

Draft Belfast City Council response to Success through STEM

Do you believe that the activities already taken and those articulated in this strategy will address these recommendations? If not, what else needs to be done?

It is clear from the draft strategy that there is a significant volume of actions planned and under way to address the challenges identified as part of the STEM review. These actions apply across a range of government departments and bodies. It will be important that the implementation of these individual activities is clearly monitored and managed and that consideration is given to the cross-over between individual actions.

In response to the question as to whether these activities will address the recommendations, the current position suggests that a step change is required in order to move from the current position to the recommended levels. It is unclear from the documents whether specific targets have been set. In the absence of specific targets, it will be difficult to ensure that actions are implemented.

Given the pressures on public finances which actions do you believe will make the most difference and should be priority?

In terms of priority actions, it is suggested that focus should be placed on the supply-side measures over demand-side issues.

In line with Priority 2, it is considered that the most critical issues should be to manage STEM sector attractiveness. This should, in particular, address the careers guidance provision, making young people aware of the opportunities and benefits available to them should they choose to study STEM subjects. If this was addressed through the education system, it would prevent the need for re-training or conversion courses. Priority 3 i.e. the need to facilitate STEM CPD is critical in this regard: teachers need to be continually exposed to the business-side implementation of STEM in order to contextualise their teaching.

Dialogue with the private sector will be central to ensuring the relevance of the curriculum in STEM. In this respect, it is important to set in place a framework for structured discussion with the private sector. In recognition of the small business focus of the local economy, it is recommended that local government is engaged in this activity, given that it works closely with a significant volume of local companies that are not in receipt of support from other sources. Belfast City Council is happy to offer support in this regard within our District Council area.