



FUTURE OF CASTLEREAGH CAMPUS

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

PUBLICATION DATE: 13TH NOVEMBER 2023

CLOSING DATE FOR COMMENTS: 16TH FEBRUARY 2024

Subject of this consultation:	This consultation is about a proposal to close the Castlereagh Campus of Belfast Metropolitan College (Belfast Met).
Scope of this consultation:	Belfast Met seeks views on this proposal to proceed with the closure of Castlereagh Campus.
Who should read this:	We would like views from members of the public, public representatives, businesses and other interested individuals.
Duration:	This consultation runs from 13 th November 2023 and ends on 16 th February 2024.
How to respond or enquire about this consultation:	You can respond or enquire about this consultation by using the following link: https://www.belfastmet.ac.uk/castlereagh-campus-consultation/
After the consultation:	Responses will be taken into account when actioning the final proposal.
Getting to this stage	This is the second consultation on this issue, following a meeting held with Castlereagh campus staff on 8 th November 2023 in the Castlereagh Campus. Further staff briefings will be hosted during the month of November and a Public Consultation Meeting will take place on 12 December 2023.

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1.0 Introduction

Belfast Met currently has four main campuses (Titanic, Millfield, Castlereagh, and Springvale) and one satellite campus at Girdwood. The Riddell site is vacant and has been earmarked for disposal.

The Castlereagh campus, which accounts for 19% of the estate is the oldest (most buildings in the campus were built in 1950's) and most in need of urgent attention. A condition survey / feasibility review was conducted at Castlereagh Campus in 2021 and identified in the medium term that c.£10m would need to be spent to ensure that the facility remains suitable for ongoing curriculum delivery.

Previously the College management team had set out to work towards a Strategic Outline Case (SoC) which considered a range of options for the future development of Castlereagh, including:

- Upgrade works in existing Castlereagh Campus (indicative cost of £10m).
- Development of new campus (indicative cost of £51m).
- Consolidation of curriculum onto Titanic and Millfield campuses.
- Part consolidation/ part new build (various locations).

These options were presented to our Governing Body, who considered them against a backdrop of recent unprecedented cuts to our college budget, a decline in student numbers collegewide and specifically lower student enrolments on the Castlereagh Campus, and the need to ensure the sustainability of the wider College so we can continue to fulfil our purpose of “Equipping Learners, Driving Innovation, Transforming Lives”.

As a result of the above factors, and the current condition of the Castlereagh Campus, our Governing Body has decided that it would be more prudent, taking into account the continuing decline in college enrolments and sector wide value for money pressures and efficiencies, to consult on potential closure of Castlereagh Campus.

Closure of this campus would involve consolidating the current curriculum offer onto our Millfield and Titanic Quarter sites (both city centre with improved transport access) and relocating the majority of non-teaching staff to the Springvale campus.

As part of scenario planning which will be determined by the outcome of the consultation, we are currently exploring the potential to proceed with the closure and decant of the Castlereagh Campus commencing June 2024. We recognise that it is a complex process to ensure we have sufficient space to accommodate any move from Castlereagh to our existing campuses. As such should a decision be taken to close the Castlereagh Campus, there is a possibility that any related timeline could be elongated. Should such a decision be taken, a key priority for the College will be to ensure minimal disruption for learners, staff and other stakeholders in this process.

2.0 Strategic alignment

This consultation exercise is aligned to several government and college strategies, as outlined below.

2.1 10X Strategy

The government Skills for a 10X Economy - Skills Strategy for NI sets out three strategic goals which, cumulatively, aim to address the skills imbalances in our economy and improve social inclusion and wellbeing across our society.

To achieve this, it is important we have the right infrastructure in place to meet the anticipated demand for skills as a key support strand to the Government's aspirations to grow and develop the Northern Ireland economy.

2.2 The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 / NI Energy Strategy

The Climate Change Act and the NI Energy strategy 'Path to Net Zero' sets out the long-term vision of net zero carbon and affordable energy for Northern Ireland. Belfast Met facilities will need to lead to the highest levels of energy efficiency, thus reducing the amount of energy we need. We will need to support our contribution in helping to deliver energy consumption savings of 30% and 48% of carbon emissions against baseline by 2030 with a further target of net zero by 2050.

2.3 The Belfast Met Strategic Plan 'Choose Success' (2021-24)

Our College Strategic Plan 2021/22 - 2023/2024 – Choose Success – sets out our vision for the future, our objectives, what we will do and what we will achieve by 2024. At the heart of our new plan are our learners. Our vision is to be College of Choice for learners, Employer of Choice for talent and Partner of Choice for employers & business. Our purposes focuses on equipping learners, driving innovation, and transforming lives.

2.4 The Belfast Met Estate Strategy 2022-32

To support the College in delivering on its purpose and achieving its vision, our Estate Strategy 2022/32 is in place for developing and managing the Belfast Met estate to ensure high quality buildings, facilities and infrastructure are provided to support a modern and innovative curriculum.

Whilst the Estate Strategy will fully support and underpin the implementation of the whole College Strategic Plan, we have identified college strategic goals where the delivery of the strategy can contribute to achieving relevant college objectives and actions contained therein. The objectives and actions specifically being addressed are:

Objective 1: College of Choice

To be a College of Choice, providing learners with an excellent learning experience on relevant, high performing and flexible skills and education programmes that enable them to progress into work or further study.

Objective 5: Sustainable by Nature

To use our role as educators to inspire, celebrate and advance the Sustainability Agenda, maximising our positive impact on the environment, economy and communities we serve. To operate a financially sustainable College, delivering value for the public purse, in compliance with all governance obligations (annually through budget and statutory reporting cycles).

Our estate and infrastructure are identified as key enablers in ensuring the College delivers on its Purpose and achieves its Vision. Underpinning the Strategic Plan objectives are the following key fundamentals to managing a large estate:

- Consistently provide stimulating and highly functional spaces that meet the needs of our learners, staff and wider stakeholders.
- Unlock and maximise the value of the College estate through rationalising the estate and improving space utilisation.
- Manage the College assets to ensure compliance with legislative/statutory requirements and best practice.

- Assess, implement and maintain enabling technologies to ensure that the College is able to support future growth and take advantage of relevant innovations.

The main purpose of our estate strategy is to ensure that we have an appropriate estate for meeting current and future business needs. Our estate should be appropriate in terms of scale, flexibility, sustainability and suitability. The strategy should be underpinned by a commitment to an effective planned preventative maintenance (PPM) programme.

3.0 Current pressures

There are several pressures impacting on Castlereagh campus, each of these are set out below.

3.1 Building condition

The Castlereagh campus is 11,500m² (19% of campus footprint) and contains six blocks of which blocks 1,2,5,6 are approx. 70+ years (1950's) and Block 3 / Block 4 (mobile huts) that are approx. 30 years.



We have invested £4.4m in the last 10 years to maintain the college estate and IT infrastructure to ensure statutory compliance and a positive experience for our learners. Following an initial survey in 2019, reviewed in 2021, £10m of improvement works (planned preventive and lifecycle work only) were identified in the medium term that would need to be spent to ensure that the facility remains suitable for ongoing curriculum delivery and statutory compliance. This figure does not include any remodelling works or required IT infrastructure projects.

In recent years we have experienced several health and safety incidents including a major fire in September 2018 in our main electric switch room (due to ageing equipment) that resulted in Castlereagh closure for four weeks.

The survey identified that the building would be rated as a C in accordance with the RICS building ratings (Operational but major repair or replacement needed soon). Furthermore, the functional suitability of each of the blocks in the campus, which is a comparative measure of whether accommodation is fit for its intended purpose, are either rated as fair or poor.

The current layout of the buildings is not fully in accordance with ETI schedule of accommodation. The ETI Schedule of Accommodation is a document, providing guidelines for colleges to ascertain best use of space within their estates. The current condition and layout of the buildings at the Castlereagh Campus is not conducive to the delivery of a modern vibrant FE curriculum. It does not provide consistently the same high standard of facilities to study as other college campuses and is not flexible enough to meet the needs of future curriculum development or to deliver the 10X Strategy.

Our Estate Strategy focuses particularly on flexibility, with the onus on being able to plan and meet the changing curriculum demands with the ability to scale up and down as appropriate to address anticipated changes in demographics.

3.2 Budgetary pressures

FE Sector budgets are under severe pressure and the ability to action or undertake refurbishment or new construction options will be constrained by availability of funding. However, the option to consolidate curriculum/support provision onto other existing campuses will deliver efficiencies and savings to offset any additional expenditure.

3.3 Learner Enrolments

The FE sector is currently experiencing a declining number of learner enrolments at both sector wide level and college level. The number of individual learners at Belfast Met has also fluctuated across the last 5 years reflecting an overall downwards trend.

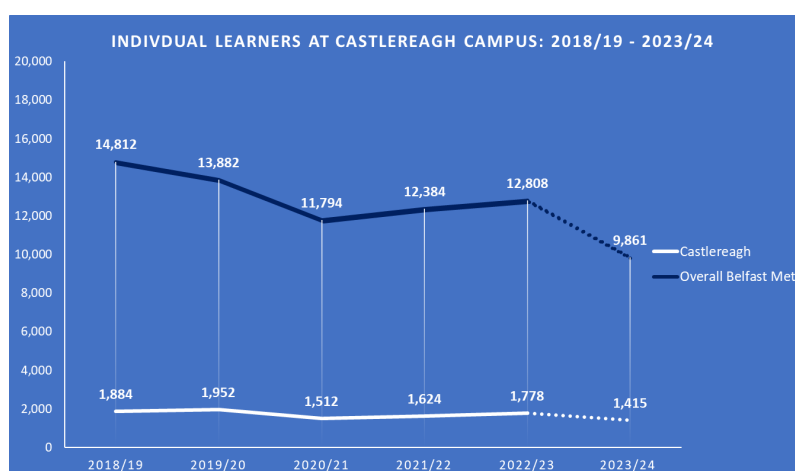


Table 1: Individual learners at Belfast Met and Castlereagh campus

Learner numbers at Castlereagh have reduced from 1,778 in 2022/23 to 1,415 currently in 2023/24; a 20% decrease (363 fewer learners). Provisional 2023/24 learner numbers at Belfast Met are down 23% in comparison to final figures for 2022/23.

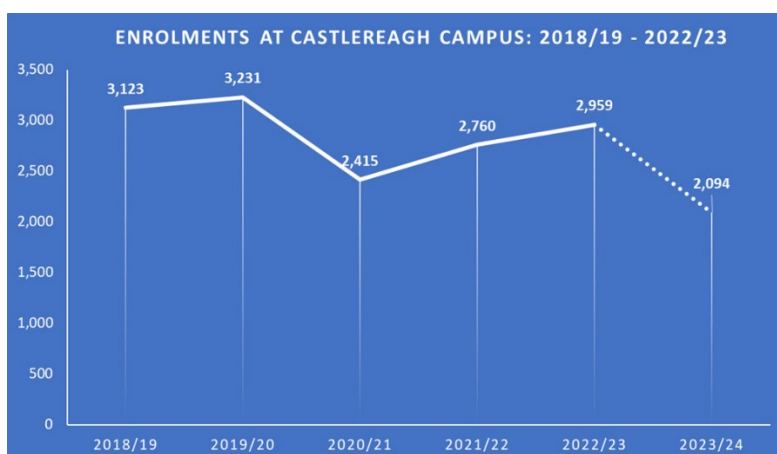


Table 2: Enrolments at Castlereagh Campus

When we examine our enrols at the Castlereagh Campus, we can see the number of enrolments has fluctuated across the period 2018/19 to 2022/23, starting at 3,123 in 2018/19 and ending at 2,959 in 2022/23.

While the number of enrolments may appear to have increased of late, it is important to be aware that 13.5% of our 2022/23 enrols are as result of a growth in Apprenticeships and HLAs. Those learners attend the Castlereagh campus a maximum of one day a week.

The 2023/24 data is not included in the above graph as this data has not yet been formally published by DfE. However, our consolidated data return information as at September 2023 would indicate a total number of enrols in the Castlereagh Campus of 2,094. This is 865 fewer enrols than in 2022/23.

These numbers show a decline in the number of learners studying at Castlereagh of almost 30% from 2019/20 to present.

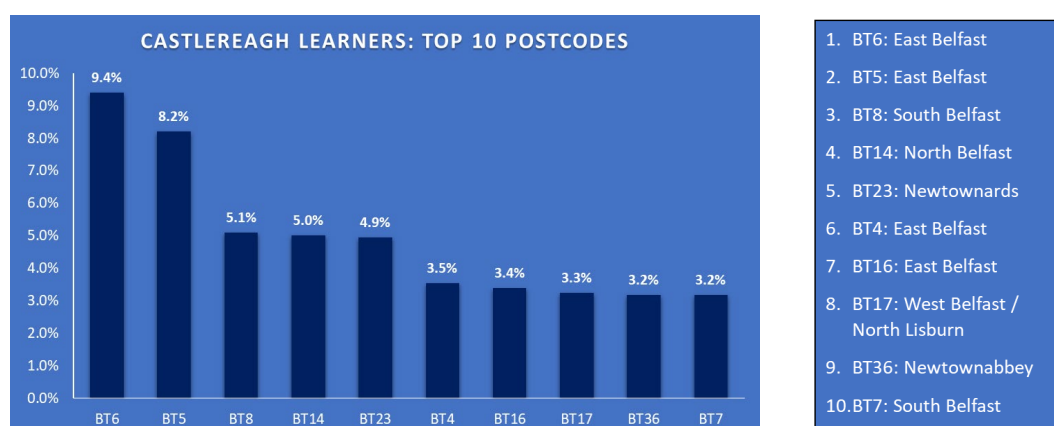


Table 3: Castlereagh Learners: Top 10 postcodes

Learners currently studying at Castlereagh campus reside in 71 different postcode areas. These postcodes are not restricted to Belfast only. A significant number of learners come from much further afield.

When we consider the make-up of our learners studying at Castlereagh, the data shows that only 24.5% of all learners currently studying at Castlereagh campus reside in East Belfast (postcode areas BT4, BT5, BT6 & BT16). A significant proportion of our learners travel from South, North and West Belfast and beyond.

Staff currently working at Castlereagh campus reside in 46 different postcode areas.

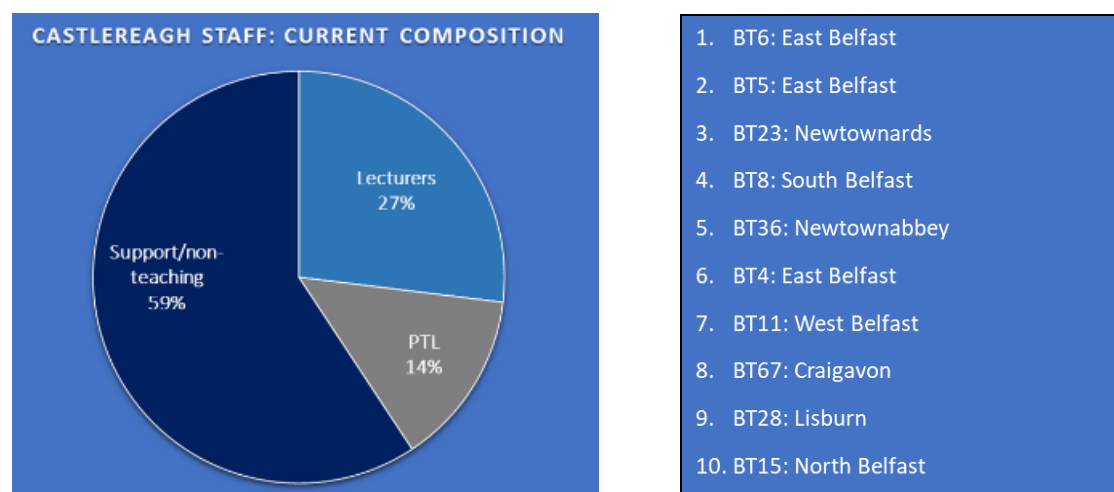
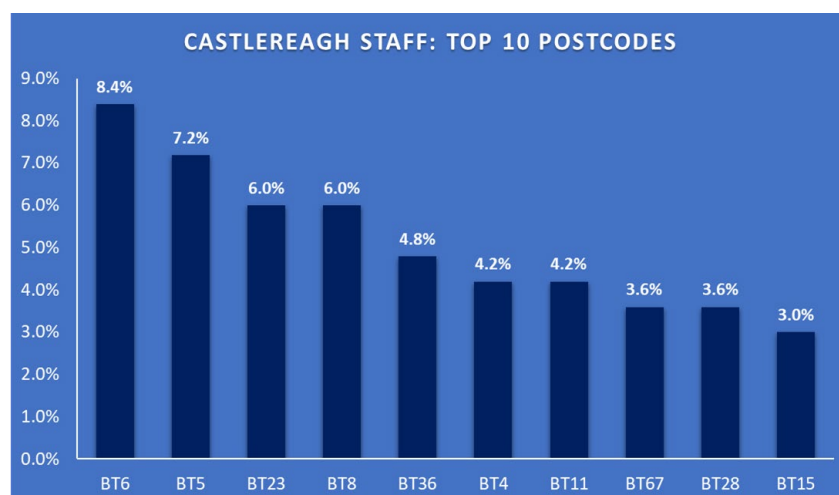


Table 4: Castlereagh Staff: Top 10 postcodes

Based on these numbers, our analysis shows that 22.2% of all staff currently working at Castlereagh reside in East Belfast coming from postcode areas BT4, BT5, BT6 & BT16 (BT16 is defined as East Belfast/Dundonald however it is not one of the top 10 postcodes).

3.4 Environmental sustainability

The Climate Act NI 2022 places a legal requirement on the College to reduce carbon emissions by 48% by 2030 and Net zero by 2050.


Whilst significant efforts have been made to reduce our consumption on the campus the current condition of the building fabric impacts our ability to make any meaningful energy / carbon saving without significant investment in the campus building fabric.

Following installation of Solar PV systems at our Titanic, Millfield and Springvale campuses, we will be generating approx. 10% of our electricity through renewable sources. The condition / age of our Block 1 roof at Castlereagh inhibits our ability to install a Solar PV system and increase the amount of electricity we generate from renewable sources without prior replacement of the roof.

4.0 Future of the Castlereagh campus

Should a decision be taken to close the Castlereagh campus, the intention would be then to consolidate the current curriculum offer onto our Millfield and Titanic Quarter sites and relocate the majority of non-teaching members of staff to a new Integrated Shared Services Centre (ISSC) in a reconfigured Community Learning Centre at our Springvale site.

5.0 Consultation Questions

**Castlereagh Campus Closure Consultation**

Consultation Response Form

The aim of this consultation is to obtain views from stakeholders in Northern Ireland on the proposed closure of Belfast Met's Castlereagh Campus at Montgomery Road.

Please use this form to complete your response.

The closing date for this consultation is **Friday 16 February 2024** and therefore we need to receive your completed proforma on or before that date.

If you have any requirements to enable you to make a response to this consultation (e.g., audio tape, Braille, large print, in languages other than English), please do not hesitate to contact us at the address given below or by telephone or e-mail.

You can respond to the consultation document as follows:

Webpage: Complete this survey online.

Email: consultation@belfastmet.ac.uk

By post: Corporate Development
Belfast Metropolitan College
Montgomery Road
Belfast BT6 9JD

Tel: 028 9026 5368

1. I am responding:

☐ As an individual

☐ On behalf of an organisation

2. Do you agree with the proposal to close the Castlereagh Campus?

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. Are you familiar with our Castlereagh Campus?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. If yes, what are your views of the Castlereagh Campus?

5. Please identify what impact(s) the potential closure of the Castlereagh Campus may have on you / your specific area(s) of interest and/or those who you represent.

6. Please outline any proposals to help reduce the impacts you have outlined above.

7. Do you consider that any aspect of the proposal to close the Castlereagh Campus impacts adversely on people in the Section 75 equality groups?

NB: Section 75 categories include persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

8. If yes, please tell us:

Which groups you think the plan affects and how you think these groups would be adversely impacted.

9. Can you suggest any measures/actions which may help to minimise any potential adverse impact on these groups?

10. We have asked several specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please report them here:

6.0 The Consultation Process

The consultation period runs from 13 November 2023 to 16 February 2024.

You can give your views by:

- Completing this online survey on our college website.
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/YF2FWC8>
- Emailing the College at consultation@belfastmet.ac.uk.
- Attending a public meeting for all interested parties on Tuesday 12 December 2023 from 4pm to 5pm. This meeting will be held in the Castlereagh Campus Gymnasium.

All comments on the proposal must be received by 16 February 2024, or they cannot be considered.

If you need this information in a different format, or you would like help to complete the online survey please contact us at consultation@belfastmet.ac.uk

Please submit only one response per person to this consultation.

The information provided in this document is intended to be sufficient for the College to form a view on the proposal. Belfast Met will consider all views and concerns raised during the consultation period before making a decision on whether to proceed with the proposal.

Following the consultation period, a report on the outcome of the consultation, including comments submitted, will be published on the College website.

Please respond to the consultation by Friday 16 February 2024.

Confidentiality

Information provided in response to this consultation, will be managed by the College in accordance with our obligations to relevant legislation. This is primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA and the EIR there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals with, amongst other things, obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential.

If we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances.

Appendix 1 Equality Screening

Equality screening documentation for the proposed closure of the Castlereagh Campus can be access via the following [link](#).

Appendix 2: Equality Scheme Consultee List

Stakeholder	MENCAP
Governing Body	National Deaf Children's Society
SLT	NI Dyslexia Centre
DfE	Inspire
Department meetings (support and academic)	Praxis Care
All Staff	Royal National Institute for the Blind
Students	The Cedar Foundation
Age (older and younger people)	Education
Age NI	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
Barnardo's	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
Extra Care	Education Authority
Include Youth	Libraries NI
Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children & Young People	Ofqual (NI)
Youth Link NI	Stranmillis University College
Youth Action	Ulster University
The Silver Grove Care Home Montgomery Road	Queens University
Dependants	Open University
Carers NI	FE Colleges
Family Support NI	Northern Regional College
Home Start	North West Regional College
Parenting NI	Southern Regional College
Disability	South Eastern Regional College
Action on Hearing Loss	South West College
Action Mental Health	Equality and Human Rights
Autism NI	Committee on the Administration of Justice
Disability Action	Equality Coalition
Guide Dogs for the Blind	Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
	Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

Gender	Public Authorities
Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network	Belfast City Council
Women's Resource & Development Agency	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Women's Aid Federation NI	South Eastern HSCT
SAIL NI	Belfast HSCT
Transgender NI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
Mens Action Network	Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Good relations / community	Race
Co-Operation Ireland	African & Caribbean Support Organisation NI
Labour Relations Agency	Bryson Intercultural
Northern Ireland Community Relations Council	Bryson Intercultural Floating Support Service
NI Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)	Chinese Welfare Association
East Side Partnership	Indian Community Centre
East Belfast Community Development Agency	NI Community of Refugees & Asylum Seekers
Cregagh Community Association	East Belfast Race Relations Network
Invest NI	Northern Ireland Muslim Family Association
Belfast Community Planning Partnership	Northern Ireland Interfaith Forum
	Sexual orientation
LORAG (Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group)	Cara-Friend
Belfast Healthy Cities	The Rainbow Project
GEMS NI	Gay & Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland
Political	
Alliance Party	
Democratic Unionist Party	
Social Democratic and Labour Party	
Sinn Fein	
Ulster Unionist Party	
Green Party in Northern Ireland	
Traditional Unionist Voice	
People Before Profit	

Unions	Tor Bank School
National Associations of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)	Wellington College
National Education Union (NEU)	Employers (Apprenticeship partners & Training Providers)
National Union of Students (NUS)	Local residents & businesses
Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)	British Legion
Unison	Ulster Rugby
Unite	Residents of Castlereagh
University and College Union (UCU)	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Contractors & Suppliers	Radius Housing
PPP/PFI partners	Choice Housing
Service contractors- Castlereagh	Clanmil Housing Association
School Partnerships	Ulidia Housing
Assumption Grammar School	Abbeyfield & Wesley Housing Association
Boys Model High School	Alpha Housing Association
Friends School Lisburn	Apex Housing Association
Glenmona Resource Centre	Arbour Housing Association
Hazelwood Integrated College	Ark Housing Association
Hill Croft Special School	Connswater Homes Ltd
Hunterhouse College	Coownership
Little Flower Girl's School	Craigowen Housing Association
Longstone School	Grove Housing Association Ltd
Loughshore Education Resource Centre	Habinteg Housing Association LTd
Mitchell House School	Newington Housing Association
Rosstulla	North Belfast Housing Association
St Colm's High School	St Matthew's Housing Association
Fort Hill College	Triangle Housing Association Ltd
Malone College	Woodvale and Shankill Community Housing Association
Lisnagarvey High School	
St Genevieve's High School	
St Gerard's Education Resource Centre	
St Louise's Comprehensive College	
St Patrick's College Bearnageeha	

Other	Securitas Technology
SIB	GPS Colour Graphics
Belfast ALC Coordinators	Sangers
Neighbouring Businesses	Chempar
French Village Bakery	MSO Cleland
Wolseley Plumb & Parts	Alan McVeigh Motor Repairs
SEnsations Learning Support	Alanbrooke Cryospa
Pivotal, Belfast	Target Dry
Hanover Systems	NI Leasing
Auto Technic	Xtra Space NI Storage
HMG Powder Coatings	MAD Colour
Box-IT	Eurospar Ladas Drive
Podium 4 Sport	McCleary's Estate Agents
Beattie Flanigan	Total Vapour Cregagh Road
PSNI Lisnasharragh Station (Statistics)	Hamilton News
Medicare Pharmacy Group	Gordons Chemist, Cregagh Road
Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre	Spar Greenway
Clonduff Community Centre	DWT Austin Chemists
Kenect Recruitment Agency, Belfast	Feet Street Podiatry
Lynas Food Outlet	Maud's Ice Cream
WH Stephens	Toast
E&H Services	Museum of Orange Heritage
Radiocontact Ltd	Lisclare
Interior 360	Lidl
Tetra Tech	
Arrow Communications	
Period Electrics	