tullycarnet, Duncairn, The Diamond, Whiterock and Rosemount), the role of individual resilience and self-determination as motivation for academic achievement were highlighted as vital for educational success by a range of community and education respondents. Characteristics associated with self-determination were also reflected in the other two Wards (Dunclug and Woodstock) but less frequently. Such personal drive and capacity were understood to enable some young people to achieve “against the odds”. This individual resilience was viewed as the factor that distinguished them from fellow young people in the same or similar circumstances who fail to achieve the same degree of success. For example, a primary principal commented on the resilience of two pupils when undertaking the Transfer Test; and a post-primary principal recalled a former pupil who has achieved despite her “adverse home conditions.”

“We have one girl went to grammar last year and one this year ... I have never seen such strength of character, in both of them. They are just so determined” (Principal)

“I have one girl in a university in London ... she got there on her own strength, there was nobody pushing her from home ... all sorts of problems, but she made it.” (Principal)

Young people themselves reinforced these claims and spoke about the importance of individual resilience, motivation and of the need to resist peer discouragement.

“It was down to me, and they [parents] were never forceful or anything, I would just always go and do my homework, it was never a bother.” (Post-primary pupil)

“Believe it or not, you actually get slagged off for trying ... but I just don’t listen ... I persist as I want to do well.” (Post-primary pupil)

### *Sense of connectedness to local community*

**Young people having a strong sense of connection to their local community have a positive impact on attainment and on their attitudes towards learning.**

Community connectedness, as manifested through community collaboration and good relationships within a Ward area, was associated with promoting young people’s engagement in education. In a number of the case study Wards, there was evidence that perceptions of belonging to a mutually supportive community of people with shared interests and objectives can positively influence young people’s drive and ability to achieve.

For example, several teachers and principals spoke about levels of social cohesion being important factors in terms of: “raising the value of education” in disadvantaged communities; improving links between schools and local communities; and giving young people a sense that “everyone is pulling in the same direction.”

“It is important for our young people to feel connected ... to feel they are part of united community.” (Principal)

“How young people visualize themselves ... in their social world ... influences their attitude to school.” (Teacher)

Similarly, young people from several Wards highlighted their sense of belonging to their local community as important referents in their outlook and identity. For example, one post-primary pupil spoke about being “proud to belong” to a community which was “welcoming, friendly, and a good place to live”; while another claimed that she felt “supported by everybody” in terms of her education.

However, it should be noted that in terms of this sense of connectedness there were variations between the case study Wards. For example, the qualitative data evidence variances in (perceived) levels of community cohesion between the predominantly-Catholic and predominantly-Protestant Wards. In general, two key reasons were cited for this variance: the unifying role of the Catholic Church in The Diamond, Rosemount and Whiterock Wards; and the occasionally fractured nature of community activity in the Woodstock and Duncairn Wards. These issues are more fully examined in the later section on attainment differentials across religious background.

### *Local youth and community work*

**The case studies evidence the value of effective local youth and community work input in terms of encouraging attainment in these areas.**

Youth and community programmes, statutory and voluntary, which encourage learning and offer homework support were seen as particularly important for those young people with limited parent support and/or those in adverse home conditions.

Alongside community level support, the contribution of both statutory and voluntary local youth work input in terms of enhancing learning in disadvantaged communities was also seen as a significant driver of attainment in the case study Wards. Young people and youth workers also spoke about the value of trusting relationships and relaxed environments.

“Lots of us come here to do our homework ... the youth workers love it and make us feel welcome.” (Post-primary pupil)

“It’s warm, it’s quiet, and it’s always friendly ... and a good place to study.” (Youth worker)

“The main thing is contact ... a relaxed environment where we have a chat and I find you do most of the opening up and most of the work ... around the pool table or when you’re making a cup of tea or coffee and it’s just offering support at that age.” (Youth worker)

The qualitative data from the case studies also evidence a number of instances highlighting schools and youth clubs working closely and collaboratively:

“It’s a very good youth club ... Part of it is just about keeping those young people engaged and away from the interface ... We have identified those young people who are at risk ... and we are trying ... to come up with programmes ... whether its revision programmes ... where, instead of them staying here after school, we would talk to the youth leader and we would say, here is the particular programme that this guy needs to do, you do it with him. They prefer that environment to being in school.” [Principal]

Community and youth workers, particularly those with a long-standing connection to the local community and viewed as ‘achievers’, were highly valued by young people as role models. They were seen as offering deep understanding of the learning needs of young people in the area, the barriers they face en route to achievement, and what is required, personally and practically, to overcome these barriers.

“(Named youth worker) has known us all since we were children so she knows the way we work and ... she knows how to treat us.” (Post-primary pupil)

However, the seven case studies also highlight a number of individual-home-community factors that are seen to inhibit attainment.

### **Immediate inhibitors of attainment**

**The attainment prospects of some young people in the seven case studies were viewed to be inhibited by: adverse home conditions and inadequate levels of parental support; the inter-generational transmission of educational failure; the low self-esteem of some young people; and increasing levels of mental ill-health identified amongst young people.**

#### *Adverse home conditions and inadequate parental support*

**The case study data evidence a section of young people whose attainment prospects are limited because they live in adverse home circumstances and/or have inadequate levels of parental support.**

Across all seven ILiAD wards, adverse home circumstances, such as disadvantaged pupils living in “challenging environments” in “unhappy” and “unstable” homes, was consistently identified as one of the most important inhibitors of educational achievement. Educationists, community workers and EWOs highlighted that some

young people lived in home environments, which were “unfriendly” and “uncaring”; and associated the lack of a nurturing environment with a wide range of contributing factors. These included: domestic and community-level violence; a culture of drugs, alcohol and benefit dependency; absent fathers; acute financial hardship and poverty; parental mental and physical ill health; breakdown in parent relationships; and parents absent from the home because of working long hours.

“You do have a lot of difficult family situations which impinge on kids’ ability to work effectively and their esteem.” (Principal)

“Deprivation takes a variety of forms ... and, often, love is in massively short supply.” (Principal)

Several parents spoke about not being able to help their children with their homework. For example, one parent spoke about being embarrassed about her own limited literacy skills and expressed the hope that her daughter’s school experience would be an infinitely happier one than her own.

“You feel like an idiot! You go into the school and don’t know a child’s bloody homework. Half the time you don’t want to go in because you’re embarrassed with yourself. My number one hope is that it’s going to be different for her.” (Parent)

Young people themselves were also aware of the importance of their home and family environment to promoting or inhibiting academic achievement.

“Being from disadvantaged areas ... has less of an effect than what your parents’ attitude is.” (Post-primary pupil)

### *Intergenerational transmission of educational failure*

#### **Parental early experiences of educational failure were associated with children’s fear of failure, low expectations and negative attitudes to schooling.**

Parental experiences of educational failure were associated with children’s fear of failure, low expectations and negative attitudes to schooling. In six of the ILiAD wards (The Diamond, Tullycarnet, Duncairn, Rosemount, Woodstock and Dunclug) intergenerational de-valuing of education was mentioned by respondents as having a profoundly negative impact on the potential of some young people to achieve. Parents’ own experiences of educational failure were viewed as related to children’s fear of failure, low expectations and negative attitudes to schooling through identification. This de-valuing of education was understood to be transmitted from parent to child through successive generations, such that it becomes an attitudinal and behavioural norm.

Several principals from schools which serve young people from these disadvantaged areas spoke about “families that haven’t managed to break that cycle” and a “third generation of people that have suffered unemployment” seen as part consequence of this inter-generational transmission.

“Generationally, they see their parents doing nothing, and their parents failed at school, and the parents don’t know how to support them and encourage them being in school.” (Principal)

“You have a lot of people who, because they hated school, think: “My life’s OK and I’m fine; my child will be the same”. (Principal)

Community level respondents also frequently echoed these themes. For example: a parent claimed that she was “ashamed” about “not having a clue” how to help her child with schoolwork; and a youth worker spoke about the lack of employment opportunities and the impact on young people’s attitude to schools and learning.

“There are low aspirations and expectations due to two or three generations of underachievement and unemployment around here. What’s the point trying at school if there are no jobs?” (Youth worker)

### *Low self-esteem and aspirations of some young people*

**A number of young people from areas of high deprivation suffer low self-esteem and lack aspiration as a result of negative community attitudes around education.**

Across the seven case study Wards, patterns of low self-esteem and lack of aspiration among some young people were identified as significant inhibitors of attainment. Several school and community level respondents expressed the view that the attainment prospects of many young people are affected by negative attitudes towards learning and low levels of self-belief.

“Some young people are bereft of aspiration and have no dreams of anything.” (Principal)

“We’ve so many coming in now with just no aspirations. It’s quite scary. They have no dreams of anything. You are talking to them in careers, and you ask them, what do you want to be? ‘Dunno’. What are you good at? ‘Dunno’. It’s like something’s just been killed in them, before they even get here ... They just don’t think that they are good enough to do anything.” (Senior teacher)

“There is a section of young people who feel school is pointless because they don’t believe they have the capacity to succeed.” (Community worker)

The principal of a post-primary school gave a specific example of how the local-level norms and influences can effectively mitigate the (perceived) need for education:

“That has been passed down to the children ... when you’ve children coming in [and] their ambition is to be a taxi driver, because their daddy runs a taxi ... there’s nothing wrong with a taxi driver, but if that’s the only ambition you have starting off, then there’s not a lot of need for school and education.” (Principal)

Young males were considered to be particularly vulnerable to pessimism and an inability, as well as lack of confidence, to identify pathways to employment. According to another post-primary principal, these traits persuaded some boys to lose interest in their education. Moreover, a youth worker argued that, among a section of young people from deprived areas, these traits were not uncommon.

“They cannot see that there’s anything worth putting in the hard slog of school for.”  
(Principal)

“Possibly 85% of young people I come into contact with have negative attitudes towards education.” (Youth worker)

In such communities, this lack of aspiration was often associated with underlying local-level normative assumptions around employment prospects.

“I’ve never heard of a child round here [saying] ‘I want to be a fireman, a policeman or an ambulance man or doctor or nurse.’” (Resident)

“When they leave school they think they’re going to lie about and do nothing.”  
(Parent)

“I think it definitely comes from their parents ... them thinking ‘That’s what my life’s going to be, that’s what my career path is’. It’s really scary.” (Teacher)

### *Young people’s mental health*

**Increasing levels of mental ill-health identified amongst young people are having a negative impact on attainment and are creating additional pressures for schools.**

EWOs and principals highlighted an increase in the numbers of children with mental health and learning difficulties across the case study areas. This is in line with evidence that show strong links between mental health problems in children and young people and social disadvantage in NI, with rates of problems on the rise.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, one principal claimed that 15% of his pupils have been referred to counselling for a range of issues such as physical abuse at home, social media bullying, self-harm and sexual orientation issues with associated with emotional problems. Moreover, a number of principals highlighted that, within some areas served by their school, suicide amongst young people had increased.

“In the last few years, we see more and more children every single day in here that are referred to the ... child mental health services ... we’ve seen ... mental health issues that children have risen considerably”. (EWO)

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.refineni.com/mental-health-stats/4578563576>

According to one principal, mental health issues among young people are placing “significant pressures” on schools in terms of “managing resources to be able to deliver the curriculum to all children.”

## The impact of School level factors on attainment

This section presents a summary of findings on the main school factors that are viewed as acting as drivers and inhibitors to educational achievement across the seven wards. These aim to illustrate the pattern of these drivers and inhibitors across the Wards as well as highlighting some of the unique features of schooling that differentiate individual Wards.

### School Factors

Drivers	Inhibitors
<i>Visionary and collaborative school leadership</i>	<i>Low expectations on the part of some schools and teachers</i>
<i>Effective school-community linkages and accessibility to parents</i>	<i>Perception among some parents of schools as ‘middle class’ and ‘detached’</i>
<i>Collaborative schools, inter-agency working and Full Service programmes</i>	<i>High rates of absenteeism and exclusion in some schools</i>
<i>Provision of diverse curricula</i>	<i>Insufficient support for SEN</i>
<i>Positive teacher-pupil relationships</i>	
<i>Effective pastoral care and support for pupils with Special Education Needs (SEN)</i>	

Table 4: Key drivers and inhibitors to educational achievement at school level



### **School-level drivers of attainment**

The most important school-level drivers of attainment in the case study Wards are: **visionary and collaborative school leadership; effective school-community linkages and accessibility to parents; provision of diverse curricula; positive teacher-pupil relationships; inter-school and inter-agency collaboration and Extended Schools provision; effective pastoral care and support for pupils with SEN.**

#### *Visionary and collaborative school leadership*

**Visionary and collaborative school leadership can have a markedly positive impact on attainment.**

According to the case studies, visionary and collaborative school leadership commonly entails a principal having an active commitment to lead all staff to support, encourage and enable all pupils to maximise their potential, while at the same time building relationships with the communities that the school serve. According to one principal, leadership is about “setting the strategic direction of the school” and making sure this vision “filters all the way down.” Other principals highlighted the importance of setting high standards in terms of attainment, discipline and personal development.

“We’ve a huge emphasis here on discipline, appearance, behaviour and work.”  
(Principal)

“Our pupils ... are very able children ... they have a responsibility to use those talents ... that’s a huge part of our ethos.” (Principal)

In the predominantly-Catholic Wards of The Diamond, Whitrock and Rosemount, there were well-established, collaborative learning communities, with Catholic maintained schools at the hub of these. It was clear that most Catholic maintained schools in this study were not stand-alone entities in the community – their leaders had enhanced the connectedness between the school and the community, with parents, schools and groups sharing responsibility for the academic progression of local young people.

“I’m the principal of this school, but I believe I do have a contribution to education in the city, and I have gone on various fora throughout this city because I believe we have a contribution to make for all children ... this is what I was employed to do, and I will do the best for my girls in this school, wherever they come from.” (Principal)

#### *Effective school-community linkages and accessibility to parents*

**Attainment is enhanced when schools develop effective links with local communities and are viewed as accessible by parents.**

In all seven case studies, principals, teachers and community workers as important drivers to educational achievement highlighted effective school-community linkages.

“I have to say that there has been outstanding work done in the community with adult education ... just to create a spark in the parents or those who have been disengaged.” (Principal)

“There are benefits to be gained for schools by tapping into the capabilities and resources that exist in communities to actually produce young people with an appetite for learning and an ability to learn.” (Community worker)

“Because the school opens so late at night, there’s that opportunity for study because some people don’t have the environment at home to study, and I think that’s what works for me ... staying in after school to study.” (Post-primary pupil)

It was also clear from the data that when teachers develop good relationships over time with parents and grandparents, there is increased trust, confidence and openness between families and schools. These positive school-home relationships were frequently associated with: low staff turnover; the perceived attachment and commitment of staff to the school and to the children; and the investment that is put into the relationship between parents and school staff.

Several principals, teachers and EWOs spoke about the value of encouraging parental involvement by making schools as accessible as possible. These respondents also highlighted that, in some areas, parents were reluctant to engage with schools; and that new and innovative engagement methods had to be adopted to help parents (particularly those who themselves found formal education a struggle) to take a more pro-active role in the school lives of their children.

“Parents who have had a bad experience of school do not necessarily want to re-engage with school with their own children.” (Principal)

“Some parents get a rush of bad feeling of their previous experience; worry that [by attending events such as parents’ evenings] they’re going to come under the spotlight; feel that they are incapable of presenting themselves in a positive light on behalf of their children; and, as a result ‘they take the easy option and they don’t go.’” (EWO)

“It’s about getting parents to see that school is a welcoming place. We tried classes like alcohol and drugs awareness and that didn’t work very well and then we thought ‘let’s try something different, a wee bit softer’. So we introduced Zumba classes to try and get them to come in ... but it’s a struggle. It really is.” (Principal)

It should also be noted here that the case study data evidence a variance in terms levels of parental engagement with schools between the predominantly-Catholic and predominantly-Protestant Wards. These issues are more fully examined in the later section that outlines differentials across religious background.

### *Provision of diverse curricula*

**The provision of diverse curricula was highlighted as an important driver of achievement. Participants across all Wards stressed the need for an inclusive system that afforded young people access to a broad-based education in which the value of different forms of knowledge and skills, not just those associated with academic achievement, was validated.**

The need for pupils to “achieve something” was repeatedly stressed; and broadening out the range of subjects and GCSE equivalents on offer was seen as significantly increasing the possibilities for such achievement.

“Fostering higher levels of achievement amongst our lower-achieving girls, we get fantastic results with the performing arts.” (Principal)

“A lot of the schools around here would do the double award BTEC options too, where they would come out with two GCSEs in the time it would take to do one GCSE, so there was a little bit of inflation ... But I’m not criticising that ... the children would have a sense of achievement and a sense of understanding that there is a worth in what they’re doing, rather than being consistently met with failure.” (Principal)

“We have made huge changes to try and address boys’ uptake at things like Home Economics, so now we’re having boys going through and having A-levels in Home Economics and Health and Social Care because they’re now more involved in the junior end of the school in how it gets delivered to them.” (Senior Teacher)

“Even our least academic group have the potential of coming out with up to 8 GCSEs or their equivalents, and that’s where I talk about we’ve high expectations for everybody.” (Vice-principal)

The vital need for the provision of vocational opportunities was confirmed by the data from both the education and community sectors. This need was routinely linked with the particular requirements of local boys who, it was argued, are more likely to engage in vocational than traditional school settings. Offering broad and diverse curricula was also viewed as crucial for those young people underachieving or in danger of being disengaged or excluded from school. Young people and teachers from EOTAS and the AEP sector schools serving these Wards talked positively of the highly diverse provision and the unique pedagogy on offer that suited differing individual learning styles, preferences and needs allowing pupils within these sectors to re-engage with education.

“They just can’t handle mainstream school. Their ways of learning are just different. They can’t conform to the usual routine. It means they have some qualifications. OCN drugs and alcohol awareness, certificate in Excel. What this means is they might just leave with 5 GCSEs ... as opposed to very little.” (AEP teacher)

### *Positive teacher-pupil relationships*

**The case study data confirm the crucial importance of the quality of teacher interaction with pupils to significantly enhance the potential for achievement.**

According to the data, positive, proactive teacher-pupil relationships are another important factor in encouraging attainment. In several focus groups with post-primary pupils, respondents described how friendly and empathetic teaching encouraged their learning:

“Teachers that are nice to you and motivate you, you do the work more and put in harder working.”

“You get really close to the teachers ... you’re thinking, like, we’re all a big family.”

“They do go out of their way if you don’t understand something ... they’ll stay with you until you understand it.” (Three young people aged 14-17)

Teachers and principals who highlighted the importance of the vocational aspect of their teaching practices supported these views:

“You need to be feeling it and believing it ... you need to be living it and breathing it for our kids.” (Teacher)

“I see my job in that traditional sense of vocation ... the teaching staff here are similarly motivated and typically go the extra mile for pupils.” (Principal)

The consensus from the data was that, alongside subject competence, the ability of teachers to form constructive relationships with pupils is an important enabler of learning. In other words, it is essential that teachers have and explicitly demonstrate the ability to establish a rapport and a sense of connectedness with those they seek to educate.

“If the teachers show some respect and trust, the pupils often respond similarly.” (Parent)

“Teachers need to redefine themselves as an enabler and facilitator rather than just a teacher.” (Principal)

Several principals and teachers concurred with these sentiments and further claimed that one of the most important aspects of a teacher’s skill-set is their ability to understand the complexities of some pupils’ home lives and how this can negatively impact on their capacity to learn. For example, one principal spoke about the need for teachers to understand “what is causing that child to be disruptive; what his needs are; and why he is getting on like this.” Importantly, the accounts of young people also consistently articulated the same set of core attitudinal and behavioural qualities they associated with a “good teacher”. These coalesced around an explicit demonstration of genuine concern and commitment through, for example, taking the time to talk, good-humoured “banter”, kindness, patience, encouragement and a willingness to help.

### *Collaborative schools, inter-agency working and Full Service programmes*

**Collaborative working between schools and locally-based groups and agencies and the provision of Full or Extended Schools programmes are viewed as an important enablers of attainment on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.**

Collaborative working between schools and locally-based groups and agencies and Full Service provision were consistently found to play a critical role in supporting young people with limited parental support and/or those with adverse home conditions.

Inter-school and inter-agency collaborations were common features of the best performing schools in the study. Two important aspects of such collaboration were identified as: improved lines of communication i.e. between schools and social services, and during primary to post-primary transitions; and the inter-school sharing of learning resources such as making certain courses and subject specialisms available to pupils from other schools. EWOs highlighted what they saw as a “nascent shift on the part of some schools to adopt a more holistic approach” when addressing the needs of young people at risk of academic failure. Such an approach entailed school developing meaningful links and relationships with communities and families to ensure that: schools had a fuller understanding of the lives of their pupils; and parents and communities were more aware of school-based programmes and initiatives which seek to improve attainment in disadvantaged areas. This “more joined-up method”, it was argued, gave parents and schools the chance to avail of the “widest possible range of support mechanisms.”

In all seven wards, the data evidence the benefits of local-level, inter-agency working for educational achievement. Principals of schools serving these Wards were able to describe collaboration with a wide range of community-based groups and agencies including, for example, Save the Children, Sure Start, Small Steps, Save the Children - the ‘Families and Schools Together’ (FAST) programme and Barnardos.

Frequent reference was also made to the added value of Full Service programmes<sup>14</sup> set up to enhance the educational achievement of young people in the local community by providing a coherent and co-ordinated approach with schools, organisations and agencies addressing the specific needs of learners, their families and the local communities. Such programmes were highlighted as important factors in terms of raising attainment levels especially for “vulnerable learners.” Several principals and teachers argued that such initiatives gave young people, without support, the extra help they need; furnished parents with the skill sets to better support their child’s education; and had a positive impact on attendance levels. One principal claimed that the most

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<sup>14</sup> The Extended Schools policy document, *Extended Schools: schools, families, communities – working together* was published in 2006. <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/circular-2010-21-extended-schools-building-on-good-practice.pdf>

important aspects of these interventions was the “equalising effect” between pupils who have “fantastic support at home” and other young people who have “no place to study, no help at home and no family history of doing exams.”

“[Extended Schools provision] ... acts as parents for them and tries to give them the same support as if they had a supportive household ... we can get extra support out in the community.” (Principal)

“Since Extended Schools provision ... was established in this school in 2007, attendance has increased from 86% to 89%.” (Vice Principal)

“FSES has contributed to transformation of the community through raising aspirations of pupils and parents ... engaging pupils with realistic employment considerations and by bringing the “employer into the room” and providing more effective networks of medical and social support to address individual and family needs.” (Principal)

### *Effective pastoral care and support for pupils with Special Education Needs (SEN)*

**Securing the social and emotional welfare of pupils was vital not only to help pupils effectively engage in learning through early detection and intervention but also to support a more holistic development of young people.**

The case study data also suggest that attainment is influenced by how teachers attend to the social and emotional wellbeing of pupils to encourage effective learning through pastoral care. For example, one post-primary principal argued that a “powerful, efficient and fast-acting pastoral care system” in which intervention is “quick and continuous” is a precondition of a successful learning environment; another claimed that pastoral care in his school operated on both a formal and informal level.

“We have a very strong pastoral system ... But it’s not about a system as such, it’s about people, the teachers, noticing things, picking up on things, getting to know the young people ... it’s really about everyone being part of the pastoral team.” (Principal)

The responses of parents and community workers confirmed the important contribution of consistent provision of Special Education Needs (SEN) support, as well as help for young people with difficulties related to social and emotional development.

“There are quite a few of our own local children that would need extra help. I must say [name of school] is fantastic at providing support, and bringing [name of another school] ... to give these children the extra help that they need”. (Community worker)

“In the [named secondary school] ... there were schemes and mechanisms there for them [disruptive pupils] ... and many people availed of them”. (Parent)

### *Other common (school-level) drivers of attainment*

Although less frequently cited in the data, the seven case studies also highlighted the following school-level drivers of attainment: support during transitions (nursery through to careers advice); the benefits of social mixing (i.e. having a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds in the classroom); and the provision of vocational opportunities (i.e. to ensure that all students leave school with a sense of achievement).

### **School-level inhibitors of attainment**

**Attainment in areas of deprivation is often inhibited by: low expectations on the part of some schools; a perception among some parents of schools as “middle class” and “detached”; the high rates of absenteeism and exclusion in some schools; and insufficient support for SEN.**

### *Low expectations on the part of some schools*

**It was frequently argued in the data that low expectations on the part of some schools and teachers were an inhibitor of academic success. Several parents held the view that some schools and teachers “give up” on pupils if they don’t see them “trying enough.”**

These views were supported by a range of pupils in some Wards.

“I don’t think they push them nearly hard enough ... you are basically telling them they will not amount to much.” (Parent)

“The teachers just think ... well, if they can’t be bothered, why should I waste my time on them?’ And if they’re going to just mess around, then we’re happy to let them.” (Parent)

“She doesn’t even teach really, she just basically says “page whatever” and then she doesn’t even explain it right ... if you have a problem she just tells you that it’s rude to come up and disturb her.” [Young person aged 13]

“They just want to do the absolute minimum, they don’t care what results they get.” (Young person aged 17)

Young people also identified how perceived negative and potentially humiliating behaviour inevitably impacts on pupils’ self-confidence as both learners and individuals.

“No matter what you achieve it’s like you sort of feel a bit wick because you’re being compared to somebody who has done better ... it makes me really annoyed ... It makes you feel like you’re thick.” (Post-primary pupil)

The above quotes highlight a theme running throughout young people’s accounts, namely, that such ‘bad’ teachers were likely to discourage learning and limit aspirations.

Nevertheless, young people were clear that although academic achievement is related to the quality of teaching received, they were not naïve enough to dismiss the role also played by personal commitment and endeavour.

“They tried their best but I just got to the stage where I wasn’t bothered ... It was more me than them. The school did their best ... The school does help but like it’s down to you too. Like the teachers are there for help but it’s down to you, if you really want to go on and do it. (Young person)

### *Perception among some parents of schools and teachers as ‘middle class’ and ‘detached’*

**There was a perception amongst some parents (particularly in the Controlled sector) that some schools and teachers are “detached” and “middle class” and that this made it more difficult for these parents to play a fuller role in their children’s education.**

Several parents spoke about some schools being detached from the realities of their pupils’ lives, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The most frequently suggested reason for this detachment was that many teachers who work in such schools “come from a middle-class type background” and thus “it’s totally impossible for them to relate to what’s going on” in their homes or communities.

“Look, most teachers come from a middle-class type background and haven’t endured or lived the life that these kids have lived.” (Parent)

It should be noted here that there was a noticeable difference between mainly-Catholic and mainly-Protestant Wards around perceived levels of detachment or attachment of schools to the areas they served. Moreover, school and community level respondents frequently claimed that such variances existed because, in comparison with some schools in the controlled sector, schools in the Catholic Maintained sector which serve disadvantage communities are more commonly populated by: principals who had grown up in and/or continued to live in the local community; and teachers who are “nearly all” working class (a fuller examination of this variance is presented in the later section on differentials across religious background).

“When you go into schools ... you get a sense of those teachers ... they’re generally locals ... they have a real sense of investment in the kids ... For others, a school like [named school] may be their first step in their career and as soon as they get an opportunity to get out of it they will.” (Community worker)

It was also suggested that some schools have little or no connection to the communities they serve. Several parents, particularly in those communities where the school is situated several miles away, argued that schools do not do enough to mediate the



impact of these spatial detachments; and spoke about the need for such schools to gain a better understanding of disadvantaged areas.

“Well, his secondary school is more than four miles away ... may as well be a million miles away ... they just don’t engage with this estate.” (Parent)

“Maybe if they could see where their pupils were actually living ... they might be able to relate to them better.” (Parent)

### *High rates of absenteeism and exclusion in some schools*

**In the case study Wards, the schools with higher rates of absenteeism achieved lower rates of attainment. The data also highlight higher school absenteeism rates within mainly Protestant Wards compared to the mainly Catholic Wards.**

The secondary data support the qualitative data and confirm the importance of attendance in terms of subsequent attainment and show that the schools with higher rates of absenteeism achieve lower rates of attainment. For example, the three Wards with the highest levels of absenteeism Tullycarnet (39.7%), Woodstock (39.7%) and Duncairn (27%) had the lowest attainment as measured by Grades A\*-C across all subjects. Similarly, the three best performing Wards in terms of attainment (Rosemount, The Diamond and Whiterock) had the lowest rates of absenteeism – 21.1%, 22.2% and 23.7% respectively. However, absenteeism and exclusion rates and adequate responses to these remain a concern more broadly for all the Wards. This secondary data, thus, point to higher school absenteeism rates within mainly-Protestant areas compared to the mainly Catholic Wards (these variances are further explored in the later section on differentials across religious background).

Additionally, the pressure of school league tables to achieve targets, and otherwise demonstrate their added value, was understood by some participants to promote a culture in which it became acceptable to “sacrifice” the wellbeing of individual, typically problematic, pupils. A tendency to expel pupils was considered to be compounded by the lack of resources available to some schools to support those pupils experiencing problems. In their absence, and faced with these pressures, the likelihood of “difficult pupils” being expelled was understood to increase.

“There are certain schools ... that are very quick to expel, in my opinion ... their attitude towards it is, we can’t deal with them so let’s get rid of them ... that is an impact upon their educational outcome because they will attain less ... some of the children that have been expelled from schools ... could be addressed within the school but they don’t seem to have the wherefore or the maybe the staffing to deal with it as they used to.” (EWO)

### *Insufficient support for SEN*

**Rates of young people registered with SEN were higher in non-selective schools across the Wards and concerns were raised about the adequacy of provision for educational support.**

In terms of the secondary data analysis (for 2012/13), with few exceptions, schools serving each of the seven Wards showed a clear relationship between patterns of SEN rates and FSM entitlement (and indeed absenteeism) with non-selective schools, including those from the integrated sector, having the highest rates of SEN as compared to the grammar schools. Schools hosting high rates of children with SEN (in conjunction with high percentages of young people on FSM entitlement) across the Wards had lower percentages of young people achieving 5 GCSE grade A\*-C (including English and Maths). The qualitative data reflected a range of related concerns about the speed of response and adequacy of provision for children and young people with SEN in some Wards.

Although several excellent examples of effective school SEN, Educational Psychology and EWO provision were highlighted, several parents, EWOs and community workers claimed that in their areas, this provision was “patchy” and “inconsistent”. The two most common concerns were: failings around the early identification of learning barriers; and a significant “backlog” in terms of referrals.

“It took them too long to discover there was a problem and even longer to put in place proper support for his dyslexia.” (Parent)

“There's a failure in the education system to identify early ... learning issues, emotional issues and specific ASD issues or even ADHD ... there's a bottleneck of resources and a lot of children and young people fall through the net.” (EWO)

According to community workers, there is an issue with some young people transferring from a primary school setting to secondary level having never been properly assessed or having had their individual learning needs addressed. These respondents stressed that this can have a direct impact on that young person and ultimately impact their “chances at school”; and highlighted a lack of funding as “part of the problem.”

“For a lot of the young people we're working with there's underlying health issues ... there hasn't been the proper screening or testing and there's some learning difficulties that maybe hasn't been picked up.” (Community worker)

“I think there needs to be an ethos of young people getting the proper help in first year and the proper assessments done in primary school so that when they do go onto the secondary setting these issues are identified.” (Community worker)

“I think that's going to get worse because they're cutting back on classroom assistants ... in schools.” (Community worker)

### *Other school-level inhibitors of attainment*

In addition to the school-level inhibitors as listed above, the following, less frequently cited inhibitors were also identified: weak school-home and school-community linkage; pupils being declared ineligible for inclusion in Year 12 statistics by some schools; disruptive classmates (who it was claimed by one parent take up a “disproportionate amounts of the teachers’ time”); and a silo mentality on the part of some schools in terms of inter-agency and inter-school collaboration.

## **The impact of Structural/policy level factors on attainment**

This section presents a summary of findings on the main structural and policy-related factors that are viewed as acting as drivers and inhibitors to educational achievement across the seven Wards. These aim to illustrate the pattern of these drivers and inhibitors across the Wards as well as highlighting some of the unique structural and policy-related features that differentiate individual Wards.

### **Structural/policy Level Factors**

<b>Drivers</b>	<b>Inhibitors</b>
<i>Collaborative and proactive community services</i>	<i>The current economic climate</i>
<i>New and improved school buildings and facilities</i>	<i>Legacies of the recent conflict</i>
<i>The high attainment performance of the Grammar sector</i>	<i>The spatial detachment of schools and the communities they serve</i>
	<i>Variability in availability of quality pre-school provision</i>
	<i>Negative effects of academic selection for those who do not achieve selection to a grammar school</i>

Table 5: Key drivers and inhibitors to educational achievement at structural/policy level

### **Structural/policy-level drivers of attainment**

**Across the seven case studies, the most significant structural/policy drivers of educational attainment were: collaborative and proactive community services; new and improved school buildings and facilities; and the high attainment performance of the Grammar sector.**

#### *Collaborative and proactive community services*

**Collaboration and interagency promotion of young people's engagement in and with education were identified as an important enabler of attainment in the case study Wards.**

There was evidence of a legacy of people working together to support and improve their local communities, although the impact of this was somewhat variable across the Wards. Where additional non-mandatory services (external to and outside of schools) worked coherently and were visibly available to support youth and families within the Ward areas, these were seen as beneficial and added to a sense of, "wrap-around" community. These included: early years services and mother and toddler groups; women's groups; men's groups; cross-community links and activities; intergenerational/youth engagement in the community activities; recreational activities; work training and skills support services; other education support, such as after-schools programmes, mentoring, and homework clubs; further education providers; alternative education providers; mental health/drug and alcohol/emotional support services; and homelessness support/accommodation services.

This interconnected support was also associated with increasing levels of collaborative, proactive community activity leading to discernible community gain. Positive examples included advocacy, lobbying and, collaborating to obtain funding for local projects and youth initiatives. The best examples seemed to centre on the inclusion of and active participation by local young people, including the more marginalized, to identify services, and seek support to address the difficulties they face, including in relation to educational attainment.

"We are trying to build the whole pupil and we are trying to ... use the young people to transform their areas...we are trying to tap into this whole notion of build from the bottom up ... we don't want them to be the most deprived in the next 5 to 10 years, we want them to come away from that." (Teacher).

#### *New and improved school buildings and facilities*

**Improvements and renewals of school premises were seen to have effected positive change and confirmed that young people are more likely to succeed if their learning environment reflects aspiration and not decline.**

It was commonly claimed in the case study data that new and improved school buildings and facilities have a positive impact on young people in terms of encouraging learning. Several teachers and principals spoke about the "transformation" in pupils' attitudes

when their learning takes place in environments which are “high-tech”, “modern” and “fresh.”

“The new building is fantastic ... the children love it ... it has raised everyone’s standards and expectations.” (Principal)

“It makes such a difference when young people are taught in a learning environment which is new and gives them the chance to use the latest technology.” (Teacher)

“Our new build has led to vastly improved behavior ... it has been designed to have 70% more light than any other school in Northern Ireland. In four years, we have had no vandalism ... zero. They see it as their school. It has created a security for them.” (Principal)

Where such investment was stimulated as part of FSES provision, not only was impact upon pupils and families recognized but also impact upon the whole community.

“These new schools have fantastic facilities that are available for use by all sectors of the community.” (Community Worker)

By contrast, several principals, of schools housed in older buildings, reported the negative impact that this had on pupils’ aspirations, and their subsequent achievement. One such principal claimed that: parts of his school were in a state of disrepair; and that interactive whiteboards and tablet technology were urgently required but he did not have the financial resources to pay for them.

“I would like to see more investment. Studies have shown that newer facilities raise motivation.” (Principal)

### *The high attainment performance of the Grammar sector*

**In the case study Wards, the high attainment performance of the Grammar schools is evident. The best performing schools in this study were Grammar schools; and principals, teachers, parents and young people who attended Grammar schools were supportive of academic selection.**

The qualitative data from interviews with principals, teachers and parents in the grammar sector evidence widespread support for academic selection and the view that the current system gives young people from disadvantaged communities the opportunity to “get a first-class education.”

These respondents also argued that attainment performance of the grammar sector, in the words of one teacher, “speaks for itself”. Similarly, the principal of one grammar school argued that the current system was inclusive of all sections of society; and another grammar school principal that in the absence of grammar schools, “bright” children from disadvantaged areas would be deprived of a “unique opportunity.”

“My own view is that academic selection gives an opportunity to children from any social strata, once they get into the school; I think it benefits them enormously.” (Principal)

“I’m from West Belfast and from a deprived background and to me it gives a unique opportunity for upward mobility for children who live in areas of deprivation because, let’s face it, back to the point I was making earlier, if the motivation for the majority of people in an area is not to go an academic way, then those children could get lost, the ones that are very bright could get lost.” (Principal)

The grammar school pupils who took part in the focus groups were also very supportive of academic selection and felt that they were receiving the “best education possible.” These respondents also: highlighted the support they received from their primary schools in preparation for the transfer test; argued that those who did not sit the test simply lacked self-belief; and claimed that grammar school pupils were “motivated” and that this allowed teaching to be more effective.

“They have wee miniature tests, relating to the transfer test ... everybody was dedicated to doing it. There was a transfer club and stuff, so you’d go to that and they would help you with it.”

“We had a test after school club, and then at the weekend they gave you a Maths test one week and an English test the next week, and then they would give you a Maths and English homework every night, so we had stacks to do ... and we spent like hours going over them.”

“So having an academically selected school where everybody that’s there is motivated to do the work just means the teachers can do a better job.”

“People would say to you, ‘oh you’re doing your 11+, I could never do that.’ And you’re like, ‘but you’ve never tried’ ... some people just think they are not good enough for it.” (Grammar school pupils aged 12-15)

### **Structural/Policy-level inhibitors of attainment**

**The most significant structural/policy inhibitors of attainment in these disadvantaged communities were: the current economic climate; legacies of the recent conflict; the spatial detachment of schools and the communities they serve; variability of availability of quality pre-school provision; and some of the negative processes associated with academic selection.**

#### *The current economic climate*

**The current economic climate, in particular the lack of employment opportunities, is having a detrimental effect in terms on educational aspiration for some young people.**

Principals, teachers, parents and young people in all seven case study Wards claimed that the impact of the current economic climate was discouraging learning in some disadvantaged communities.

“Young people in the most disadvantaged communities see long-term worklessness as normal ... so it can be difficult to keep them motivated in their learning.” (Teacher)

“You ask them to do their homework and study hard ... but they just go: ‘What’s the point? There are no jobs anyway.’” (Parent)

“If there are no jobs, why should young people bother at school?” (Young person aged 17)

Additionally, current economic conditions within the Ward areas were identified as putting many local families under acute financial pressures.

“The job situation and the economy seem to lead to more stresses and break-ups in families.” (Principal)

“The reality is deprivation is rife, poverty is rife. We are not living on the edge of poverty no more, we are actually in poverty. We call ourselves working class communities and nobody works. It is now becoming a social underclass. The working class is above us now. This is what we are actually dealing with. Young people are feeling the effects of deprivation.” (Community Worker)

Similarly, a post-primary principal claimed that many young people feel obligated to work a number of part-time jobs during term-time because their modest incomes are “contributing to the family budget.”

However, there were instances where it was claimed that the current economic climate, in particular, the lack of employment opportunities, sometimes had the effect of increasing determination in young people to have ambition to go on to achieve at A-level and access Further or Higher Education.

### *Legacies of the recent conflict*

**In some communities, legacies of the recent conflict continue to have a negative impact on attainment levels and some young people’s attitudes to school and education.**

In the Woodstock and Duncairn Wards, legacies of the recent conflict were reported as barriers to attainment. Such legacies were said to include spatial mobility challenges (e.g. where accessing the city centre of Belfast entails transiting through the ‘other’ community), which, it was argued, has a limiting effect on these young people’s capacity to adjoin wider social networks. Additionally, high levels of ethno-cultural insularity were reported in these Wards alongside accounts of the impact of the ‘flags protest’, which it was claimed by one principal had “disrupted the schooling of some young people.”

“Living in this estate is like living in a prison ... you can’t go anywhere ... it’s just not safe.” (Young person aged 15)

“In Tigers Bay, they have about 4 or 5 streets they can run about ... that’s really the only places they feel safe ... it’s a very small World for them.” (Youth worker)

“I think the “Troubles” have made some of these communities very inward looking and distrustful of outsiders.” (Community worker)

“Some of our boys were caught up in and around the flag protests ... we got some of our older students to speak to the younger ones about keeping safe and out of trouble.” (Principal)

### *The spatial detachment of schools and the communities they serve*

**The spatial detachment of some schools from the communities they serve creates additional expense and logistical problems for parents, inhibits the engendering of close school-community relationships, and gives young people a sense that education is not something that is prioritised in their community.**

Across the seven case studies, principals, teachers, parents and community workers claimed that the visibility of schools in disadvantaged communities was an important driver of attainment. The consensus here was that young people and parents are more easily encouraged to engage with schools if the schools are seen as part of the community.

“We are a permanent reminder that education is a priority in this area.” (Principal)

“Being so centrally located means that we are part of the community fabric. It’s easier for our pupils to attend school and parents to come to our events.” (Teacher)

“No buses needed ... most of them walk to school ... no one seems to mitch off.” (Parent)

However, in three of the seven case study Wards (Woodstock, The Diamond and Tullycarnet), the relatively long distances between schools and the communities they serve was identified as an inhibitor of attainment by principals, teachers, parents and community workers.

“This (spatial detachment) detracts from parents’ ability to understand the role that they can play in supporting the education of their children ... If the school is just down the road, you feel a connection ... we tried to run things in the evenings, but it’s too far for people to come.” (Principal)

“I think that visibility is crucial and if schools are not visible then how can they be relevant?” (Community worker)

“My son’s school is miles away ... so his school is not part of his everyday life.” (Parent)



“It’s trying to get those parents who are disengaged with school ... It’s about getting them to see that school is a welcoming place ... but it’s a struggle. It really is. Let’s face it we are just too far away.” (Principal)

### *Variability in availability of quality pre-school provision*

**The availability of quality pre-school provision was seen as an important enabler of attainment. However, this provision was found to vary between the Wards.**

Research is well-established<sup>15</sup> that early education counters socio-economic disadvantage by enhancing educational outcomes of under-achieving groups. Since the quality of pre-school is associated with more positive outcomes, concerns were expressed across the case study Wards about how the provision could meet the increasing needs. Some families in the case study Wards claimed that: they have little or no access to Early Years provision; and that they are unable to get their children placed in an appropriate nursery school. According to local community workers and residents, demand patently outstrips local supply and, although some parents have been offered places for their children further afield, these locations present significant transportation barriers. Moreover, in some cases, there is reluctance on the part of parents to send their children to nursery facilities outside of “their community”. This consequence of this supply-demand dichotomy is that the “school-readiness” of some young people is compromised. Indeed, one principal argued that some children are entering school ill-prepared and are thus “not able to make good use of the learning opportunities.”

Several pre-school principals referred to demands associated with responding to increasing levels of physical health problems and special medical needs that young children from these areas are exhibiting that influenced the quality of provision.

“Out of an enrolment of 52 children, I’ve had 10 children with asthma, three with Autism, four with behaviour issues, three with delayed development, two with medical needs, three with toileting issues, and four were on EpiPens.” (Principal)

“This is my twelfth year and we have been oversubscribed since we went to 2 full time sessions (for pre-school) ... because we had a higher level of FSM ... (the Department) granted us the full-time sessions to offer dinner to everybody, and since that, we’ve always been oversubscribed.” (Principal)

“It’s frustrating because you feel, if I had extra staff, I could take time with the parents ... Because parents are looking for guidance.” (Principal)

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<sup>15</sup> For example, Centre for Research in Early Childhood (2013), OfSTED. <http://www.crec.co.uk/docs/Access.pdf>

These respondents also perceived an increase in cases of suspected autism and behavioural needs alongside the observation that children's speech and language delays, at entry to preschool, were observably increasing, thereby requiring specialist help in their classrooms. However, since nursery year is usually the year when special needs are formally assessed, additional support is not always readily available to help with the education of these children.

In terms of addressing these challenges, several principals highlighted various forms of external support for the parents of children in their schools. This support included parent activity co-ordinators/facilitators and external agencies who run parenting courses for the early years. These principals viewed this support as extremely helpful in terms of encouraging parental involvement in the school and raising parents' awareness about the levels of social and cognitive development that their child should be reaching at different ages – but this did not allay the difficulties for those who could not access good provision for their children.

#### *Academic selection (negative effects)*

**Notwithstanding the attainment performance of the grammar sector, some of the issues arising from academic selection were identified as inhibiting attainment among some young people in the case study Wards. Such issues were seen to include: the negative impact in terms of confidence levels and self-esteem of those pupils who fail or do not sit the transfer test; Grammar schools 'creaming' likely high achievers from non-selective schools – thus depriving pupils in the non-grammar sector of positive (peer) role models; and the ways in which the current system of selection favours those parents with the means to pay for private tuition.**

Although, as highlighted above, there was support for academic selection from respondents in the grammar sector, the issue of selection was widely viewed as an inhibitor of attainment. Forty-four per cent of pupils attend a grammar school in NI. Data retrieved for the seven case study Wards (2011-12) showed that predominantly Catholic Wards, The Diamond (12<sup>th</sup> MDM) and Rosemount (44<sup>th</sup> MDM) had 30% (or over) of post-primary age pupil attending grammar schools. Duncairn (a predominantly-Protestant Ward) had the lowest percentage (11.7%) followed by Whiterock (14.1%), Dunclug (17.5%), Tullycarnet (19.3%) and Woodstock (20.4%).

Principals, teachers, community workers, parents and EWOs largely connected to the non-grammar sector, argued that academic selection: deflates the confidence of those who either fail or do not sit the test; tests children at too young an age; deprives schools in the non-grammar sector of likely high achievers; and is most beneficial to those children whose parents can afford to hire private tutors for their children around subject specialisms and transfer test preparation.

A range of respondents highlighted negative impacts of the selection process for some year seven pupils, such as, the impact that 'failure' had on young people's confidence in their learning, and the time it took to rebuild their self-esteem:

"Most of the young people come to us feeling a bit deflated having come through a transfer system that has labelled them as under-achievers and certainly not on a par with some of their peers. So, we do an awful lot when they first come to us to try to restore their confidence." (Principal)

"It takes us quite a while to hammer home ... that you are not second best because you didn't get the 11+ or because you didn't go for a selection test and didn't get into a grammar school. It takes me two or three years to say you are as good as any other pupil in any other school now believe in yourself." (Principal)

"The ones that fail ... it's a big blow to their self-esteem." (EWO)

"At 11, the level of maturity (in terms of preparing for and sitting the transfer test) is just not there." (Teacher)

"I think it is a lot of pressure for a child of that age." (Parent)

Moreover, principals and teachers in the non-grammar sector claimed that, due to falling enrolments, grammar schools are depriving non-grammar schools of likely high-achieving pupils.

"Because grammars still take the numbers they always did, our school has lost all of our role models in terms of likely high-achieving pupils ... those who would be leaders in this school." (Principal)

It was also frequently claimed by a range of respondents that the current system of academic selection favours those parents with the financial means to pay for private tutors to help their children prepare for the transfer test.

"The current system favours those with the means to pay for private tuition." (Teacher)

"Where would I find the money (to pay for private tutors)?" (Parent)

"If you're from a working class background ... it wouldn't occur to them to think of a tutor. I mean, let's face it, middle class people nearly all get their children tutored, whether they're able or whether they're not, that's just what they do." (Principal)

## Differentials in attainment between and within Wards: Towards an explanation

The previous section showed the main cross-cutting issues that were found to enable and inhibit educational attainment across the seven case study Wards. This section presents some of the secondary and qualitative data that challenge standard (commonly-held) notions of the relationship between (statistical) measures of deprivation and educational achievement. It begins by examining how patterns of attainment change across the Wards when core subjects and equivalents are included/excluded into Ward attainment profiles. Finally, the section closes with some of the factors that go some way to illustrating and explaining differential attainment patterns between Wards at GCSE by examining patterns associated with religious background, gender and rates of absenteeism, FSM and SEN.

### Differentials between Wards with and without core subjects

**The percentage GCSE pass rate (Grade A\*-C) for some Wards is significantly influenced by students GCSE pass rates that include GCSE equivalents.**

**The percentage GCSE pass rate (Grade A\*-C) for some Wards is significantly influenced by GCSE pass rates that include the core subjects English and Maths.**

Case study Wards were found to vary quite significantly depending on whether or not GCSE equivalents and core subjects were included. For instance, Whiterock, the most deprived Ward, dropped its 'educational achievement' ranking when core subjects were included in the measure whereas the difference for Tullycarnet was negligible. Across all seven Wards higher percentage of pupils are succeeding at school when equivalents are included than the percentage of school leavers who completed GCSE subjects only. In every case, educational achievement is lower if only pure GCSE subject passes are included. Thus, comparisons across and between Wards on the general benchmark measure of GCSE passes Grade A\*-C are more nuanced than at first glance, and suggestive of varying strategies by non-selective schools serving these Wards.

During the period 2008-2011, there were 868 school leavers, across the seven Wards. Of these, the minority (38.1%) passed GCSE subjects only (without equivalents), with 431 pupils passing subjects that included GCSE equivalents (such as BTEC/NVQ).

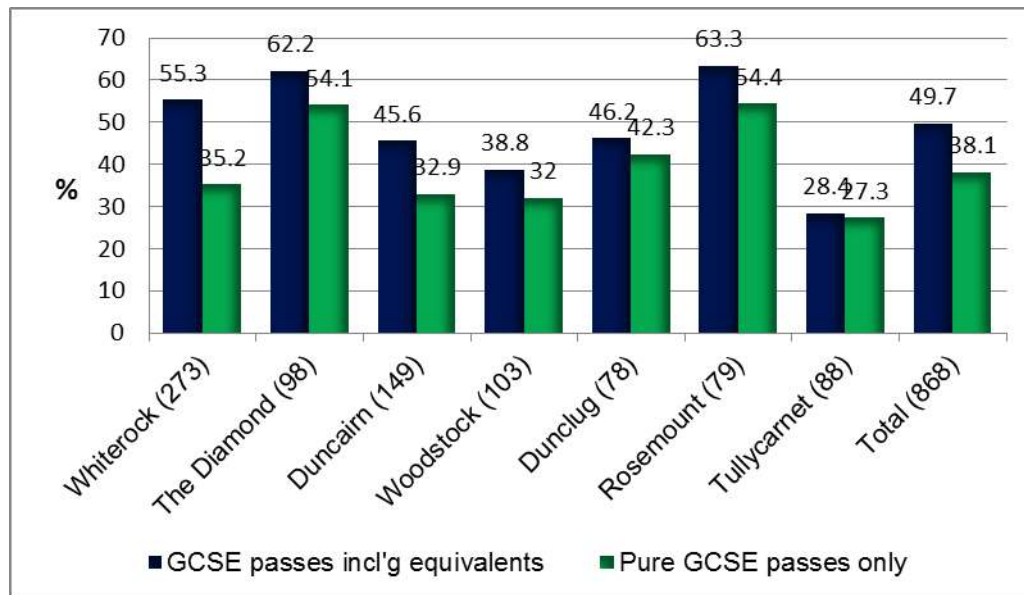


Figure 3: Percentage GCSE A\*-C with/without GCSE equivalents across seven case study Wards.

Across the seven Wards, a higher percentage of pupils appear to be succeeding at school when equivalents are included than the percentage of school leavers who complete only GCSE subjects. In every case, educational achievement is lower if only pure GCSE subject passes are included.

The percentage GCSE pass rate for some Wards was being significantly influenced by students being entered for GCSE equivalents. For Tullycarnet, there was very little difference in achievement levels when equivalents were/were not included (1.1% variation). By contrast, for Whiterock, there was a 20.1% variation in the results pattern within the Ward. This brings educational achievement levels closer to that of Tullycarnet (and also of Duncairn) if 'pure' GCSE passes is the educational measure adopted.

Whiterock and Woodstock were much more closely matched (35.3% and 32.0% respectively) in contrast to their relative achievement profiles if equivalents were included. With equivalents included in the measure, Whiterock outperforms Woodstock with 16.5% difference.

A comparison of Duncairn and Woodstock (as two predominantly Protestant areas) showed very little difference in performance when pure GCSEs were examined (32.9% and 32.0% respectively). When equivalents were included, the achievement pattern is much wider (Duncairn 45.6%; Woodstock 38.8%).

**The percentage GCSE pass rate (Grade A\*-C) for some Wards is significantly influenced by GCSE pass rates that include the core subjects English and Maths.**

A notable shift in the patterns of educational achievement across the seven Ward areas was identified when the core subjects, English and Maths, were included. The variation in performance for the most deprived Ward, Whiterock, was found to be the greatest out

of all seven Wards.

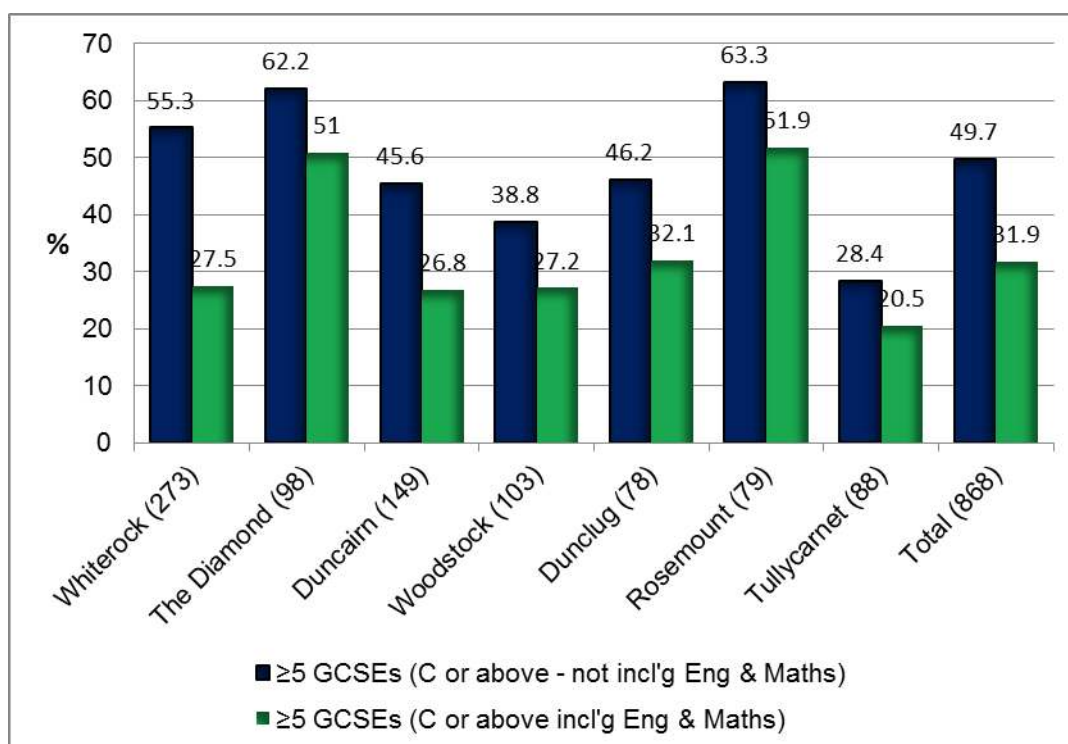


Figure 4: Percentage GCSE Grade A\*-C with/without English and Maths across seven case study Wards.

The findings add to the ongoing debate about how we assure a quality curriculum and qualifications framework for young people that both centralises the importance of English and Maths as core subjects, while at the same time engaging those, who have broader interests and talents, including vocational ones. Offering diverse curricula with associated qualifications is the strategy adopted by some of the schools in the case study sample illustrating instances of increasing numbers of their young people obtaining 5 or more GCSEs (A\*-C) – but without the core subjects. Alongside this, the qualitative data suggest that teachers and pupils see this strategy as improving educational attainment because these lead to classrooms in which pupils are more highly engaged, motivated and successful and this is especially, but not solely the case, for young people in EOTAS and AEP. While engaging some young people in Maths and English can often feel like an uphill struggle, the challenge is nevertheless to find ways to reinforce the value to many of English and Maths skills as essential building blocks for any further study and career.

### Attainment differentials across religious background

There were marked differentials in educational achievement between predominantly Catholic (Whiterock, The Diamond and Rosemount) and predominantly Protestant Wards (Woodstock, Duncairn and Tullycarnet).

**The three predominantly Catholic Wards in the study (Whiterock, The Diamond and Rosemount) had higher levels of attainment in terms of five GCSEs A\*-C (2012/13) than the three predominantly Protestant Wards (Duncairn, Woodstock and Tullycarnet).**

**In the case study Wards, attainment differentials across religious background were associated with: the relative value placed on education; perceived levels of detachment or attachment of schools; varying levels of community cohesion; and variances in school absenteeism rates.**

Further details are available in Appendix 3 and Volume 2: ILiAD Case Studies of Seven Electoral Wards provides in-depth individual description and analysis for each of the seven case study electoral wards

### *Relative value placed on education*

In general, the qualitative data evidence a higher value placed on education in the predominantly-Catholic case study Wards than was found in the predominantly-Protestant Wards. The data suggest that these variances are related to:

- Historical experiences of discrimination in the Catholic community in terms of the industrial labour market;
- The value of education being championed by nationalist politicians;
- The role of the Catholic ethos in terms of encouraging learning in disadvantaged communities; and
- Negative socio-cultural norms in some working class Protestant communities around education.

“Even in the 1970’s, when it came to poverty the way out of it in the Catholic sector was they pushed their kids to go onto University ... here (in the Controlled sector), they didn’t need to because they were jobs for them. It was only when the jobs dried up that the Controlled side cottoned on to the fact that education really matters.”  
(Principal)

“One of the key legacies (of the Education Act 1947) is a very strong belief in the Catholic community in Derry that, as John Hume would have said: “Education tackles poverty; education is what will end poverty.” (Principal)

“The Catholic ethos of this school helps pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds know that they are valued, they are talented and they are part of a community.”  
(Senior teacher)

Several respondents in the predominantly Protestant case study Wards highlighted the contrasting value placed on education in the Protestant and Catholic communities.

“There seems to be a real apathy sometimes with some of our parents ... maybe they themselves didn’t have a good experience of school. School and education maybe aren’t viewed as important in the Protestant community.” (Principal)

By contrast, a youth worker recalled that during the times of exams, almost no Catholic children attend his cross-community youth club; and a principal spoke about the inter-generational transmission of negative attitudes around school and education.

“... because their parents have them in the home; they're studying, they're revising; and their parents are being supportive.” (Youth worker)

### *Perceived levels of detachment or attachment of schools*

As outlined above in the section on school-level factors, perceived levels of detachment or attachment of schools were important determiners of attainment. These data also show that such perceptions were commonly informed by: the strength and efficacy school-home and school-community relationships; how the schools and teachers relate to the realities of working class families; and the visibility of schools in local communities – i.e. schools being seen as part of the community fabric.

Although there were examples in all the case study Wards of schools creating and sustaining effective relationships with local communities and families, it would appear that many Catholic schools have prioritised these triangular relationships more effectively than some of their controlled school counterparts. Indeed, many of these Catholic schools are seen as integral to the local community and families in such schools are encouraged to be active participants in their children's education to a greater extent than was found in many schools in the controlled sector.

“We would try to work with the families at home to help support them ... that all encompasses within that caring, Catholic ethos we have.” (Senior teacher)

“The relationships with parents are good, we would have a parent-teacher night for every year group ... out of a group of 200, you might have ten parents not there.” (Principal)

According to the qualitative data, an important factor in these positive relationships between schools and local families and communities in the predominantly Catholic wards is that many teachers in the schools serving Whiterock, Rosemount and The Diamond were born and continue to live locally.

“There's teachers here that are former pupils ... and send their kids here too ... that's important.” (Parent)

“I was born and reared just beside here. I know the community completely ... I've a fuller understanding of the community background, of where the families and children are coming from ... I'm not saying it's absolutely necessary, but it's been very beneficial for me going forward ... the support that you get as a result of that is very good ... people believe in the school and believe in what you're doing.” (Principal)

In the predominantly-Protestant case study Wards there were accounts from some parents, which paid tribute to the principals and teachers who have worked hard to



improve levels of attachment between their schools and the communities they serve. In Tullycarnet, for example, there was evidence of a reciprocal and proactive engagement between the local post-primary school and the local community in recent years stimulated by a threat of closure that has led to a mutual commitment to improve educational outcomes for pupils.

“We want to have our children go to our local school and we understood much better when he (the Principal) came out to us to talk about it.” (Parent)

However, other parents, pupils and community workers in the predominantly-Protestant Wards claimed that many teachers in the controlled sector did not necessarily aim to have the same connection or long-term commitment to the community than is commonly found among teachers in the Catholic Maintained sector.

“Some of the teachers are middle class ... know nothing about the home lives of their pupils and ... just don't care about kids from disadvantaged areas.” (Parent)

“It would not matter if they were from a nationalist background, but it would have been better if they were from a working class area.” (Post-primary pupil)

“A lot of the teachers are middle class, pretty detached ... and it's totally impossible for them to relate to what's going on in their communities.” (Community worker)

As outlined earlier, a further important aspect of perceived levels of attachment or detachment of schools is their visibility in local communities. In the predominantly Catholic Wards of Whiterock, Rosemount and The Diamond the fact that there are so many quality schools, literally, within walking distance from pupils' homes has important and positive consequences such as: (a) these schools being seen as assets of the community; (b) young people having a constant reminder that education is an integral part of their lives and living environment; (c) schools being accessible to parents and more able to also involve the community in events and initiatives; and (d) reduced transportation costs and journey times for pupils thus encouraging higher levels of attendance.

For example, in the Whiterock case study, more than half of the Ward's school-age population attend schools less than one mile away; and out of a total secondary enrolment of 572, only 15 pupils attend a school which is three miles away. However, in the predominantly-Protestant Wards of Duncairn, Woodstock and Tullycarnet the fact that many young people attend schools which are more than four miles from their homes was highlighted as an important inhibitor of attainment and increased the sense of detachment between schools and the families and communities they serve.

“I think that visibility thing is crucial and if ... schools are not visible then how can they be relevant; so there's something about how do you create visibility for education in places.” (Community worker)

“(Named school) where my daughter attends is almost five mile from where she lives ... so they can't really say they're part of this community.” (Parent)

### *Varying levels of community cohesion*

The case studies also highlight varying levels of community cohesion in the predominantly-Catholic and predominantly-Protestant Wards which these data suggest are related to:

- Changes in demographics, a certain level of ‘fracturing’ and a subsequent lack of community cohesiveness within predominantly-Protestant Wards;
- Positive psycho-social connections in predominantly-Catholic Wards engendered by e.g. the Catholic Church and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA); and
- Perceptions that communities in the predominantly-Catholic case study Wards in the study have mediated their post-conflict transitions more successfully than communities in the predominantly-Protestant Wards.

The secondary data from the case study Wards confirm contemporary demographic patterns which depict an aging and declining Protestant population and a young and expanding Catholic population. Moreover, the recent arrival of ethnic minorities also appears to have created more challenges for working class Protestant communities and schools than Catholic ones. It is also clear that the rapidly increasing private rented sector has caused difficulties in the Duncairn and Woodstock Wards, where transitory tenures and perceptions of community as a “dumping ground” have done little to enhance community cohesion in these areas.

The case studies also evidence levels of “fracturing” and a lack of cohesion in the predominantly-Protestant Wards that contrasts with the positive psycho-social connections which were seen as a feature of the predominantly-Catholic Wards.

“There’s a long-standing perception within loyalist communities, which tends to be about victimhood, feeling hard done by and having their identity erased.” (Community worker)

“There is no community here ... just loads of immigrants and private lets.” (Youth worker)

“Unifying factors such as the Catholic Church and other shared associations such as the GAA have helped to create a sense of community cohesion.” (Principal)

“In the Catholic community ... there is a clearer vision about why you’re doing things ... an overarching ideology that underpins almost everything.” (Community worker)

“Protestant communities are in drift ... there is no central connection to a faith that binds people together because there are so many Protestant churches ... the Catholic communities just have one which helps to hold people together.” (Senior teacher)

It was also suggested in the case studies that these perceptions of higher levels of community cohesion in the predominantly-Catholic Wards were related to communities in these Wards having mediated their post-conflict transitions more successfully than

communities in the predominantly-Protestant Wards. For example, legacies of the recent conflict such as spatial mobility restrictions, insular attitudes and conflict-era politics were commonly cited in the Duncairn and Woodstock data as inhibitors of attainment.

“Tigers Bay is only situated five minutes walking distance from Belfast city center ... but there is no safe passage. They have got half a dozen streets that they can run about in, that they can say “these are my streets.” It’s a very, very small world. But these kids feel safe there, that’s the only place that they feel that.” (Youth worker)

“The level of conflict related insularity in some of these working class Protestant communities ... I am sure ... has a debilitating impact on ... [local young people’s] social horizons.” (Teacher)

“Local politicians are more concerned with conflict-era disputes than they are about the social or educational wellbeing of the residents.” (Parent)

However, these accounts contrast with findings from the predominantly-Catholic case study Wards where conflict-related spatial mobility restrictions did not, to any extent, feature in the data; comparable levels of insularity were similarly absent; and there was no sense of defeatism, abandonment, or perceived demographic encroachment.

### *Differentials in school absenteeism and school exclusion rates*

As outlined earlier, the secondary data around differential levels of absenteeism must also be factored into any explanation of why the predominantly-Catholic Wards in the case studies had higher levels of attainment than the predominantly-Protestant Wards of similarly high (or lower) deprivation.

In relation to absenteeism, notable differences were identified between the Wards.

Indices show that the three predominantly-Protestant Wards in the ILiAD study, which had the lowest attainment as measured by percentage Grades A\*-C across all subjects, also had the highest rates of absenteeism (2012-2013):

- The Protestant Wards had the highest rates of absenteeism – ranging from 27% in Duncairn to 39.7% in Tullycarnet and Woodstock;
- Dunclug, the mixed-religion Ward had the lowest rates of absenteeism;
- The Catholic Wards’ rates were: The Diamond, 22.2%, Rosemount, 21.1%, and Whiterock 23.7%, despite the fact that these three Wards also had the highest rates of FSM entitlement in the ILiAD sample.

### *Attainment differentials across gender*

**Out of the seven case study Wards, girls consistently outperformed boys at GCSE Grade A\*-C in all but one Ward area (The Diamond Ward). The data here suggesting that such differentials are related to varying levels of value attached**

to education, cultural expectations around educational achievement, self-esteem and absenteeism rates.

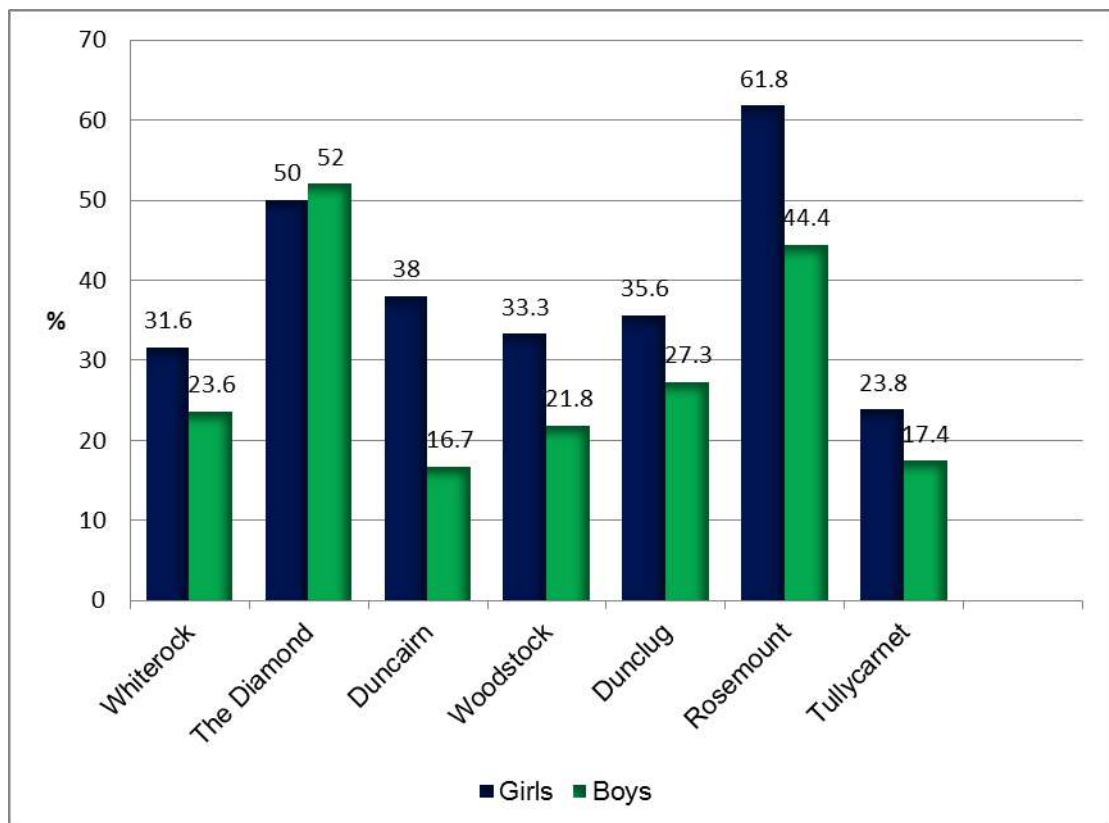


Figure 5: Percentage of GCSE Grade A\*-C, including English and Maths, by gender and Ward

The overall trend in Figure shows girls out-performing boys. The greatest difference between boys' and girls' performance at GCSE, including English and Maths, was in Duncairn. The only inconsistency in this pattern occurred in The Diamond, where boys' performance was slightly better than that of girls by two percentage points at GCSE Grade A\*-C. The data suggest a number of factors, which help explain the higher achievement of females in the case studies, such as:

- Gender divisions in the way that education is perceived and valued;
- Differences in cultural expectations and learning styles between males and females;
- The impact of low self-esteem and a lack of local positive role model for some young males; and
- Higher absenteeism rates in all-boys schools serving the Ward areas of high deprivation in comparison to all-girls schools.

A commonly cited view in the seven case studies was that girls were more likely to value education and see attainment as something worth aspiring to than boys were. Similarly, it was frequently claimed that, particularly in disadvantaged communities, the

learning styles of girls were more conducive to academic achievement than the learning styles of boys.

“Being in an all-girls school, when you have female teachers ... it’s good to look up to them and see them as strong independent women.” (Post-primary female pupil)

“Girls study because they are told to and boys study because they need to. Boys are, commonly, more selective when it comes to directing their attention and energy and are likely to say ‘so what part do I need of this?’ and if I don’t need it, I won’t do it.” (Principal)

“Many boys find it difficult to be engaged by very academic type subjects such as English literature or additional Maths.” (Teacher)

“If a boy doesn’t see why it’s relevant he doesn’t see why he should work at it.” (Vice principal)

“Girls generally, take information in quicker, are more focused ... boys develop slower and mature slower ... they’re still evolving intellectually ... they’re still years behind girls ... they’re still growing up.” (EWO)

Respondents in the case study interviews and focus groups also argued that low levels of self-esteem among a section of young males and a lack of positive role models had a negative impact on their attitude to schools and learning.

“The working class boys here, increasingly, are so disengaged they are just lacking such motivation.” (Senior teacher)

“One of the problems, I think, is that they (boys from disadvantaged communities) have no one to look up to ... no one who they can aspire to be.” (Youth worker)

Finally, the secondary data from the case study Wards shows that high rates of absenteeism were more prevalent within all-boys schools than were found in the all-girls schools. Given the already established link (DE, 2015)<sup>16</sup> between absenteeism lower levels of attainment at the end of KS2 and KS4, these rates of high absenteeism need some further consideration in relation to the attainment differentials across gender that these case studies have highlighted.

## Differential rates of absenteeism, FSM and SEN

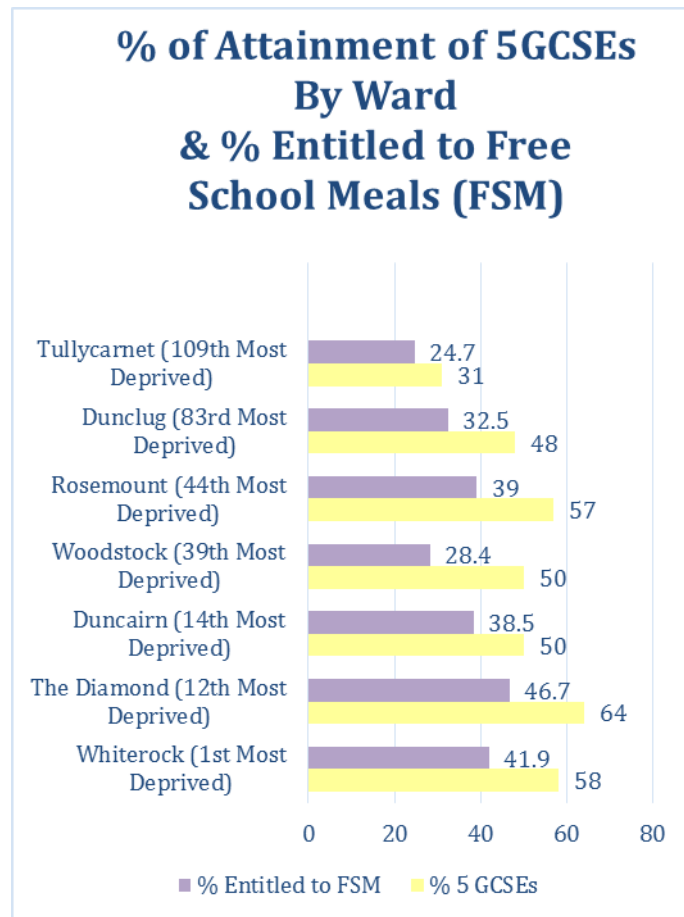
**Case study pupils within schools with higher rates of absenteeism,<sup>17</sup> higher percentages of FSM and SEN did not achieve as well at GCSE Grade A\*-C**

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<sup>16</sup> Department of Education (UK) The Link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4. Research Report, February 2015  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/412638/The\\_link\\_between\\_absence\\_and\\_attainment\\_at\\_KS2\\_and\\_KS4.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/412638/The_link_between_absence_and_attainment_at_KS2_and_KS4.pdf)

**(including English & Maths).**

Strong relationships between FSM entitlements in schools, the proportion of children with SEN in a school, and high absenteeism rates, were observed from secondary data analysis. As these factors increased, attainment rates at GCSE were generally found to decrease.



*Figure 6. Percentage of GCSE (A\*-C) and percentage of FSME by Ward*

The grammar schools serving all seven Wards showed consistently the lowest rates for absenteeism, FSM, and SEN, in contrast to other non-selective schools, and they had the highest rates of GCSE passes at grades A\*-C. Differences in achievement rates between schools with similar characteristics were also observed – in many of these cases, the proportion of pupils with SEN in a school was the only observable difference.

## Section 4 - Towards policy and practice - some considerations

The following section provides summaries of key aspects of young people's experiences that can help or hinder their educational pathway and point to some implications for policy and practice for these Wards.

Only by understanding the various immediate, school and structural/policy factors influencing differences in education outcomes at local levels will it be possible to design effective responses in policy and practice that improve the educational outcomes for all young people in these deprived Wards.

The following section provides summaries of key aspects of young people's experiences that can help or hinder their educational pathway. Given the qualitative nature of the ILiAD study, there is no suggestion that the factors identified are in any way causal but rather, taken in the round, they illustrate the delicate balance of interrelated factors seen to persist for many young people in these areas. Supporting and investing in the aspects that are viewed as enhancing educational success and reducing or minimising the negative impact of those that delimit educational possibilities, may shift the balance of opportunity in a positive direction but only with a view to the local context. Thus, the hope is that the summaries may hold some implications for policy and practice for these Wards.

### Immediate (Individual-Home-School) Level Factors

Across the seven case study Wards, factors that are seen as positively influencing and improving educational outcomes and that ought to be encouraged, include: the positive impact of a young person's resilience, which refers to their capacity to do well and bounce back despite adverse experience<sup>18</sup>; where parents or caregivers offer support and encouragement for education within the home; in local communities where young people feel a strong sense of connectedness and where there is good youth and community provision which supports and encourages learning and development, particularly for those who might otherwise fall through the gaps.

Counter to these supportive elements, factors that are viewed as detracting from educational attainment in these Wards include: increasing concerns about levels of young people's mental ill-health, coupled with adverse home situations that reflect inadequate parental support for education; inter-generational transmission of educational failure from parent to child through successive generations such that failure

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<sup>18</sup> Gilligan, R. (2000) Adversity, Resilience and Young People: the Protective Value of Positive School and Spare Time Experiences CHILDREN & SOCIETY VOLUME 14, pp. 37-47

becomes a norm and where some young people display significantly poor self-esteem with associated low educational aspirations.

In terms of these immediate influences on attainment, the case study data suggests an important role for relevant agencies and policy makers in terms of capturing best practice and further supporting initiatives for these Ward areas, which:

- Seek to build resilience in young people from these disadvantaged backgrounds from the earliest age by mitigating risk factors and actively supporting activities that engender higher levels of self-esteem and self-agency;
- Continue to support parents and caregivers to make a fuller contribution in the education of their children and encourage high aspirations;
- Recognize and address the ongoing and complex learning needs of young people with mental health problems by properly resourcing services for young people with mental health problems; and
- Utilize and integrate the valuable assets (including the positive role models) of local youth and community work input, which is directed towards encouraging learning in disadvantaged communities.

### School Level Factors

The argument that schools make a difference was a key message conveyed across the Wards - but they do so differentially. Factors that were seen to make positive differences and where good practice ought to be extended included: the importance of school leaders who held a vision and who saw the value of collaboration both inside and outside; schools that develop effective links with local communities and are viewed as accessible and welcoming by parents; where inter-school and inter-agency collaborations are common features; a diverse and inclusive curriculum that encourages attainment; teachers who engender respectful, proactive relationships that motivate and enable learning; and where there is effective pastoral care provision and support for SEN pupils and those with behavioral problems.

Conversely, school factors associated with inhibiting educational achievement and where improvement may be required included: low expectations on the part of some schools and teachers; where there were weak school-community linkages; with some schools being perceived as “middle-class and detached” by parents and pupils: schools with high rates of absenteeism and exclusion and where there were insufficient support or resources for children with SEN.

The school level issues which were raised in the case studies highlight the need for schools, institutions and government departments with a responsibility for education for these areas to design and implement policies which:



- Facilitate visionary leadership in schools via the capturing and sharing of best practice models and ensuring that collaborative skills are integral to any review of headship qualifications;
- Acknowledge that, notwithstanding demographic and geographical realities, there is a need for schools in these disadvantaged Ward areas to work at having a 'presence' in the communities of the young people and families they serve. For example, where significant spatial distances exist (between schools and communities), schools need to increase their provision of outreach as appropriate;
- Support and encourage all schools to continuously monitor and evaluate (as part of school development planning) existing school-community and school-home linkages and make any necessary procedural changes to ensure that such linkages are as effective and accessible as possible;
- Induce and resource schools to network and engage collaboratively with each other, FE and HE and with external agencies in pursuance of shared, area-based learning/ attainment goals, social mixing and reconciliation, and models of best practice around e.g. inclusive curriculum, pastoral care provision and support for SEN pupils;
- Support and mentor teachers who feel (or who are perceived as) 'detached' to find ways to increase their levels of understanding about social difference and improve connectedness with their school's pupils and the communities they come from;
- Recognise the strong pattern of relationship between attendance and attainment and properly resource the work of EWOs and other agencies in terms of early intervention and inter-agency support to address absenteeism.

### **Structural/Policy Level Factors**

Factors that are seen to influence and improve educational outcomes at a structural level and, where attention should be paid, include: the positive ways communities and agencies increasingly interact and cooperate to promote education and support pupils, parents and families more broadly; where there are new and improved school buildings that act as a visible commitment to education; the existence of high-performing schools located in the community that support high quality teaching and learning and act as a source of pride and a practical resource for the pupils, teachers and community; and, the positive impact on attainment performance for those young people who attend grammar schools serving these areas.

By contrast, structural and policy factors that were identified as inhibiting educational attainment and which need to be considered and addressed include: the impact of the current economic climate; the toll of legacies of the recent conflict; the spatial detachment of schools and the communities they serve; the variability in availability of quality pre-school provision; and areas with insufficient SEN and EWO support. Additionally, some of the processes arising from academic selection that were identified as inhibiting attainment need addressed, such as the negative impact on those pupils who fail or do not sit the transfer test and the inequities of private tutoring for economically poor families.

The structural/policy level issues as highlighted above and more fully examined in this report make clear for these Wards that:

- It is important to continue to recognise the power of local community-based activity and the ethos of partnership that exists to benefit young people and families within these disadvantaged communities. Added to this it is vital to encourage active citizenship, especially through youth engagement; and also for elected representatives to build strong relationships with these communities in order to represent more fully the issues of poverty and education;
- There is value in sustaining investment in new and improved school buildings and facilities that have a significant and positive impact on young people from disadvantaged areas in terms of raising educational aspiration;
- Within some of the case study areas, legacies of the recent conflict are having a negative impact in terms of attainment. These communities require patient, proactive and ongoing support to help them mediate their post-conflict transitions;
- Policy makers are minded to acknowledge that while access to a grammar school provides pupils from these Ward areas with a distinct advantage, in terms of attainment prospects, successful navigation of the academic selection process is often contingent on parents having the financial means to pay for private tuition.

## Concluding thoughts

Some influences affecting educational achievement in these Wards are seen to reside within the young person themselves, some are locally driven within the home and the local environment; others occur inside the school and the classroom settings, while still others are exerted through structural and policy conditions and constraints.

More broadly, the evidence from the ILiAD research highlights that promoting educational achievement for these disadvantaged Wards cannot rely solely on the roll-out of generic policy and models of practice. Rather, policy and/or practice must address the multiple factors identified that interact to affect young people's lives and outcomes at a local level in these Wards, while paying attention to the 'bigger picture'. Thus, in terms of responding to the challenges associated with educational achievement in such disadvantaged Wards, what the ILiAD study best illustrates, overall, is the importance of:

- **Thinking locally and planning systemically:** This means that any change in policy or practice ought to take close account of the unique context of each local Ward. Any proposals for change should take cognisance of the distinctive balance and interdependence that exists between the complex interplay of structural, school-level and immediate factors that contribute to conditions for educational attainment in that area;
- **Cross-cutting issues:** There is value in considering the range of cross-cutting themes identified across the seven Wards and consulting on these more widely across NI Wards. Notwithstanding the unique profile of features represented by each Ward, and the fact that, although the findings cannot be generalised, there was sufficient frequency and consistency in the issues identified, such that these issues may have resonance for other disadvantaged communities in NI;
- **No 'quick fix' solutions:** Given the complexity illustrated within each Ward case study, simply diagnosing one element as 'the problem' (e.g. the child or the school or the home or the neighbourhood) and offering 'quick fixes' to underachievement is unlikely to work. Investing in and collaborating to identify sustainable longer-term solutions for the improvement of educational attainment, by involving all community members as partners, and building on strengths, is likely to be more fruitful.
- **Bonded versus bounded:** Those interviewed from these Ward areas tended to view their community positively when they experienced a sense of connectedness based on strong networks of formal and informal relationships that were trusting and promoted a range of benefits, in which children and young people were a priority. This sense of bond seemed best exemplified when it was inclusive and benefits were shared within the Ward across people at different parts of any hierarchy. However, it also seems significant that these areas are encouraged and supported never to become community silos but rather for boundaries to remain fluid, where local people and stakeholders are open and willing to link and network beyond their home community to garner resources and share experience on how best to close the achievement gap.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Literature Review: Outline

An extensive literature review was conducted by the ILiAD research team that encompassed key perspectives on the issue of educational achievement and the types of factors, which tend to make a difference with regard to students' attainment and deprivation or poverty. Additionally, the literature review informed the design of research instruments and helped operationalise key constructs of the study.

The review considered factors associated with:

- Individual
- Family
- School
- Community<sup>19</sup>

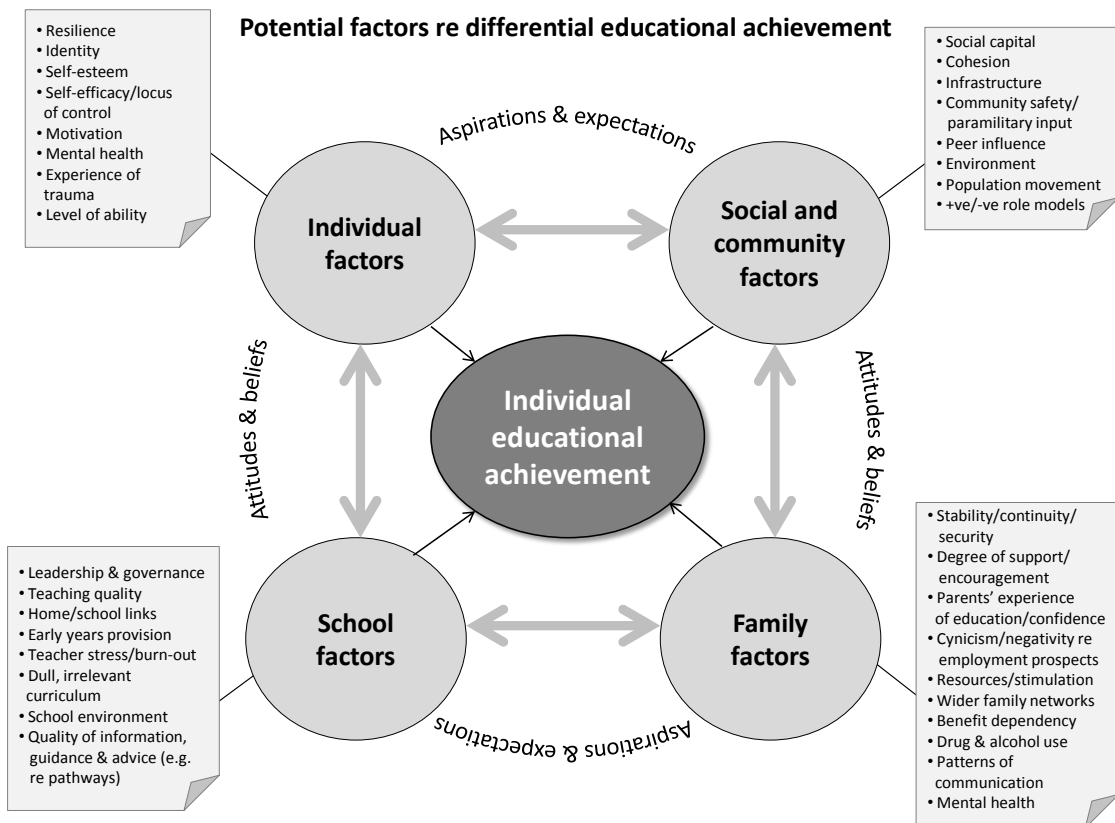


Figure 7: Mapping of potential factors influencing differential educational achievement in existing research literature

<sup>19</sup> A complete analysis of the theoretical frameworks (including Social Capital) used is not presented in this report but is available elsewhere in **Volume 1: ILIAD: Main Technical Report**.

## Individual factors

(a) Individual pupil background measures, such as family and socio-economic status (SES) and gender have been found to account for only a very small percentage of the total variation in pupil attainment (approximately 11%);

(b) The factor that makes the biggest difference in terms of disadvantaged students who succeed and those that do not, is resilience, defined as when students experience competence and success despite adversity and disadvantage;

(c) Students have the potential to overcome their economic and social disadvantage and to perform at levels similar to their more advantaged peers; socio-economic disadvantage can be overcome with the right set of circumstances and incentives.

## Familial factors

(a) Parental aspirations and expectations for their children's achievements have a strong impact on children's school results;

(b) Parents' own experience of education, educational self-confidence, contact and engagement with teachers and schools, parental beliefs and attitudes about the value and utility of education are all important predictors of children's school attainment;

(c) Some parents in disadvantaged areas are resistant to engage with their children's schools by feeling "put down" by schools and teachers.

## School-level factors

(a) The impact of schools, known as 'school effect', on pupil attainment practically (as well as statistically) has been shown to be significant, and is related to a consistent set of factors influencing pupil outcomes. These include teacher behaviour, which has been found to explain up to 75% of the variance between classes in schools.

(b) Positive teacher reinforcement, higher-order questioning techniques, and productive approaches to teaching that include a supportive classroom environment, inclusivity, and a sense of connectedness of learning to the outside world can facilitate student achievement.

(c) School leaders need to be politically informed leaders as well as educators, who can adjust, adapt and deal with the changing socio-economic conditions their students face.

(d) Involving community members in school improvement decisions has also been shown to lead to lasting transformation.

(e) The benefits of schools that provide a range of services and activities to help meet the needs of pupils, their families and the wider community have been shown to improve student engagement and attainment.

## Community factors

(a) Strong networks in families and communities are found to act as 'social glue' and can lead to positive outcomes for children and young people and links between communities can aid social cooperation across communities and groups of people.

(b) Local community is a powerful influence and plays a major role in shaping what happens in schools because school failures and successes occur within the context of community standards and expectations;

(c) Improving educational outcomes for young people because young people are influenced by the educational attitudes and behaviours of their peers, and any attempts to invest in and improve educational attitudes and behaviours are likely to reverberate throughout disadvantaged communities.

(d) Evidence, from the range of national and international studies reviewed, reinforced the value of the case study design aiming to capture perspectives at the individual, school and structural or policy levels within each Ward.

## Appendix 2: Methodology

The ILIAD research was designed as a three-year (2012-2015) case study analysis of seven Ward areas of NI. The overall methodological design was mixed-methods, combining statistical interrogation of existing data sets (secondary data analysis), a pupil online survey, and an in-depth qualitative case study of each sample Ward.

The ILIAD study is the first study to examine qualitatively and in-depth the factors that may be influencing educational achievement patterns among the more deprived Wards in Northern Ireland.

The ILIAD research adopted a case study approach to explore and understand the factors behind significant differential educational achievement between:

- electoral Wards with high level deprivation who perform better educationally than Wards with lower level deprivation;
- Catholic and Protestant deprived Ward areas;
- similarly deprived Catholic Ward areas;
- similarly deprived Protestant Ward areas, and;
- within areas of mixed housing.

### Rationale for case study methodology

Case study is an ideal methodology when holistic, in-depth investigation is needed as it provides multi-perspectival analyses, using multiple sources of data. Case study data is normally a lot richer and of greater depth than statistical experimentation thus providing illumination and insight into complex issues, such as those anomalies on achievement and deprivation identified across NI. However, any findings from this research can only be attributed and related to the case study areas that form the research.

### Operational Definitions

The ILIAD study adopted standard definitions associated with the two main factors 'educational achievement' and 'deprivation':

**Educational achievement** was defined by the standard benchmark measure of 5 GCSEs at grades A\*-C or above.

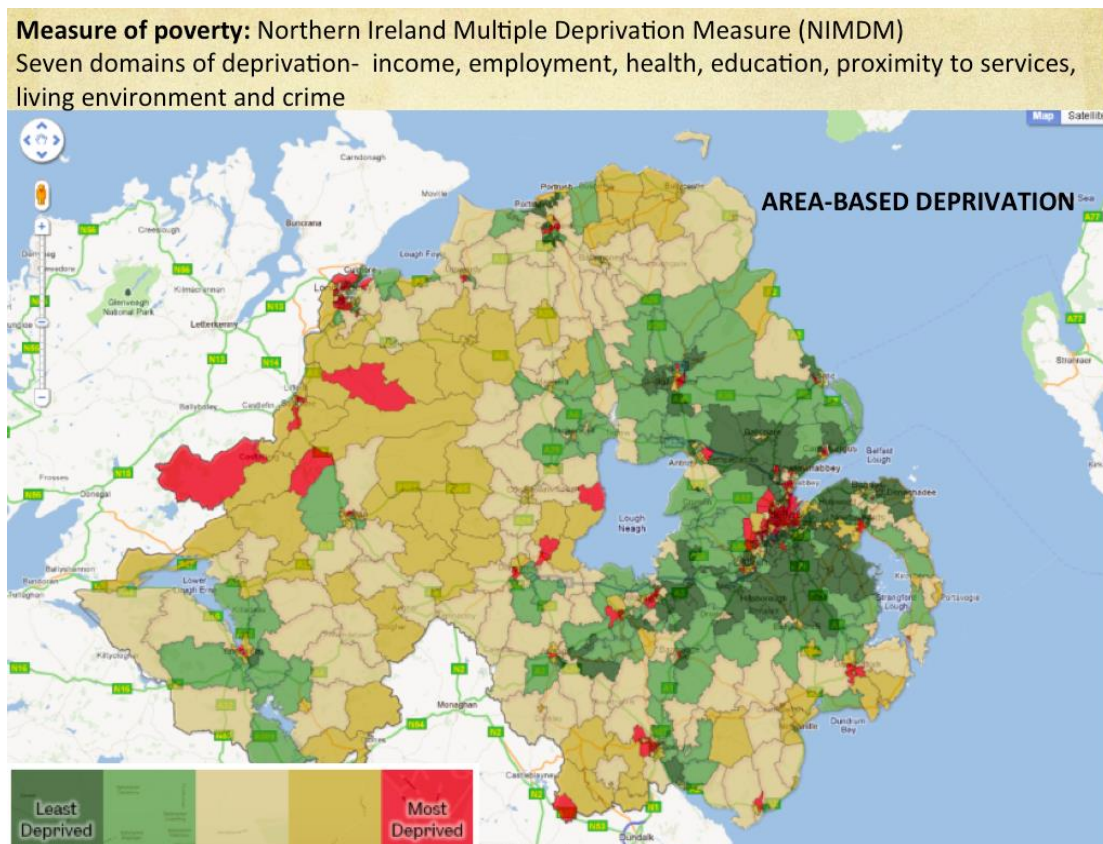
**Deprivation** was defined according to the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM, 2010).

The study focused on understanding how factors combined at Ward level in NI to create different patterns of educational outcomes, where Ward is defined as:

**Ward:** An electoral Ward is the smallest unit of administrative geography and is the one used within the IliAD study. Since 1992, NI has been divided into 582 Wards, ranked from 1 'most deprived' to 582 'least deprived' using the NIMDM. Figure 1 illustrates the geographical spread and concentrations of MDM across NI.

## Selecting the Seven Case Studies

Following statistical analyses of multiple deprivation measures (MDM) in relation to educational performance of Ward areas in the top 20% for multiple deprivation, case study Ward areas were selected.



*Figure 8: Geographical spread of deprivation for Northern Ireland using the NIMDM from which the seven case study electoral wards were selected.*

The IliAD study selected seven case studies from within the top 20% electoral Wards for multiple deprivation, according to the NIMDM (i.e. between electoral Ward 1 – electoral Ward 116). Selection was undertaken:

(i) by a preliminary analysis of the 15 year trends of the percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE passes at Grade C or above within the top 20% most deprived Ward areas;



(ii) against criteria that were judged would lead to the best comparative data in response to the research questions. Figure 2 shows the geographic locations of the seven case study Wards across NI.

Selection criteria included urban location; largely Catholic/Protestant/mixed demographic; mix of anomalous and average profiles regarding levels of deprivation and educational outcomes. The research goal was to 'drill down' beneath the headline statistics to determine and map more holistically what factors could be contributing to the various identifiable patterns of achievement within and between these areas.

The criteria for including these particular seven Wards in the study, as examples of differential educational achievement, was as follows:

- Whiterock because it is the most deprived Ward in Northern Ireland and it has significantly different educational achievement levels compared with The Diamond (which is also a predominantly Catholic Ward and closely matched for multiple deprivation).
- The Diamond and Duncairn because this gave the study predominantly Catholic and Protestant Wards which are very closely matched for deprivation but demonstrate differential performance educationally. Duncairn experienced a spike in educational attainment since approximately 2008/09 and is now performing at similar levels as Woodstock, another predominantly Protestant Ward, even though Duncairn is more highly deprived. Regarding the GCSE indicator, The Diamond appears to be a particular anomaly because it has high deprivation and strong educational performance.
- Rosemount and Tullycarnet because Rosemount provides a predominantly-Catholic Ward with relatively high deprivation but good educational performance, whereas Tullycarnet, predominantly-Protestant, provides the opposite profile (i.e. a Ward with relatively low deprivation and poor educational performance).
- Woodstock because it is more highly ranked for deprivation than Tullycarnet, and yet has better educational outcomes. Both are predominantly-Protestant, so they offer a comparative view within the Protestant group.
- Dunclug because it is a mixed-religion Ward and it has an average GCSE performance level in the sample of cases.

In total the case studies comprised three largely Catholic Wards, three largely Protestant Wards and one mixed-religion Ward. Two of the Wards were located in L/Derry, one in Ballymena, and four in Belfast/Greater Belfast area. All of the Wards were in urban/semi-urban locations.

The seven case study electoral Wards (with the composite Super Output Areas<sup>20</sup> (SOAs) in brackets) chosen for the sample are listed below:

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- **Whiterock** (Whiterock 1; Whiterock 2; Whiterock 3)
- **The Diamond** (The Diamond)
- **Duncairn** (Duncairn 1; Duncairn 2)
- **Woodstock** (Woodstock 1; Woodstock 2; Woodstock 3)
- **Dunclug** (Dunclug)
- **Rosemount** (Rosemount)
- **Tullycarnet** (Tullycarnet)

## Rationale for selection

### Case Study Data Collection

A comprehensive literature review informed the subsequent data collection plan and the analysis undertaken.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect data in each of the case study Ward areas, comprising:

- Qualitative data - focus groups, individual interviews, desk-based research
- Secondary data analysis of existing data

### Qualitative Case Study Data

Case study data were collected through a variety of fit-for-purpose methods in each of the seven Wards. These comprised semi-structured, individual face-to-face interviews and focus group interviews.

The approach was community-centred and, as such, was iterative and developmental. Thus, data derived in the early stages of fieldwork informed subsequent data collection among community participants and stakeholders until data saturation points were reached. Data saturation is a quality standard in qualitative research; it involves gathering and analysing data to the point is reached where no new insights are being observed.

### Interviews

The semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews covered the following themes in conversational-style, tailored according to the individual or group respondents. Thus, for young people the emphasis was placed on individual, family, school, community and peer factors, whereas community representatives were focused on community influences, assets and support mechanisms. Themes covered in interviews included the following:

- community influences (community cohesion; capacity; positive assets and resources; community safety);

- individual aspirations, expectations, influences and how these are formed and perpetuated;
- influences in the home (parental support, family stability);
- school factors (controlled/maintained, leadership, curriculum, pedagogy, pastoral care, extra-curricular, FSM, SEN, attendance);
- wider family influences (attitudes, expectations, experiences of education, parent/school engagement);
- peer influences;
- gender and religious identity;
- influence of informal education provision (for example, youth clubs, Alternative Education Provision, Integrated Services); and
- access to support services/organisations/affiliations.

## Secondary Data

Early analysis of a series of social, educational and demographic factors of the Wards using existing secondary data sets (Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service/Census/Department of Education data), including geo-social, community and educational services mapping provided baseline characteristics of the target areas. This allowed a comparative element across the seven Wards and permitted some exploration of change over time in relation to education. Interrogation and mapping of secondary data, included:

- Multiple deprivation (2010) domain statistics (such as crime, employment etc.) at Ward and lower spatial levels;
- 2001 and 2011 Census data, to explore the temporal continuity of these geographical areas over the decade and to examine change (e.g. in demographics and housing tenure) through time;
- Department of Education (DE) and Education and Library Board (ELB) data at the Ward level, including data on enrolment (at nursery level through to post-primary level);
- Achievement levels and destinations of school leavers<sup>21</sup>; absenteeism; Free School Meals entitlement;<sup>22</sup> Special Educational Needs registrations; and
- More qualitatively, assessments of school provision based on school inspection reports from the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).

Secondary data analysis provided both (i) contextual demographic and educational summary and comparative outlines for each Ward and (ii) a preliminary baseline understanding of patterns to begin responding to the question of how significant educational differentials exist between Wards.

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<sup>21</sup> Full analyses are not presented in this report.

<sup>22</sup> Free School Meals Entitlement (FSME) is used as a proxy for socio economic status (SES). FSM or FSME is generally accepted as a measure of family poverty, since only students from families in receipt of state benefits such as income support, jobseekers allowance or child tax credits.

## Sampling

**Case study participants:** Accessing relevant participants, and appropriate key stakeholder groups in each of the seven case study areas was undertaken on the basis of purposive sampling. In line with the main factors identified in the literature review as influencing educational achievement, the ILiAD study engaged and obtained the views of those at grassroots community level, schools level and those who could comment at a policy/structural level for each of the seven Wards. The latter group were derived from community and education sectors.

Overall, each Ward case study comprised a range of views from: children and young people; parents; teachers; principals; educationists; community leaders; youth workers, church members, police, education welfare officers; statutory officials and other stakeholders (e.g. members of residents' associations, women's associations).

The total range of interview and focus group respondents (n=370) across the seven Ward areas, representing grass roots community and education sectors, is summarised below in Tables 6 and 7. Policy and structural level data were derived from statutory officials but also included views/ documentation from community representatives, who had a role or were influential within the Ward.

<b>Respondent category</b>	<b>Number</b>
Young people	70
Parents	60
Community organisations	22
Community representatives	18
Community/unattached youth workers	8
Residents associations	12
High educational achievers	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>

*Table 6: Total number of respondents (n=200) providing Home-Community level qualitative data by respondent category across Ward areas.*

<b>Respondent category</b>	<b>Number</b>
Principals and Vice Principals	42
Senior teachers and teachers	10
Pupils in focus groups	62
Education Welfare Officers	40
Education youth workers	8
Statutory Officials	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>

*Table 7: Total number of respondents (n=170) providing education level qualitative data by respondent category across Ward areas.*

With a balance of numbers of participants representing community and education sectors. For the purposes of qualitative analysis, youth worker data were incorporated into the education level data unless the respondent specifically identified as community/or detached youth workers. Specific details of the qualitative data collected within each case study ward is available in **Table 8** below:

*Table 8: Specific details of the qualitative data collected within each case study Ward*

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Community-level data</b>	<b>School-level data</b>
<b>Whiterock</b>	Education welfare officer focus group x1 Community representative interview x 1 Community partnership focus group x 1 Parents focus group x 1 Detached young people focus group x 2	Senior teachers interviews x 2 Education and Library Board representative interview x1 Nursery school principal interview x 1 Primary school principal interview x 1 Special school principal interview x1 Post-primary principal interview x 4 Post-primary pupil focus group x 2
<b>The Diamond</b>	Community worker interview x 4 Parent of high-achieving child interview x 1 Parent focus group x 2 Youth workers focus group x 1	Nursery school principal interview x 1 Primary school principal interview x 2 Post-primary principal interview x 4 Post-primary pupil focus group x 4 Primary pupil focus group x 1
<b>Rosemount</b>	Education welfare officer focus group x 1 Youth worker interview x 2 Young people forum focus group x 1	Nursery school principal interview x 1 Post-primary principal interview x 4 Post-primary pupil focus group x 5
<b>Dunclug</b>	Education welfare officer focus group x 1 Community worker interview x 2 Community leaders focus group x 1 Youth workers focus group x 1 Young people focus group x 3 High achiever interview x 1	Nursery/primary school principal interview x 1 Post-primary principal interview x 3 Teacher interview x 1 Post-primary pupil focus groups x 4
<b>Duncairn</b>	Education welfare officer focus group x 1 Community representative interview x 1 Youth/community worker interview x 2 Young people's focus group x 1 Parents focus group x 1 Residents association focus group x 1	Nursery/primary school principal interview x 1 Post-primary principal interview x 4 Post-primary vice-principal interview x 1 Post-primary senior teacher interview x 2 Alternative education pupil focus group x 2
<b>Woodstock</b>	Education welfare officer focus group x 1 Parents focus group x 1 Community representative interview x 2 Youth and community workers focus group x 1 Residents focus group x 1 Young people focus group (residents) x 1 Neighbourhood Partnership personnel focus group x 1	Post-primary principal interview x 3 Post-primary vice-principal interview x 2 Post-primary senior teacher interview x 4 Post-primary focus group x1
<b>Tullycarnet</b>	Education welfare officer focus group x 1 Community worker interview x 4 High achiever interview x 4 Parent focus group x 1 Neighbourhood forum focus group x 1	Nursery school principal interview x 1 Primary school principal interview x 1 Post-primary principal/teacher interview x 6 Primary pupil focus group x 1 Alternative education pupil interviews x 3

## Data analyses

**Qualitative data** from the focus groups and interviews were firstly transcribed and inductively analysed; members of the research team engaged in data reduction by closely reading and systematically providing coded content and thematic interpretations of the data. The full research team worked collectively on the comparative analysis of all qualitative data to reveal individual Ward factors. For each Ward, a force-field analysis was developed to identify the key drivers and inhibitors to educational achievement that summarised factors at play for each case. This was followed by a comparative analysis that identified cross-cutting themes across the seven Wards.

These themes were subsequently considered in respect of the statistical analyses to provide a holistic picture of each case study site and ultimately a critical contrast of cases across the study sample in response to the research goals.

**Secondary data analyses** from a range of available data sets for the Ward areas included:

- GCSE passes including equivalents;
- GCSE passes including the core subjects, English and Maths;
- FSM, SEN and attendance rates
- Impact of gender and religion.

## Ethical approval

The study was granted ethical approval by the Queen's University Belfast's Ethics committee through the School of Education and the research team was guided by the BERA's Ethical Guidelines (2011)<sup>23</sup>. Particular ethical issues relevant to this study included voluntary informed consent; right to withdraw; entitlement to privacy and anonymity of participants; incentives; legal compliance; minimal bureaucratic or emotional burden and responsibility to the sponsor.

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<sup>23</sup> British Educational Research Association's (BERA) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research; available at: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BERA-Ethical-Guidelines-2011.pdf?noredirect=1>

## Appendix 3: ILiAD Case Study Ward summaries

This section provides a summary sketch for each of the seven case study Ward areas to provide context for the findings. Basic geographical, demographic and deprivation details based on the Census 2011 data are described. The case summaries are presented in order from the most deprived Ward (Whiterock) to the least deprived (Tullycarnet) within the sample. All seven Wards lie within the top 20% deprived (MDM, 2010) Wards for Northern Ireland. Fuller descriptions for each Ward cases can be found in **Volume 2**.

A force-field diagram follows a summary description of each case study Ward areas. The diagram illustrates the factors identified as enabling (**Drivers**) and impeding (**Inhibitors**) young people's educational achievement in that area. Drivers and Inhibitors are separated into Structural factors, School-level factors and Immediate-level (Individual-Home-Community) factors respectively.

## Whiterock (1<sup>st</sup> MDM)

Whiterock is located in the Lower Falls electoral area of West Belfast. It is identified as the most socially deprived Ward in Northern Ireland (ranked 1<sup>st</sup> out of 582) on the NIMDM (2010). Whiterock has the highest population density in the ILiAD sample (5694 people, and has the second highest percentage of young people under the age of 15, at 25.2% (NISRA, 2011). Its demographic is predominantly Catholic (93.1%). The population density within the Ward is the second highest of the ILiAD sample, and has very low percentages of residents who were born outside of the UK or the Republic of Ireland (1.1%, significantly lower than the NI average of 7.1%). In 2011, 14.1% of young people from Whiterock attended grammar schools (the second lowest proportion of the seven ILiAD Wards) and 85.9% attended secondary schools. Nine schools serve the young people of the Ward, of which seven are non-selective schools.

A range of immediate, school-level and structural level factors are seen to impact on the educational attainment of young people from Whiterock. Across these three levels, it is clear that a number of these factors enable academic achievement in the Ward and others are seen to inhibit young people's progression through school. In terms of the Structural drivers of attainment in Whiterock, the data evidence that there is a long-standing culture of collaboration and cooperation between schools and other agencies involved in the educational welfare of young people. This culture may help to explain the reasons why the most deprived Ward in Northern Ireland performs significantly better in terms of the proportion of young people (58%) who attain 5 GCSE A\*-C.

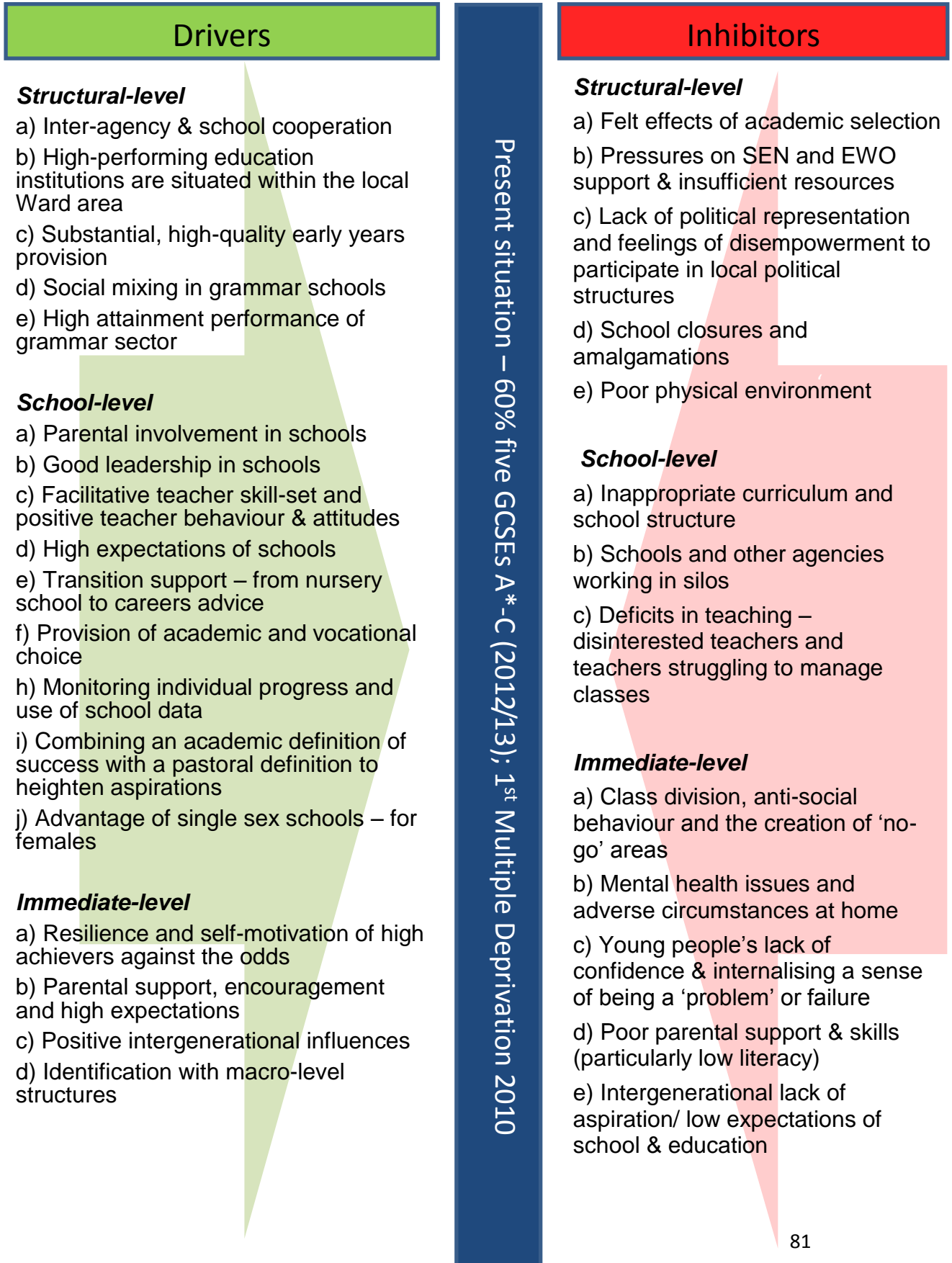
It is also clear that an important element of this culture is that there are several high-performing education institutions situated within the local Ward area. Indeed, more than half of Whiterock's school-age population attend schools less than one mile away; and out of a total secondary enrolment of 572, only 15 pupils attend a school which is three miles away. Moreover (and uniquely within the ILiAD Wards) Whiterock has: two grammar schools; a FE campus; a HE institution; and a designated Specialist School for Performing Arts very close to the geographical centre of the Ward. These highly regarded community resources were seen by many local residents as having a wholly positive influence on young people's aspirations. There are also multiple nursery schools and Surestart programmes within the Ward which are fully integrated into partnership arrangements with community groups and statutory agencies. Additionally, nursery place uptake for children born in Whiterock has not fallen below 75% in the last four years (higher than the other ILiAD Wards) and the quality of this provision very high. The final driver was based on the claim that many young people from Whiterock benefit from the social mixing which is said to be a feature of the Ward's grammar school.



## Case Studies: Drivers and Inhibitors

### Case study 1: Whiterock

#### Perceived factors influencing achievement in Whiterock Ward



## The Diamond (12<sup>th</sup> MDM)

The Diamond Ward is located within the City Walls of Derry-Londonderry. It is a predominantly-Catholic Ward but includes largely Protestant residents of the Fountain area (364), which make up 15% of The Diamond's population of 2551 persons (NISRA, 2011). The second smallest population among the seven Wards, The Diamond is 12<sup>th</sup> (out of 582) in terms of NIMDM. The Diamond has a lower than average percentage of residents who were born outside of the UK or the Republic of Ireland (3.6%), compared to the NI average of 7.1%. Fourteen and a half per cent of young people are under the age of 15 in The Diamond (Census 2011) which is the second lowest in the ILiAD sample. It also has the smallest numbers of pupils (147 pupils in 2011) attending the seven post-primary schools that serve the Ward. Approximately 14% of pupils from The Fountain area attend a school in the Waterside area of the city.

The data evidence a range of immediate, school-level and structural factors which impact on attainment levels in The Diamond Ward. Some are seen to enable achievement and others are seen to inhibit school progression. In terms of the structural drivers to educational success, it is clear that, certainly for the Ward's Catholic population, the key historical legacies of the Education Act (1947) are a widely held belief in the value of education and qualifications in general and in the Catholic education system in particular. This legacy is also reflected in the secondary data which indicate that, similar to the Whiterock Ward, The Diamond performs significantly better in terms of educational attainment than its deprivation index would suggest and for 2012-2013, it shows a five GCSEs pass rate of 85%. Moreover, the proportion of school leavers in the Ward who entered Higher Education was 36% - more than double the corresponding figures for Tullycarnet (12%), Whiterock (17%), and Woodstock (14%).

There are several high-performing schools located within the Ward (some of which are new-builds). The seven schools which serve the Ward (including three grammars schools) are all within 2.6 miles of the Ward's geographical mid-point: five of these schools have a five GCSE pass rate of over 90%; and several have been given specialist status and, accordingly, receive additional financial support. Other drivers were identified around: the "rich tapestry" of social mix that characterizes many of the Ward's schools; and the equal number of avenues to grammar school education that are now available to girls in the Ward. This parity is also reflected in the attainment data, which show that The Diamond is the only Ward in the ILiAD study where females and males perform at approximately the same level.

## Case study 2: The Diamond

### Perceived factors influencing achievement in The Diamond Ward

#### Drivers

##### **Structural-level**

- a) Historical legacy of the Education Act 1947 (for Catholics)
- b) Inward investment and resources
- c) Social mixing in primary /post-primary schools
- d) Equal number of grammar avenues for males and females
- e) Recession as a driver
- f) High attainment performance of grammar sector

##### **School-level**

- a) Transition support between key educational stages
- b) Good pastoral care and close relationships with teachers
- c) High discipline standards and academic expectations of the part of the schools
- d) Rewarding effort and success in areas other than academics
- e) Cooperation and links between schools
- f) Monitoring individual needs, using school data & target setting
- g) Intergenerational engagement with schools
- h) School-community collaboration
- i) Pupils feeling listened to in school
- j) Breadth of curricula and interactive teaching styles
- k) Low rates of high-absenteeism

##### **Immediate-level**

- a) High levels of youth club involvement (Fountain area)
- b) Individual resilience and motivation
- c) Family support and high expectations of parents
- d) Positive adult education experiences of parent/mother are changing norms
- e) Feeling connection to a community
- f) Positive early education experiences of nursery and primary school

#### Inhibitors

##### **Structural-level**

- a) A lack of community cohesiveness and a fractured community identity for Protestants
- b) Continuing division/conflict between communities
- c) Felt effects of academic selection
- d) Current culture of education policy – perfectionism in a time of cutbacks
- e) Official statistics hiding key issues
- f) Recession and poverty – role models not coming back to the area
- g) Unstable or inadequate funding for early years, youth and community providers

##### **School-level**

- a) Belief in a finite, 'natural' ability level of a child
- b) Overuse of IT
- c) Schools struggling to engage with parents
- d) Historically, schools that served children from the Fountain had a negative reputation
- e) No transition support
- f) Boys feeling pressured into doing STEM subjects
- g) 'Average' children falling through the cracks at school

##### **Immediate-level** Anti-social behaviour

- a) Adverse circumstances at home
- b) Intergenerational 'switching off' from education

Present situation – 85% five GCSEs A\*-C (2012/13); 14<sup>th</sup> Multiple Deprivation 2010

## Duncairn (14<sup>th</sup> MDM)

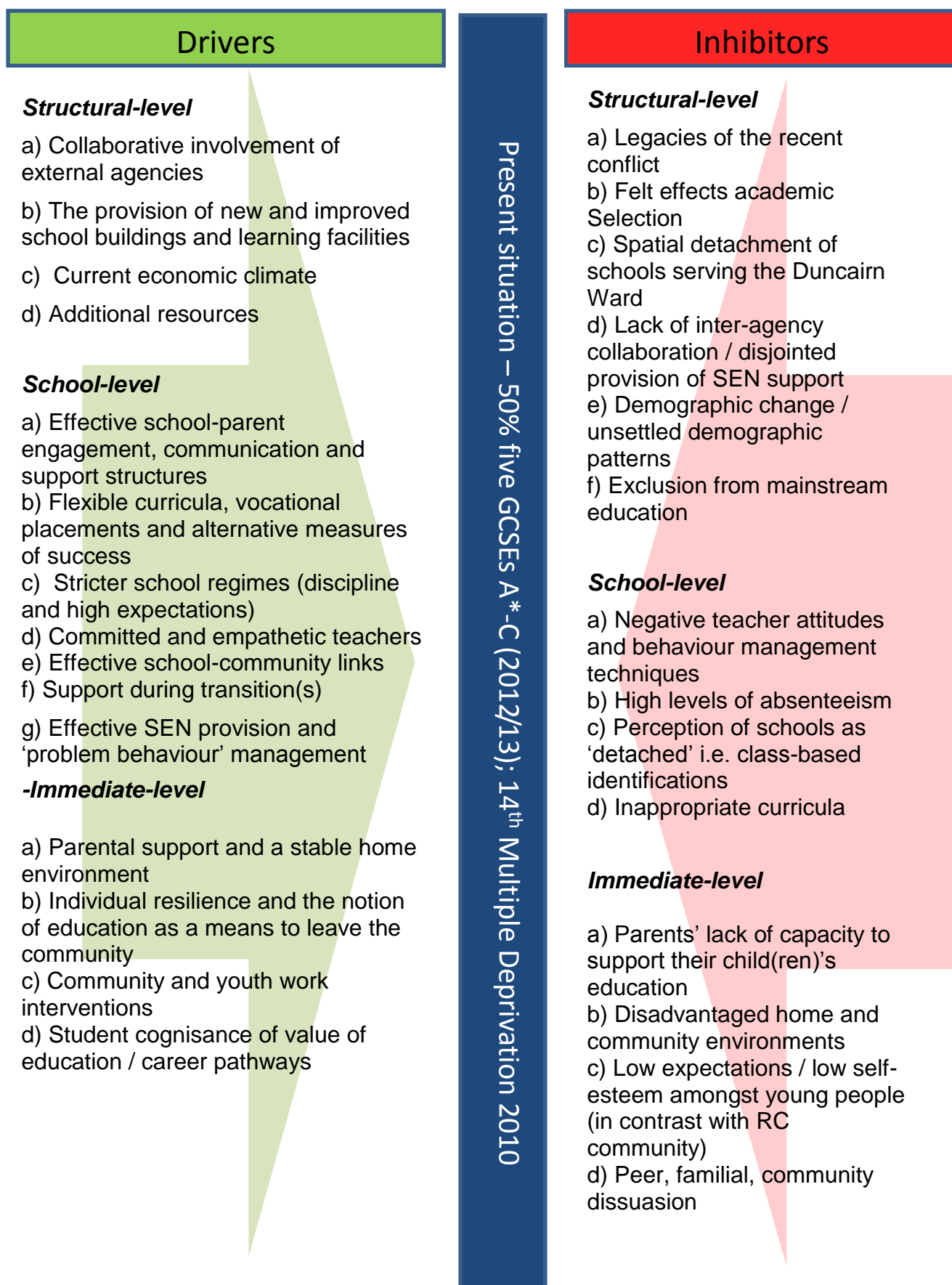
Duncairn is located in north Belfast, and although extremely close to Belfast City Centre to the south of the Ward, its boundaries also stretch along Belfast Lough into the dockland area of Belfast. The Ward includes the interface areas and security fences of Tiger's Bay and Duncairn Gardens. Duncairn is ranked 14<sup>th</sup> (out of 582) on NIMDM (2010) and has one of the larger population sizes in the sample of Wards, at 4901 persons (NISRA, 2011). Duncairn is a predominantly-Protestant Ward (although the 2011 Census revealed that the percentage of Catholic residents increased substantially (from 5.5% in 2001 to 23.6% in 2011)). The Ward also has a higher than average percentage of residents who were born outside of the UK or the Republic of Ireland (10.3%, compared to the NI average of 7.1%). The percentage of young people under the age of 15 is 17.5%, just under the NI average of 19.6% and has one of the largest numbers of post-primary schools pupils in the ILiAD study Wards (223 pupils in 2011), with eleven schools serving these young people. In 2011, 11.7% of young people from the Ward attended grammar schools (the lowest proportion of the seven ILiAD Wards) and 88.3% attended secondary schools.

It is apparent that, across immediate, school-level and structural levels, there are factors seen to enable academic achievement in the Ward and others which appear to inhibit such progress. In terms of structural factors, i.e. those informed by historical, demographical, and policy considerations, a range of issues have been identified as significant barriers to educational success. For example, the Ward's history has clearly been shaped by the recent conflict and, as a consequence: spatial mobility restrictions and insular attitudes are common; and more broadly, the wider community continues to be characterised by both intra and inter-community divisions.

It is also clear that the learning is inhibited because there are no secondary schools located in the hub of the Ward and as a result, the detachment many local young people already feel in terms of education is further compounded by: (a) the invisibility of structured learning in their communities; and (b) the distances they now have to travel to the nearest available schools. Despite the fact that only 11.7% of local secondary pupils attend grammar school, the Duncairn data also highlight the positive contribution of school collaborations with external agencies in terms of addressing needs. Secondly, improvements and renewals of school premises have effected positive change and confirmed that young people are more likely to succeed if their learning environment reflects aspiration and not decline.

### Case study 3: Duncairn

#### Perceived factors that are influencing achievement in Duncairn Ward



## Woodstock (39<sup>th</sup> MDM)

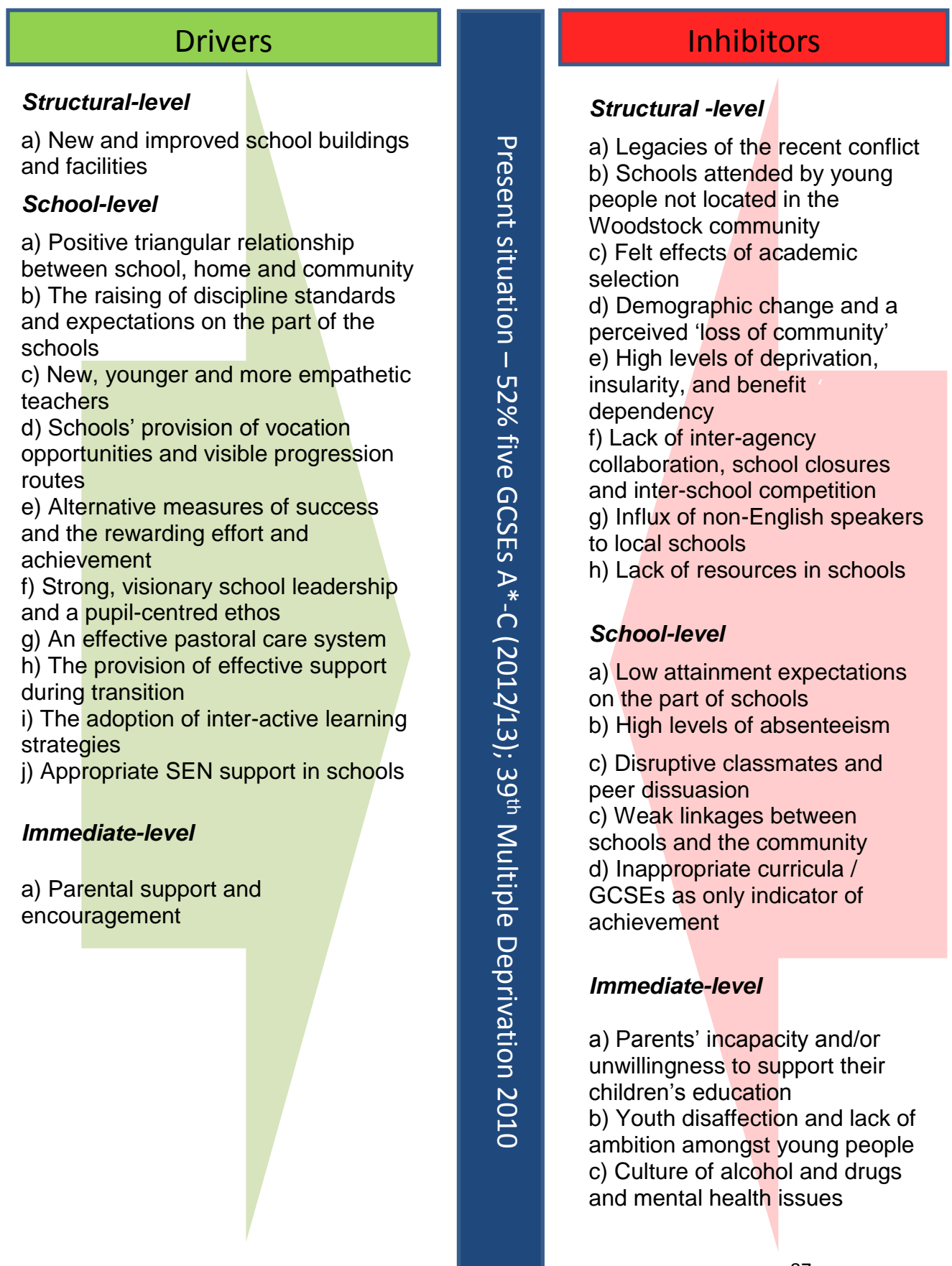
Woodstock comprises the urban, inner-east area of central Belfast. It is bordered by the River Lagan on the north-west side, and has a clearly demarcated interface area with the Short Strand. Woodstock is ranked 39<sup>th</sup> (out of 582) on NIMDM (2010). Woodstock is a predominantly Protestant Ward (86.7%, Census 2001), however, the percentage of Protestants in the Ward has decreased to 63.3 with the percentage of Catholic residents increasing since 2001 (from 6.2% to 19.4% in 2011). The Ward has a higher than average percentage of residents born outside of the UK or the Republic of Ireland (14.7%, more than double the NI average of 7.1%). Woodstock has the second largest population size of the sample of seven Wards, at 5445 persons (NISRA, 2011). The percentage of young people under the age of 15 is 16.8% (Census 2011), just under the Northern Ireland average of 19.6%. Woodstock also has one of the largest numbers of post-primary pupils (221 pupils in 2011), with eight schools serving these young people. In 2011, 20.4% of young people from the Ward attended grammar schools (the third highest proportion of the seven ILiAD Wards) and 79.6% attended secondary schools.

The data show that there is a range of structural, school-level, and Immediate factors which impact on the learning and attainment of young people from Woodstock. Summarising these factors, it is important to note that there were substantially more barriers identified in the Woodstock data than there were enablers. The structural drivers of educational attainment in Woodstock i.e. those related to policy inputs and the Ward's history and demography, appear to be limited to the improved learning environments which have been created by recent investment in new buildings and facilities in the schools which serve the Ward. The data here make clear that young people from Woodstock have responded very positively to such improvements and appear more willing to apply themselves in newer learning environments that are designed to meet their educational needs.

Similar to findings for Duncairn, the complex interplay between Woodstock's recent history and its demographic trajectory seems to have had a negative impact. East Belfast's changing employment opportunities, broader shifts to a more skills-centric economy, and the latest recession have, collectively, created sizable pockets of acute deprivation in the Ward. It is also clear that the economic cleavages both within Woodstock and between the Ward and its more affluent neighbours have created a "tale of two cities" microcosm.

## Case study 4: Woodstock

### Perceived factors influencing achievement in Woodstock Ward



## Rosemount (44<sup>th</sup> MDM)

Rosemount is situated on the outer north-west of Derry-Londonderry city centre. It is ranked 44<sup>th</sup> (out of 582) for multiple deprivation, meaning that it is one of the less highly deprived Wards in the ILiAD sample, though it is within the top 10% of Wards for multiple deprivation in NI overall. Rosemount is a mainly Catholic Ward; with 87.4% of residents identified from a Catholic background (Census 2011). The Ward has a lower than average percentage of residents who were born outside of the UK or the Republic of Ireland (5.6%, compared to the NI average of 7.1%). Rosemount has one of the highest population densities but the smallest population size among the sample of seven Wards, at 2651 persons (NISRA, 2011). The percentage of young people under the age of 15 is 13.9% (Census 2011), the lowest in the sample and below the Northern Ireland average of 19.6%. In 2011, 147 pupils were served by seven post-primary schools; of these, 30.6% of young people from the Ward attended grammar schools, the highest proportion of any of the ILiAD sample Wards.

The data has identified immediate, school-level and structural issues which impact on the educational attainment of young people from Rosemount. Across these three levels, a number of issues were seen to enable academic achievement in the Ward and others were seen to inhibit school progression. In terms of structural factors, it is clear that like The Diamond there is an enduring appreciation of education's value amongst large sections of the Ward's population; and an equally widely held belief in the Catholic education system.

In addition to the psycho-social connections engendered by the role of the Catholic Church, educational attainment in the Ward is also seen as enabled by the propinquity of high-performing schools. Of the seven schools which serve Rosemount, five are within 1.6 miles of the Ward's geographical mid-point; and the three main secondary schools are all within 0.5 miles. Other drivers were identified around: effective youth service and education initiatives in the community; extensive inward investment in the Ward, such as, new and improved school buildings; substantial provision of Early Years and other pre-school programmes; the social mix which is said to exist in the Ward's schools; the benefits of co-education for boys, particularly around addressing aggressive behaviour; and the argument that the recession and lack of jobs has, paradoxically, provided "incentives."



## Case study 5: Rosemount

### Perceived factors influencing achievement in Rosemount Ward



## Dunclug (83<sup>rd</sup> MDM)

Dunclug is located in the town of Ballymena in North Antrim. It is defined as a mixed-religion Ward, with 56.5% of residents from a predominantly Catholic background and 35.0% from a predominantly Protestant background (Census 2011), although residential areas within the main Dunclug housing estate are not necessarily mixed. Dunclug is ranked 83<sup>rd</sup> (out of 582) on NIMDM, meaning that it is one of the less highly deprived Wards in the ILiAD sample. The Ward has a higher than average percentage of residents born outside of the UK or the Republic of Ireland (13.7%, compared to the NI average of 7.1%). It also has one of the lowest population densities of all the sample Wards, with the second smallest population, at 2363 persons. The percentage of young people under the age of 15 is 25.9%, above the NI average of 19.6% (NISRA, 2011) and Dunclug has one of the smallest numbers of pupils within post-primary school provision amongst all the Wards in the study (171 pupils in 2011). Nine schools serve these young people, and in 2011 19.3% of young people attended grammar schools or schools with a grammar stream (the median of the seven LWards) and 80.7% attended secondary schools.

Structural influences were identified around: local youth groups actively supporting young people; and the embedded nature of the relationship between local schools and the communities they serve. The Dunclug data suggest that local youth groups enhance the educational achievement of young people by: providing young people with a safe space and alternative opportunities for learning; supporting them in the context of formal education; demonstrating an active interest in their welfare; and encouraging them to believe in themselves. The data also highlight the value of schools being located in the local community. For example, it was frequently cited that: young people's school choice and attendance was often premised on opportunities for peer interaction; the embeddedness of schools means they can more easily engage with the communities they serve; and because successive generations have attended the same school, local educators have a robust knowledge of pupils and their family circumstances. However, several inhibitors of attainment in Dunclug were also identified, the most significant of which related to the fact that only 17.5% of young people in the Ward attend grammar school. Educators in Dunclug also argued that academic selection: creates significant pressure and stress around the transfer test (which some pupil-respondents claimed they struggled to cope with). Despite being the only 'mixed' Ward in the ILiAD sample, sectarian polarisation and a lack of social cohesion was evidenced that led to challenges to full inter-agency co-operation.

## Case study 6: Dunclug

### Perceived factors influencing achievement in Dunclug Ward



## Tullycarnet (109<sup>th</sup> MDM)

Tullycarnet is located on the outskirts of east Belfast in the (former) Castlereagh District Council area. The Tullycarnet estate was developed in the 1970's originally to accommodate people moving out of inner east Belfast, largely as a result of redevelopment. The MDM score places Tullycarnet 109<sup>th</sup> out of 582 for deprivation and it is a Ward almost completely surrounded by areas of very low deprivation. Tullycarnet is predominantly-Protestant (93.3% in 2001, and 85.8% in 2011). The Ward has a lower than average percentage of residents who were born outside of the UK or the Republic of Ireland (2.1%, compared to the NI average of 7.1%) and has one of the smallest populations of the sample at 2419 persons (NISRA, 2011). Twenty-one per cent of young people are under the age of 15 according to the Census 2011, slightly more than the Northern Ireland average of 19.6%. Tullycarnet has one of the smallest numbers of pupils within post-primary schools out of all the Wards in the study (109 pupils in 2011), with nine schools serving these young people. In that year, 19.3% of young people attended grammar schools or schools with a grammar stream (the median for the seven ILiAD Wards) and 80.7% attended secondary schools.

In terms of the structural level factors, there are nine post-primary schools which serve the Ward and only one is located within two miles of the estate. Indeed, almost half of the 109 post-primary pupils in Tullycarnet attend a High School, which is some 4.3 miles away. These distances serve to reinforce the idea that, for local young people, education is not a priority and make it difficult for young people to feel 'their school' is in any way part of 'their community'. Moreover, it was also be argued that the significantly higher than average absenteeism levels at Newtownbreda (32.8%) and Dundonald High (36.5%) can, at least in part, be attributed to this sense of spatial detachment and the, consequential, invisibility of post-primary education in the estate.

In terms of school level factors, several enablers were identified around the recent (community-inspired) "transformation" that has occurred in relation to improved triangular linkages between schools, the Tullycarnet community and local parents. The data make clear that two key factors in this transformation were, firstly, the 'wake-up call' engendered by the proposed closure of the local primary school; and secondly, the role of a local Action Group Initiative Group. The successful campaign led by this group has clearly galvanised the wider community and increased levels of parental and familial engagement with schools. It is also apparent that the community's improved perception of education has been matched by the schools which serve the Ward in terms of: higher expectations; increased levels of commitment and empathy on the part of teachers; flexible policies and pedagogical styles; effective support during transition; and broader conceptualisations of achievement.

## Case study 7: Tullycarnet

### Perceived factors influencing achievement in Tullycarnet Ward

