



## Zero Waste Champions Programme

Our vision is to create **zero waste** schools by educating and equipping young people to become change makers at this crucial time in the Climate Emergency.

The **Zero Waste Champions** Programme aims to embed the Circular Economy in schools across Northern Ireland, providing young people with knowledge about the Circular Economy and designing waste out of their schools. Moving towards a Circular Economy can tackle environmental challenges including climate, biodiversity and create green jobs for the future.

This pioneering pilot programme is a unique opportunity for schools to become **Zero Waste Champions** by participating in a series of five workshops over the academic year and a celebration event in their area to showcase their work. It is the first of its kind in Northern Ireland with the ambitious target of reducing consumption and introducing young people to alternatives to waste.

The pilot programme is being developed by a consortium of experts, bringing their expertise to co-design and co-deliver a series of practical workshops aimed to be engaging, informative and leading to real change in the school, home and community environments.

Delivery partners include:

- Northern Ireland Resources Network - the representative body of community reuse & repair in Northern Ireland
- Ostrero - a Scottish based Circular Economy organisation that has been delivering circular workshops and programmes in schools across Scotland since 2018.
- Environmental Education and Outreach staff from four Local Authorities - Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council, Belfast City Council, Derry City & Strabane District Council and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.
- NIRN members offering expertise in circular goods and services - Fareshare NI, Habitat for Humanity, Tools for Solidarity.

### Aims

The aims of the **Zero Waste Champions** Programme are:

- To embed Circular Economy education in schools across Northern Ireland, in line with the draft [Circular Economy strategy](#)
- To strengthen circular communities across NI by bringing together Local Authorities, schools and NIRN members who offer circular services such as repair, leasing and sharing libraries
- For every school child in Northern Ireland to have an understanding of the Circular Economy and the opportunities it brings to address the Climate Emergency, to equip them with basic skills they will need in a Circular Economy, and to see this being applied in a practical way in their own school
- For all of the above to result in mindset and behaviour change across Northern Ireland so that a circular approach becomes the norm

### Legacy

The aim of the **Zero Waste Champions** Programme is to embed Circular Economy education in schools across NI. It is therefore essential that learnings are used to grow the programme so that all schools in NI could join the programme - we would aim for this to happen within 5 years. A key part of the programme is therefore delivering and evaluating a pilot programme, to ensure it is fit for purpose, and creating an online resource that can be used by schools that join the programme.

## **Zero Waste Champions pilot 2024/2025**

The pilot will be delivered to 12 schools across four council areas through five practical and engaging workshops and a showcase event with other schools in their council area to celebrate their achievements and to hear their stories.

### Workshop 1 'Making Circles'

- Introduction to the programme
- Establishing a baseline of knowledge and behaviour regarding waste reduction
- Overview of the Circular Economy
- Practical design-out waste workshop using scrap materials
- Delivered by [Ostrero](#)

### Workshop 2 Tackling Textiles

- Overview of the impact of over consumption and waste textiles
- Practical mending activity teaching basic sewing skills
- Visible mending - changing attitudes to mending clothes
- Delivered by [Tools for Solidarity](#)

### Workshop 3 Food Waste

- Overview of the issues with wasting food - global and local
- Food waste - where does it go?
- Practical workshop - how to reduce food waste
- Delivered by [Fareshare NI](#)

### Workshop 4 Our Waste Our World

- Sustainable Development Goals
- The problem of furniture & household waste
- The global impact of waste
- Practical workshop - repurposing waste into useful and beautiful items
- Delivered by [Habitat for Humanity](#)

### Celebration event

- Sharing Learnings from the programme
- Hosted by Mayor/Chairperson
- Zero Waste Champion award presented
- Feedback & evaluation

Evaluations will be carried out at each workshop to determine current knowledge and skills and the impact of the workshop. Where permission is granted, workshops will be photographed and recorded for the purpose of future promotion of the programme. The pilot is funded by DAERA through NIRN and there will be no cost to schools to participate in the programme.