



Aspire NI exists to work with young people in Northern Ireland in poverty to help close the educational attainment gap that exists between rich and poor

## Information Pack

Aspire NI is a registered charity in Northern Ireland (NIC107570)

# Contents

---

## Sections

**01** – About Aspire

**02** – The Educational Attainment Gap

**03** – How we are combatting this

**04** – How we are supported

**05** – Can you help?



# 01 – About Aspire

---

Aspire NI, a registered charity based in Portadown, Northern Ireland, focuses on combating poverty through direct involvement in the education sector. Founded by Mark Knox, a former teacher, youth and church leader, Aspire focuses on combatting poverty, specifically among young people, by working directly in schools in Craigavon, Portadown, Lurgan, Banbridge, and Belfast.

Aspire consists of a diverse team of 8 staff members from backgrounds including youth work, education, and business, and the organisation is governed by a board of 6 directors, ensuring efficient financial and operational functioning. The experienced board enables Aspire to expand and collaborate with larger organisations and companies.

In the past 8 years, Aspire has grown, providing more support than imagined, thanks to the generosity of partners, givers, and funding agencies. At Aspire, the belief is that a child's place of birth shouldn't determine their future, and every child deserves an equal opportunity to succeed in school and thus go on to have a greater chance at succeeding in later life.

Aspire holds the belief that each child is made in the image of God, with a vision for a better world. Aspire strives to bring positive change to the world in alignment with this vision







Question 1: If you're a young person, what's your dream? What's your goal? What's your ambition? What's your aspiration? What's your dream? What's your goal? What's your ambition? What's your aspiration?

Question 2: What's your dream? What's your goal? What's your ambition? What's your aspiration? What's your dream? What's your goal? What's your ambition? What's your aspiration?

Question 3: What's your dream? What's your goal? What's your ambition? What's your aspiration? What's your dream? What's your goal? What's your ambition? What's your aspiration?

Question 4: What's your dream? What's your goal? What's your ambition? What's your aspiration? What's your dream? What's your goal? What's your ambition? What's your aspiration?

Question 5: What's your dream? What's your goal? What's your ambition? What's your aspiration? What's your dream? What's your goal? What's your ambition? What's your aspiration?

1. Vardian city /  
2. 5th July /  
3. Washington D.C /  
4. Liverpool /  
5. 15th /  
6. 10th /  
7. 10th /  
8. 10th /  
9. 10th /  
10. 10th /  
11. 10th /  
12. 10th /  
13. 10th /  
14. 10th /  
15. 10th /  
16. 10th /  
17. 10th /  
18. 10th /  
19. 10th /  
20. 10th /  
21. 10th /  
22. 10th /  
23. 10th /  
24. 10th /  
25. 10th /  
26. 10th /  
27. 10th /  
28. 10th /  
29. 10th /  
30. 10th /  
31. 10th /  
32. 10th /  
33. 10th /  
34. 10th /  
35. 10th /  
36. 10th /  
37. 10th /  
38. 10th /  
39. 10th /  
40. 10th /  
41. 10th /  
42. 10th /  
43. 10th /  
44. 10th /  
45. 10th /  
46. 10th /  
47. 10th /  
48. 10th /  
49. 10th /  
50. 10th /  
51. 10th /  
52. 10th /  
53. 10th /  
54. 10th /  
55. 10th /  
56. 10th /  
57. 10th /  
58. 10th /  
59. 10th /  
60. 10th /  
61. 10th /  
62. 10th /  
63. 10th /  
64. 10th /  
65. 10th /  
66. 10th /  
67. 10th /  
68. 10th /  
69. 10th /  
70. 10th /  
71. 10th /  
72. 10th /  
73. 10th /  
74. 10th /  
75. 10th /  
76. 10th /  
77. 10th /  
78. 10th /  
79. 10th /  
80. 10th /  
81. 10th /  
82. 10th /  
83. 10th /  
84. 10th /  
85. 10th /  
86. 10th /  
87. 10th /  
88. 10th /  
89. 10th /  
90. 10th /  
91. 10th /  
92. 10th /  
93. 10th /  
94. 10th /  
95. 10th /  
96. 10th /  
97. 10th /  
98. 10th /  
99. 10th /  
100. 10th /

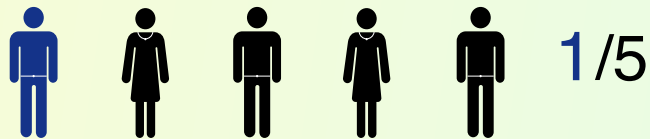


## 02 – The Educational Attainment Gap

The Educational Attainment Gap refers to the disparity between individuals from low-income backgrounds and those from more affluent ones. This translates educationally into lower academic achievements for young people from low-income backgrounds, reducing their likelihood of pursuing higher education at university and subsequently obtaining higher-paying jobs. This cycle makes it challenging to break the cycle of poverty within their families.

### Northern Ireland

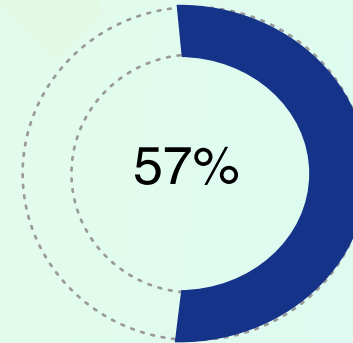
Unfortunately over the last 8 years poverty levels have risen exponentially. 1 in 5 people are living in relative poverty in Northern Ireland resulting in **103,400 children today in Northern Ireland living in poverty**. When we began Aspire this figure was only at 69,000. So now more than ever young people need our help and support.



**1 in 5 people are in relative poverty in Northern Ireland**

(State of the Nation 2021: Social mobility and the pandemic; Social Mobility Commission; p116).

A parents income can also massively affect a child's education. More than half (57%) of low-income student said they missed school trips because they were too expensive and JRF research found that children and young people worry about worrying their parents by asking for even small amounts of money for school and there is evidence from a range of studies to show that this affects their ability to enjoy school and to concentrate on learning.



**More than half (57%) of low-income student said they missed school trips because they were too expensive**

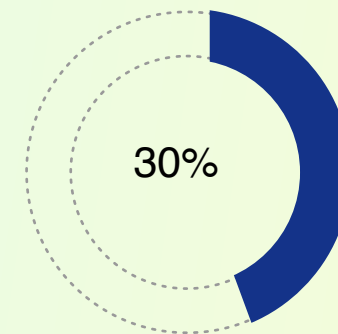
## 02 – The Educational Attainment Gap

In the 19th Century there was a movement led by Christians in inner city London. They began to open up what were known as ragged schools. These were charitable organisations dedicated to the free education of destitute children in Britain. The schools were developed in working-class districts of the rapidly expanding industrial towns. In 1844, the Ragged Schools Union was established to combine resources throughout the country, providing free education, food, clothing, lodging and other home missionary services for these children.

Free education now exists in the UK, and it may seem like ragged schools now belong in museums but even now social class remains the strongest predictor of educational achievement in the UK, where the social class gap for educational achievement is one of the most significant in the developed world.

In the UK, being born into the bottom fifth of society means there's a 30 percent chance you'll stay there. So for many working class children the fact that they are born poor often means they will die poor.

It's knowing that these facts exist in such a prosperous nation that we want to help fight this issue and make a difference in young peoples lives.



**There is a 30% chance that if you are born in the bottom fifth of society in the UK, you'll stay there.**



## 03 – How we are combatting this

Aspire NI's main service is the Aspire Programme. The Aspire programme consists of 3 components. Aspire Sessions, Aspire Academy and Camp Aspire.

**We are working in 25 schools with over 350 young people from low income backgrounds.** We are turning up weekly to provide Aspire Sessions. At Aspire Sessions we create a supportive and helpful learning environment for the young people. We play games, bring snacks, offer tutoring and support with the work they are doing currently in school. We also spend time sitting with young people and building relationships with them, caring for them and try to be there for them in a capacity that teachers often can't provide due to the size of the classes they typically work with. For at least an hour a week they have supportive adults in a room championing and believing in them.

Less than 50% of young people who are free school meal eligible achieve 5 or more GCSEs grades A\*-C, this year 89% of our young people at Aspire did.



**89%** Young people participating in the Aspire Programme achieve a grade C or above in more than five GCSE subjects. In contrast, fewer than 50% of those eligible for free school meals who are not on the Aspire Programme attain the same level of academic achievement.



**200+** Young people weekly take part in the Aspire program.



**25+** Schools benefit weekly from the Aspire program

The Aspire Programme excels in its ability to engage with individuals from primary school to school-leaving age, providing continuous support during their formative years. This extended involvement allows young people to establish enduring relationships with Aspire facilitators. The advantage of this long-term commitment becomes evident as we guide them through crucial school milestones like AQE exams, GCSEs, and even the University application process.

## 03 – How we are combatting this



At Aspire we believe that where a child is born shouldn't dictate their future. We believe that each child deserves an equal opportunity to achieve in school. And we try our best to work with schools to provide this. At Aspire Sessions we create a supportive and helpful learning environment for the young people. We play games, bring snacks and sit with young people. For at least an hour a week they have supportive adults in a room championing and believing in them. Less than 50% of young people who are free school meal eligible achieve 5 or more GCSEs grades A\*-C, this year 89% of our young people at Aspire did.



The highlight of our year is our summer camp. This past summer we had our 6th Camp Aspire. We had young people from both nationalist and unionist areas come together for a week and hang out, canoe and airsoft together. We, thanks to our kind donors, were able to create summer memories that will last a lifetime. But it's more than that. We sat with these young people and discussed Northern Ireland. We looked at our troubled history but also planned a dream city for the future. These 13 and 14 year olds were talking about how our schools should be run, how our towns should be run and what role faith communities could play in it.



We run Aspire Academy because we believe that your parent's wage should not limit your options in hobbies and skills. We provide young people with monthly workshops in a range of areas from art, cooking, sport and even skateboarding. We do this so young people don't feel like their options are limited and because we are so aware that these things have a cost attached to them – whether it be paint and pens to skateboards and helmets. It's unfair that the choices young people have in hobbies are dictated by finances. The situation young people find themselves in resembles the inequality we see in the world that as people of faith, we work against.







## 04 – How we are supported

Aspire doesn't have a product to sell or money to make outside of partnerships and funding, so we rely on strong partners to help us work with more young people across Northern Ireland.



### **One-off donations**

One-off donations support Aspire as we continue to grow across Northern Ireland and work in more Schools. It gives us the ability to spend on much needed items for our sessions, Academy and Camp



### **Monthly Supporters**

Partnering with Aspire to give monthly is one of the most impactful ways to partner with us. Partnering monthly gives us access to consistent funds to allow us to confidently make decisions.



### **Church Partners**

We like to partner with Churches in the areas we serve. Church partnerships gives us access to much needed funds, volunteers and often times use of physical facilities.



### **Funding Bodies**

Funding bodies provide us funds through grants which enable us to provide a consistent and stable workplace for our staff, and continually show up and work in every school we are partnered with.



### **Corporate Partners**

Corporate partners have a huge impact on the work we do. They enable us to reach heights sometimes we didn't know possible. Often the financial support is incredibly impactful, but skills and professional help are also invaluable for us.



### **Collaboration with other Charities**

Collaboration with other charities who share the same vision and goal as us is a fantastic way to reach more people who can use our help across NI. Often times this can open up funding opportunities for both us and others organisations.



## 05 – Can you help?

Would you consider getting involved and supporting Aspire NI as we endeavour to expand our footprint across Northern Ireland and work with more young people who need our support now, more than ever?

Depending on whether you are an individual looking to support Aspire, a Church looking to partner with charities in your local area or a company looking for a long term to help meet CSR goals you have or simply want to make an impact on the local area your business runs in, there are a number of ways to get started in supporting Aspire.

### Individual

As an individual keen to support Aspire, one of the most effective ways you can do this is by becoming a monthly giver. To do this simply visit our website and find the 'Give' section, it will be really easy to find. There is no minimum amount requirement to give to Aspire and please know, any amount you decide to give to Aspire is greatly appreciated and we thank you so much for your consideration. For other ways to support Aspire you can read the 'Get Involved' section of the Aspire website, it will provide some ideas on how to support Aspire both financially and volunteering suggestions.

### Church

If you are a church leader considering partnering with Aspire as we may work in your local area or you simply want to play a part in fighting poverty in Northern Ireland there a couple of vital ways to get started. Firstly is having us a provide a



Rating of the most effective ways to support Aspire right now.

## 05 – Can you help?

talk either at your church service or prayer meeting. Secondly is opening up volunteering opportunities to your church. Local churches have always been a fantastic source of volunteers for Aspire over the years. Thirdly is you can consider supporting us monthly financially or provide one off donations to help us fulfil specific projects or programmes we have on through the year. Please contact us directly to discuss, you can easily get in contact with us through the contact section on our website – [www.aspireni.org](http://www.aspireni.org)

### Company

We have a number of ways you can choose to partner with us, whilst financial support is the biggest difference a company can make to Aspire, it is by no means the only way to support us. We hope there is an option available that best suits how you could partner with us, but if there isn't and you feel there is another way that you might be able to help us, please contact us and we would be happy to chat. Visit the 'Corporate Partnerships' to learn more.

**One Off Donation**

**Monthly Supporter**

**Gift in Kind**

**Volunteer**

**Fundraisers**

**CSR Partner**







More information available at  
[www.aspireni.org](http://www.aspireni.org)

Aspire NI is a registered charity in Northern Ireland (NIC107570)