



Spending Wisely

Areas of Learning:

Mathematics and Numeracy

Learning for Life and Work: *Local and Global Citizenship*

Learning Intentions

By completing the activities, pupils will have the opportunity to:

- gain insight into the decisions behind the budget making-process at Northern Ireland Assembly;
- understand the consequences of budget cuts for public services;
- make decisions and calculate budget cuts according to set priorities; and
- compare and evaluate their decisions against those of the Northern Ireland Assembly using appropriate data.

Statutory Requirements

The online and class activities will contribute to the following statutory requirements:

Mathematics and Numeracy

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- demonstrate an ability and willingness to develop logical arguments;
- apply mathematical skills in everyday financial planning and decision making; and
- explore issues related to Ethical Awareness.

Learning for Life and Work: *Local and Global Citizenship*

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- investigate the basic characteristics of democracy; and
- investigate an issue from a range of viewpoints and suggest action that might be taken to improve or resolve the situation.

Budget: How would you save money?

	percentage cut	saved amount	new budget
Health £4505m	0%	£ _____ m	£ _____ m
Education £2921m	0%	£ _____ m	£ _____ m
Environment £536m	0%	£ _____ m	£ _____ m
Policing £1304m	0%	£ _____ m	£ _____ m

The image shows a digital interface for a budget simulation. It features a wooden background with a calculator icon in the top right and an information icon. The table lists four categories: Health (£4505m), Education (£2921m), Environment (£536m), and Policing (£1304m). Each category has a slider set to 0% cut, a corresponding 'saved amount' field, and a 'new budget' field. The interface is designed for interactive learning.





Cross-Curricular Skills/Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

The online and class activities will provide pupils with the opportunity to develop the following skills and capabilities:

Managing Information	<p>By discussing budget cuts and completing a Consequence Wheel, pupils will have the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ask focused questions. <p>By calculating the number of items of personal interest equivalent to £1m, for example laptops, pupils will have the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• select the most appropriate method for a task. <p>By writing a report, pupils will have the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• communicate with a sense of audience and purpose.
Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making	<p>By completing the Consequence Wheel, pupils will have the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• examine options, weigh up pros and cons. <p>By using the online tool in Activity 2, pupils will have the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• make links between cause and effect.
Working with Others	<p>By working in pairs to decide which services to cut, pupils will have the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• listen actively and share opinions; and• respect the views of others and reach agreement using negotiation and compromise.
Using ICT	<p>Activity 2 – where pupils try out different percentage cuts - gives pupils the opportunity to use an online tool to check calculations and to find the total amount saved.</p>



Overview

This activity gives pupils an insight into some of the difficult decisions relating to the budget that the Executive and Northern Ireland Assembly members have to make.

In the Starter Activities section, pupils discuss how each of the services might be affected by having less money to spend. Pupils decide how best to make the required savings. This section could be delivered by a Mathematics teacher but – as the emphasis here is on how the Assembly budget works – then the Learning for Life & Work teacher may be better placed to deliver it.

In the Online Activity section, pupils use an online tool to put their preferred savings from each of the eight services into effect so that the new budget reaches the target amount. They can then write a short report justifying where they have made savings and compare this to the actual budget compiled by the Assembly.

Starter Activities

Activity 1

£11575m represents the draft budget for Northern Ireland in the financial year April 2011 to March 2012.

The Northern Ireland Assembly appoints an Executive Committee of Ministers to take charge of government departments. The Executive Committee agrees a draft budget plan which then has to be approved by a vote in the Assembly Chamber. Committees of the Assembly examine the draft budget in detail and it is debated in the Chamber before a vote is taken.

- Ask pupils if they know how services in Northern Ireland are paid for.
- Explain that the Northern Ireland Assembly receives a certain amount of money from the government in London and that it is up to the Assembly to agree how that money should be spent.

Equivalent to ...

To give a sense of the magnitude of this figure, ask the pupils to first guess how many laptops (or another high value item of interest to a 14 year old) could be bought for £1m and then to calculate an estimate using a pencil and paper method. They could also calculate an estimate of how many items could be bought for the whole budget figure.

Was their guess anywhere close to the calculated estimate?





Media coverage ...

Ask pupils if they have heard anything about 'budget cuts' in the media. What do they understand by this term?

If appropriate, you could use the opening section of the Question Time video from **4 October 2010** on the BBC Democracy Live website to demonstrate questions the Minister of Finance must answer in relation to the budget: http://news.bbc.co.uk/democracylive/hi/northern_ireland/

Northern Ireland Budget 2011–2012 ...

Distribute Resource 1, representing the draft budget for Northern Ireland 2011–12, before cuts. Explain that it was estimated that the budget would be cut to £10232m and that the Northern Ireland Assembly had to decide where cuts should be made and how much the cut to each service should be.

Brainstorm ...

Brainstorm the effects of making cuts in each of the services and discuss the relative disadvantages of cuts in each of the areas. Some prompt questions could be:

- What could happen if Health/Education/Transport etc. have less money to spend?
- A large cut in the Health budget could result in longer waiting times for hospital appointments, or fewer referrals to services such as Speech Therapy. A large cut in the Sport and Leisure budget could result in the cancellation of new sports facilities or youth training programmes. Which of these two would be preferable and why?
- Would it be fair to divide the total amount to be cut equally between the eight services?
- What about cutting each service by the same percentage?

Activity 2

Divide the class into seven groups and distribute Resource 2 – a Consequence Wheel showing the impact of less money being available in the area of Sport and Leisure:

- The pink circle shows this event, and three possible direct consequences are written in the next set of green connected circles.
- Secondary consequences are written in a further set of blue connected circles.
- Depending on the nature of the class, you could discuss possible tertiary consequences for this wheel.

Explain how the Consequence Wheel works and discuss the completed version from Resource 2 with the pupils. You can find more information on using a Consequence Wheel in the Northern Ireland Curriculum Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3 booklet, page 17. This resource can be found in the **Key Stage 3** section of the Northern Ireland Curriculum website at: www.nicurriculum.org.uk/

Assign each group to one of the remaining services – Health, Education, Farming and the Environment, Policing, Transport, Housing, and Tourism and Business. Give each group a piece of A3 paper and ask them to draw a Consequence Wheel with at least three direct consequences showing the impact of large cuts in their given service. They should also draw and complete any secondary (and tertiary if appropriate) 'circles'.

After a given amount of time, ask one pupil from each group to explain their group's Consequence Wheel to the class.





Activity 3

Ask your pupils to work in pairs to prioritise the budget for the eight services. Ask them to consider all that they have learned from the feedback for the Consequence Wheels and to draw up an ordered list of the services with the budget they would least like to cut at the top. Explain that they will be using this in another session to work with the actual budget figures.

Online Activities:

Activity 1

Using the Budget Tool in the **Years 8–10** section of the [Northern Ireland Assembly Education Service](http://education.niassembly.gov.uk) website, ask your pupils to work in pairs to decide and calculate budget savings. Pupils should:

- use the slider to cut each service by the percentage decided;
- work out and input the amount saved and the new budget using the onscreen calculator; and
- use the 'check' button to see if the answers are correct.

A running total of the amount saved is shown at the bottom of the screen.

Introduce the pupils to the online tool and explain how it works.

Challenge them to make percentage cuts to each of the services so that the total amount saved is as close to £1343m as possible – the estimated figure for the cuts the Northern Ireland Assembly needs to make in 2011–2012.

The pupils will have to use trial and improvement to cut the services in order to get close to the required total savings.

Remind them that all of the services must be cut to some extent but they must be able to justify their decisions later.

On completing the activity, use the print button on the results screen to print the chart and tables comparing pupil cuts to those made by the Northern Ireland Assembly for use in Activity 2.





Activity 2

If time permits, ask your pupils to write a short report on the cuts they have made and why they decided to allocate them in this manner.

They can evaluate their decisions against the representation of actual cuts made by the Assembly, by using the comparison bar chart and tables printed out on the results sheet at the end of Activity 1. They should make comparisons and comment on similarities/differences, while justifying their own decisions.

Related Activities:

The **Years 8–10** section of the [Northern Ireland Assembly Education Service](#) website contains other multimedia resources which may be related to this activity:

Making a Law

Pupils can explore the process behind making new laws, while creating a bill and attempting to pass it at the Assembly.

Follow-Up Activities

Next Steps ...

Pupils explore ways of making savings in their own personal spending review. Discuss how to apply the calculations that they carried out for the Assembly budget to their own budget.

Pupils can also look at a typical weekly family budget and decide how and where to make savings. For a recent breakdown of average household spending in the UK, go to the Office for National Statistics website.





Resource 1: Table representing the existing budget for the areas listed

Area	Existing Budget (£ Millions)
Health	4505
Education, Jobs, Universities	2921
Farming and the Environment	536
Policing	1304
Transport	1073
Housing	791
Tourism and Business	272
Sport and Leisure	173
Total:	11575





Resource 2: Consequence Wheel for budget cuts to Sport and Leisure

