



**Armagh City
Banbridge
& Craigavon**
Borough Council

**Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon
Borough Council**

Equality Action Plan 2024-2027

**We Asked, You Said,
We Did**
(July 2024)

Background

This Equality Action Plan has been designed to ensure that the Council fulfils its statutory obligations in compliance with section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Actions that have been included in the Equality Action Plan cut across the majority of Council functions and inequalities are addressed by each section 75 group and include associated performance indicators and timescales to address the inequalities identified. The Council believes that the actions included in the plan are likely to have the biggest impact on equality of opportunity and good relations. The actions contained within the Equality Action Plan reflect four of the priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan. These are:

- Community Wellbeing – 11 actions
- Economic Growth – 1 action
- Service Delivery – 3 actions
- Staff, Leadership and Resources – 6 actions

In developing a new Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan for the period 2024-2027 the following was undertaken:

- A review of previous audits and action plans and the plans of other Northern Ireland Public Authorities.
- There was consideration of the Council's corporate priorities
- Engagement with the Council's Inclusive ABC Working Group.
- Individual meetings with officers from the different service areas of Council in order to identify appropriate actions.

The consultation closed on 6 May 2024, and we received 1 response to the Equality Action Plan via the consultation hub and 17 written responses. 17 of these responses were from individuals and 1 was an organisational response.

- 94% of you agreed with our community wellbeing actions.
- 76% of you agreed with our Service Delivery Actions.
- 71% agreed with the Economic growth and Staff Leadership & Resources actions.

Comments and feedback were summarised and forwarded to relevant departments for consideration in line with their business plans and service delivery. The relevant departments provided general feedback to the responses received to facilitate the 'We asked, You said, We did' facility, thereby closing the feedback loop on the consultation process.

In the section below, we provide a brief update on how Council currently addresses the matters raised from the feedback. Not all proposed actions received additional comments.

Following further review by officers the first action within the Plan which relates to section 75 monitoring has been amended.

Economic Growth

Under the 'Economic Growth' priority we have outlined the work of our Labour Market Partnership (LMP). This partnership delivers programmes specifically aimed at women, disabled people, migrant workers and young people to help improve employment opportunities

You said:

“It is important to note that some individuals and communities face multiple disadvantages and therefore their problems are compounded. Those from ethnic groups with low educational attainment and language barriers. Those with disabilities living in rural areas etc.”

*“This should also be aimed at ‘men’
Programmes which support those with barriers into work should also receive more investment”*

*“These are excellent programmes which make a real difference to people’s lives. They would benefit from more than single year funding streams which would enable more **strategic programmes offering longer term training** to be developed”*

“There are benefits for businesses in creating new or modified goods or services for the older consumer. Supporting the silver economy benefits businesses and senior citizens”

‘Supporting the social enterprise economy is also important as they provide vital services and supported employment opportunities’.

‘I think you should also consider areas of deprivation, caring responsibilities (eldercare as well as childcare) and rurality.’

We did:

The key priorities for the LMP are upskilling, bridging skills gaps, supporting individuals into higher paid roles and supporting business growth. Our 24/25 Action Plan has 4 upskilling programmes under the theme of skilled labour supply. Another key priority for the ABC LMP is creating tailored programmes for those within the section 75 groups. In the previous year we supported 22 disabled people into paid employment and to date 12 women who had been removed from the labour market for a number of years, back into employment. Improving work relevant skills was a key priority within all of these programmes, tailoring learning to the individuals needs and working with employers to ensure quality jobs with reasonable adjustments identified.

The gender economic inactivity gap in the ABC region has been consistently higher than the NI inactivity gap in every year since 2016 with the exception of 2018. This means that the area consistently performs poorly with regard to Female Economic Inactivity. Furthermore, the statistical analysis showed the gap is intensifying over time. Whilst we have a range of programmes that are open to men and women, we have identified a women returners programme to support more women back into the labour market. All of our other programmes are open to men and women.

Our new [Funding Hub](#) presents all council grants available and allows residents, community groups and businesses (including social enterprises) in the borough to apply online.

The cost-of-living crisis and the ever-changing economic landscape has a direct impact on the labour market, where conditions are significantly altered. Businesses have faced not just escalating costs during this period but increasing levels of risk and uncertainty. The programmes adopted by the LMP will provide much needed support to the labour market at this challenging time.

As a result of the analysis undertaken for this study the ABC Labour Market Partnership has identified that the 4 themes of disability, skilled labour supply, economic inactivity and unemployment will be prioritised for the next 3 years. The needs of the above groups were the subject of robust evaluation. This included a statistical analysis of the baseline scenario facing each group, direct engagement with stakeholders and a turning the curve exercise to assess the type and the extent of barriers faced by each disadvantaged group

Equality

A section 75 monitoring questionnaire was included on the consultation hub as part of the consultation exercise. 18% of respondents were male and 82% female. In relation to the analysis of the other categories one respondent who completed the Section 75 analysis was a heterosexual female aged 45-54yrs, married/civil partnership, Irish, white, non-disabled. All other respondents were members of a local community group who didn't share any section 75 data apart from gender. The comments received in relation to the equality screening exercise suggest that a small number of respondents have queried both the Council's willingness and ability to address issues relating to the nine equality groups. However, in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 the Council will continue to assess the impact of its policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations and take appropriate action where necessary.

Rural Needs

In terms of the Rural Needs Impact, we were able to engage with rural consultees from a rural community group. In accordance with the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 the Council will continue to have due regard to the social and economic needs of those living in rural areas when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and when designing and delivering services.