

Ards & North Down Borough Council

School Uniform Project 2025

Circular Councils

Case Study

Introduction

For many parents, the school uniform shop is unlikely to be the highlight of their summer. The average cost of a school uniform per year, per child, in Primary School is £315 and £337 per child in Post-Primary (The Children's Society, 2020) - a cost that is a stretch for many families at the best of times, and simply unaffordable for those hit hardest by the rising cost of living.

The concept of the School Uniform Project is very simple but the impact it has is great. Preloved, good-quality uniform items for nursery, primary and post-primary schools are donated and are then made freely available for families struggling to afford new uniforms. Each scheme has dedicated days for families to browse and pick out uniforms. Community venues such as church halls are turned into 'uniform shops' with volunteers sorting donations ensuring those receiving the uniforms will get good wear out of these items. Items include shirts, trousers, skirts, school branded sweatshirts, PE kits, blazers, school bags and shoes. The initiative is also a good environmental project reducing the number of textiles going to landfill. Above all, the ROC School Uniform Project aims to provide practical support in a dignified and respectful way.



Background

Council Officers from the ANDBC Recycling Team were involved in the project development/management alongside ROC NI and Orchardville. It was decided that Council venues accessible to the public would be used as drop off locations for pre loved school uniforms.

Venues were secured at the following Council locations and this is good evidence of interdepartmental collaboration.

- Alderman George Green Community Centre
- Hamilton Hub Community Centre
- Redburn Community Centre
- Donaghadee HRC
- Comber Leisure Centre
- Portaferry Leisure Centre
- Londonderry Park Pavilion



The above locations gave a good spread throughout the borough with the more heavily populated areas being more successful in terms of donations received.

School uniforms collected at drop offs were transported to Orchardville for sorting and cleaning.

Analysis

Feedback from the public, and lessons learned from the Winter Coat project 2024, enabled the project management team to ensure suitable venues situated within walking distance from public transport depots were identified.

The following locations were selected for the pop-up shops.

- City Church, Bangor Main Street (0.2 miles from the Bangor bus/train station)
- Newtownards Salvation Army Community Hub (0.04 miles from Newtownards bus station)

A strong communication campaign was vital to ensuring this project was a success and the following methods were used when communicating this project to the public.

- Council social media channels i.e. Facebook, Instagram
- Council website
- Bin-ovation app
- Press release
- Promotion from the Mayor's office
- Signage (Purchased through a grant from John Gray & Co Community Assistance Programme)
- Radio interview with Frank Mitchell on U105
- Local businesses also supported this initiative:
- Signature Works (Bangor), donated 6 boxes of brand new school trousers of various sizes.
- Belfast City Airport provided funding for 600 stationary packs.



Outcomes

- Overall the project was a success, with the initial support of the project by local residents donating their pre loved school uniforms leading to four successful pop up venues.
- In total 261 children and families benefitted by receiving pre loved items of school uniform and stationary.
- 4 x tables of free toys were given away to children attending the events. These toys were collected from the HRC Reuse containers and diverted from disposal.
- To complete the free service, a representative from Sustainable Stories Bangor attended the pop up events with a sewing machine to make any minor alterations to uniforms for the children.