

STATEMENT OF PROGRESS: 2023-2025

PART 3: PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

CONNECTED **A COMMUNITY PLAN**

for Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon Borough





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01 INTRODUCTION

ABC COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

ABC Community Planning Partnership structure is designed to support the delivery of the partnership's thematic action plan and locality place plans.



WAYS OF WORKING

Our partnership has developed the ways of working required to deliver outcomes and collective wellbeing and which are overseen by the Shared Leadership and Community Engagement Sub-Committee. These ways of working include shared leadership, close collaboration and integration; evidence informed policies and programmes; and involving communities and citizens in decision-making and action. The ways of working overlap with each other and our partnership has adopted them as an approach to its activities.



The actions from the Shared Leadership and Community Engagement Sub-committee are based on these ways of working.

SHARED LEADERSHIP

Our Partnership has adopted 'Shared Leadership' as a way of working and over the last two years we have continued to provide development opportunities to our partners. Partners continue to undertake leadership roles such as leading on collaborative actions in the plan or chairing the various partnership structures.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our Partnership has adopted 'Community Engagement' as a way of working as we believe that better community engagement leads to better decision making. Over the last two years we have continued to further embed our Community Engagement Strategy by providing opportunities for people to be involved in the Review of Connected, our Participatory Budgeting Programme and Place Plans. On page 11 our Engagement Timeline shows the extent of which people have been involved in this engagement.

USING EVIDENCE

An outcomes based approach provides a useful framework for us to develop a set of long term outcomes which is then used to monitor our progress. Over the last two years our Partnership has continued to use evidence to inform our decision making. Indicator reviews were undertaken to inform the review of Connected, and then published alongside it, and we continue to track our population indicators on an ongoing basis.

02

SHARED LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE



Catherine Mc Farland
Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Chair of Shared Leadership and Community Engagement sub-committee



Donna Stewart
Craigavon & Banbridge Volunteer Bureau and Vice-Chair of Shared Leadership and Community Engagement sub-committee and Vice-Chair of CVS Panel

Organisations involved in the Shared Leadership and Community Engagement Sub-Committee are-

- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
- Craigavon and Banbridge Volunteer Bureau
- Department for Communities
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- PSNI
- Public Health Agency
- Southern Health and Social Care Trust
- Millennium Court
- TADA Rural Support Network

ACTIONS DELIVERED UNDER THE SHARED LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

Action	Partner	Shared Leadership & Community Engagement - link to report cards 2023-2025
SHARED LEADERSHIP SUPPORT	Lead Partner: ABC Council	1st April 2025 - 31st August 2025 armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/pdffiles/SLCE-apr25-aug25.pdf
FURTHER EMBED THE PARTNERSHIP'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY	Lead Partner: ABC Council	1st October 2024 - 31st March 2025 armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/pdffiles/SLCE-oct24-mar25.pdf
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT: TAKE500+ - YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR VOICE, YOUR CHOICE!	Lead Partners: ABC Council and the PB Working Group	1st April 2024- 30th September 2024 armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/pdffiles/SLCE-apr24-sept24.pdf
SUPPORT COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SECTOR	Lead Partner: ABC Council	1st May 2023- 31st March 2024 (longer reporting period as report was missed during 2023 and this had to cover a longer period) armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/pdffiles/SLCE-may23-mar24.pdf
PROMOTE THE USE OF DATA AND OTHER EVIDENCE TO INFORM THE PARTNERSHIPS DECISIONS AND MAKE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC	Lead Partner: ABC Council	armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/pdffiles/SLCE-may23-mar24.pdf



Age Friendly Connected Review Workshop December 2024



Age Friendly Connected Review Workshop December 2024



Age Friendly Banbridge Walking Audit June 2024



Tak£500+ Celebration Event October 2024

03

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Involving Local People in Decision Making

Community Engagement 2023 to 2025 Timeline

Our Partnership is committed to creating opportunities for people to take part in local decisions. Shown below is a sample of the engagement opportunities presented by our partnership from 1st July 2023 to 31st August 2025:



**LMP Partnership
Action Plan**
16 people engaged



Banbridge Place Plan
216 people engaged





**Dec 23 -
Apr 24**

Development of the
Get Moving ABC
Action Plan 24-27
47 people engaged



**Feb &
Mar 24**

3 x TAKE500+ Market
Place Decision Events
4286 people engaged



**March-
May 25**

Dromore Place Plan
1078 engaged



**May
2024**

Connected Review
Workshops
63 people engaged



**Oct
2024**

Refreshing and Updating
the Take 5 Ambassador
Training Presentation
and Evaluation Processes
4 people engaged



**Oct 24 -
Jan 25**

Public Consultation of
Connected: Community Plan
for ABC Survey
69 survey responses



**June &
July 2025**

3 x TAKE500+ Market Place
Decision Events
4158 people engaged



**Mar-Aug
2025**

Craigavon Urban
Area Discovery
94 people engaged



**June
2024**

Banbridge Town Centre
Walking Audit
10 people engaged



**Dec
2024**

Age Friendly focus group
have their say on
Community Plan
24 people engaged



**Nov
2024**

ABC Senior Network hosts
Consultation Event on Draft
Programme for Government
23 people engaged



**Dec
2024**

Public Consulta-
tion of Connected
Review meetings
and workshops
151 people engaged

Tak£500+ Your Community, Your Voice, Your Choice!



The Partnership's Community Engagement Strategy identifies Participatory Budgeting (PB) as a method that promotes inclusion and diversity, quality dialogue and deliberation and has impact, with a clear link to policy and decision making.

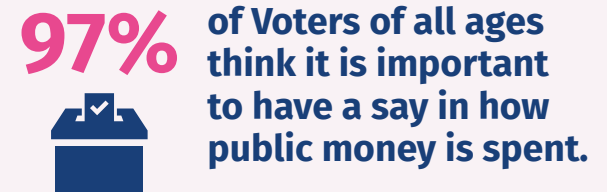
Tak£500+ Your Community, Your Voice, Your Choice! is a successful Participatory Budgeting Programme delivered by the Partnership.

There have been four PB grants processes run by the partnership, one online in 2020/21 and three in person 2022/3, 2023/24 and 2025/26. This has shown an appetite for this type of engagement where the public decides where public money is spent. The success of Tak£500+ is due to the commitment and expertise of local communities who put forward ideas and came to vote at the events. Local people decided where the funding was allocated to meet local needs.

PB FACTS AND FIGURES FROM 2020 - 2025



ALL Ideas based on Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing



Tak£500+ Group delivering project



It is an engagement method that makes a high level strategic document, like the community plan, real for local people.

PB has also been a useful vehicle to strengthen partnership working and the community planning partnership itself. The PB Working group includes community planning partners from statutory, community and voluntary sectors.

During the reporting period the partnership has progressed two PB Processes with 340 applications to the Tak£500+ Project being received. The Partnership hosted six market stall and decision making events across the borough where projects were showcased by their groups, in the hope that members of the public would vote for them to receive funding to bring their ideas to life. Over 7709 residents attended these events and cast their votes for the projects they wanted to see receive up to £1000 – and 224 of these project ideas were successful in securing the funding. With projects including sporting initiatives for all ages, community gardens and intergenerational initiatives we know the positive impact of these plans will be seen right across the borough.

All ideas were based around the 'Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing' – five simple steps to help maintain and improve your wellbeing on a daily basis. All of the projects that received funding will therefore be invested in programmes which will help to promote good mental health and wellbeing in each area.

“Having all the requirements in advance made planning much easier. The space was full of positive energy where I was able to make great connections. The excitement of the staff was great waiting to see had we achieved our grant. Now staff and volunteers cant wait to see the children enjoying their new toys.” (Successful group)

“It was a vibrant and information packed event that really felt like it brought the community together to focus on projects they cared about.” “Groups got the opportunity to show and advertise their group.” (Unsuccessful group)

“I am part of the PB Working Group, this group is working well with space to learn from each other, and all the participants views/ideas are taken on board”
(PB Working Group member)

“Loved seeing how people care about what takes place in their community and how money is spent.” (Successful group)



PB Working Group members



Banbridge Decision Making Event July 2025



Craigavon Decision Making Event July 2025



Armagh Decision Making Event June 2025

04 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Increasing opportunities for everyone to have a meaningful say in decisions that affect their lives is at the heart of community planning. The partnership's Community Engagement Strategy has aspiration to work with Children and Young People to develop innovative models to engage them in partnership.



ABC Youth Voice

ABC Youth Voice is a collaborative project between Education Authority Youth Service and Armagh City, Banbridge, Craigavon Borough Council, that empowers young people to have a say in decisions that affect their lives within their local community. It provides a platform for young people to represent their peers and speak up on issues that matters most to them. Youth Voice is a platform for advocacy, leadership development, and meaningful engagement with local government.

Established in September 2024 by the Education Authority, ABC Youth Voice have been very active and have already achieved so much together making sure they are heard and listened to. There are currently 18 members, aged 15-21.

They have recently completed their sub-group social action projects, focusing on three key themes – mental health & substance abuse, disability awareness and ending violence against women and girls.



Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Kyle Savage, along with Councillor Clare McConville-Walker, Councillor Peter Haire, Councillor Kate Evans, Councillor Peter Lavery, Councillor Thomas O'Hanlon, and Councillor Keith Ratcliffe, welcomed representatives from ABC Youth Voice to the Council Chamber for Local Democracy Event October 2024.



Members of ABC Youth Voice at Northern Ireland Leadership and Governance Conference 2025 April 2025

KEY MILESTONES

Local Democracy Week 2024 provided an opportunity for the newly established ABC Youth Voice to interact with elected members through a Q&A session asking questions on real life issues.

NI Leadership and Governance Conference – members hosted a café conversation focussing on how young people should be central to decision making at all levels. Attending the conference was a huge milestone being the first Youth Voice to be invited. This presented a fantastic opportunity for Reece Green to speak on behalf of all Youth Voices in Northern Ireland.

Engaging with Political Leadership
ABC Youth Voice members took part in the initiatives residential programme in Belfast with a visit to Stormont where they hosted a series of impactful panel discussions. The panels tackled pressing topics including Mental Health and Substance Misuse, Disability Awareness, and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

The discussions brought together a wide range of voices, featuring political representatives, statutory sector agencies, non-governmental organisations, and independent advocates — creating a powerful platform for dialogue between young people and decision-makers.

Team Building and Training

Youth Voice members have engaged in several team building and training opportunities. In July 2025, Money Ready delivered a financial awareness session focusing on understanding payslips, tax, deductions, loans, credit scores and budgeting. Additionally, Lighthouse delivered mental health & suicide awareness training to help young people to confidently support others through difficulties.

MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS (direct quotes from Youth Voice members)

‘Tuesdays are always a highlight of my week.’

‘Standout moment in my life and always mention it in applications.’

‘So many opportunities right from the beginning.’

To meet and engage with the different representatives and hear their opinions and bring them into our social action was extremely helpful during our Stormont panel discussions.’



Young leaders from ABC Youth Voice at Stormont Parliament Buildings May 2025

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Currently, ABC Youth Voice are planning their whole group social action project, looking at the gaps in society and considering the legacy they will leave behind them for future cohorts of ABC Youth Voice. Individuals have created links within the UK, developing partnerships. We hope to share our learning and reflect with these partner organisations in the new year on an educational visit.



Young leaders from ABC Youth Voice at Stormont Parliament Buildings May 2025

‘Attending events and having our voice heard allows young people’s view and opinions to be taken into consideration to inform planning, policy and decision-making.’

‘The group has allowed me to feel a part of something.’

‘The group has helped me grow in confidence and feel more comfortable in myself.’

‘I have gained a lot from the group, especially through working and being present in the community.’

Café Conversation hosted by ABC Youth Voice at Northern Ireland
Leadership and Governance Conference 2025 April 2025



Participatory Budgeting

Tak£500+ process was designed to promote inclusion and participation. Any group of three people or more aged 8 and over were encouraged to put forward an idea through the application process and anyone aged 8 and over could cast a vote. During the reporting period there was two PB processes. The voting events were well attended and the voice of younger people was elevated with 20% of voters from the age 8-15 bracket.

“This was a rewarding feeling as our idea was giving back to the community with a fun day and bridging the gap between young people and adults in the community as volunteers were aged 15+”

“This give young people the chance to help in the community and be apart of something bigger than themselves learning skills and untimely joining family’s and people together for a fun day out”



Young people at the Tak£500+ Decision Making Event in Armagh, June 2025

Place Plans

During the place plan development phase the involvement of children and young people was very important.

BANBRIDGE PLACE PLAN

140 young people got involved

- Schools Engagement Pack
- Youth focussed workshops were held in the Education Authority Youth Resource Centre via the Education Youth programme
- A Wellness Event for Southern Regional College Students

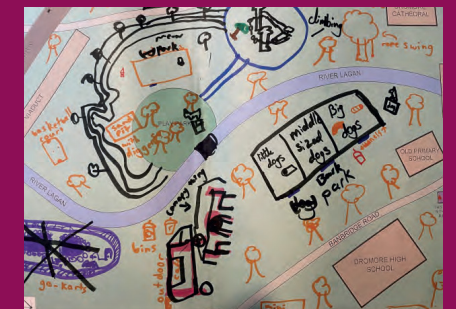
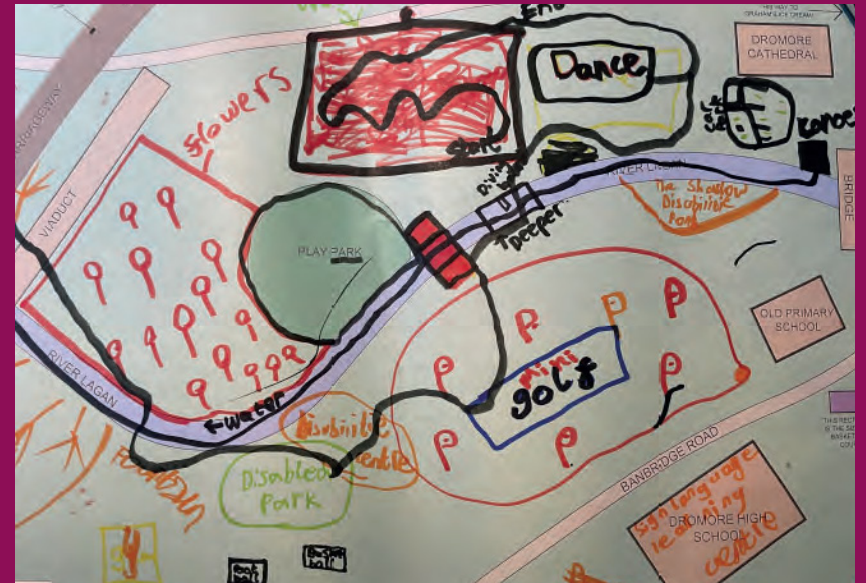
Young people have identified the need for structured and unstructured play as a priority as well as a space to meet with friends other ideas included, smart furniture where young people could meet and charge their devices.

DROMORE PLACE PLAN

74 Young People got involved

- Schools survey
- Park Design Workshop with Primary School children
- Dromore Junior Youth Club photography project
- Dromore High School place planning workshop

Young people shared that they enjoy spending time at Dromore Park but expressed interest in additional features such as a zip line and a rock climbing wall. They also recommended installing spectator stands at Ferris Park to better support local sports teams.



Park Design workshop, P6 class in Dromore Central Primary School

04

COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SECTOR PANEL



Community and Voluntary Sector organisations play a key role in improving the quality of life in the borough. The panel has a role in connecting Community, Voluntary and Social Enterprise (CVSE) organisations from across the borough, and ensuring the sector has a strong voice on the Partnership. A steering group of up to ten members has responsibility for planning and taking forward actions on behalf of the panel.

MEMBERSHIP OF COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR PANEL STEERING GROUP

- Geraldine Lawless, Millennium Court (CVSP Chair)
- Donna Stewart, C&B Volunteer Bureau (CVSP Vice Chair)
- Brendan McPartlin, Jesuits in Ireland
- Chris Leech, Craigavon Area Foodbank
- Joanne Curran, Armagh Rural Transport
- Laura Wylie, Links Counselling
- Martin O'Neill, Little Dragons Martial Arts Group
- Clann Eireann Youth Club Lurgan
- Martin Stevenson, Salvation Army
- Seamus McCabe, PIPS Hope and Support
- Terri Carvill, TADA Rural Support Network



Steering Group members

During the reporting period the Steering Group has focused on strengthening membership, shared leadership skills, and long-term sustainability, and identifying the future priorities for action, and representing the needs and aspirations of the community and wider sector across the borough.

KEY MILESTONES:

- extended its membership and enhanced diversity and representation on the Steering Group and the wider Panel
- strengthened its collective leadership capacity and skills through mentoring and buddying roles for new members undertaking co-chair and membership roles in the Partnership's sub-committees and other networks
- continued to embed succession planning into its work
- identified future priorities for action to help inform and shape the review of the outcomes, indicators and action plans for the Partnership's Connected plan
- represented the voice of the community and wider sector in the Partnership.

The Steering Group continues to work closely across the Partnership to achieve agreed strategic and delivery goals, and to identify future priorities for action. They have benefitted from shared leadership and mentoring support to ensure that they are empowered to represent and drive forward the sectoral experiences and needs across the Partnership, and through co-chair roles in the sub-committees.

MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

“As chair of CVSP, I have had the opportunity to represent the Community and Voluntary Sector at many tables. This has enabled the voice, needs and lived experiences of the community to be heard across a wide range of interests including health, economy, poverty, the environment.

We have had an input in the Partnership decision-making that impacts on the local community and the wider sector.

“We are at last being listened to and have been able to show value for money in the work and contribution we make, and to help stop duplication in services.”

“It is important to the community and voluntary sectors to have spaces where we can meet, share information and experiences, identify key areas that matter to local people and communities, and where we can best use our collective efforts to make life better in the borough”.



To keep up to date with the CVS Panels activities follow:
Community and Voluntary Sector Panel -
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
🌐 armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

05

PARTNERSHIP HEALTH CHECK 2023-2025

HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS

51  meetings

145 people from 47 organisations

“I feel that the support provided ensures meetings are planned, productive, participatory and outcome focussed is extremely useful.”

5 Community Planning Strategic Partnership (CPSP)

6 Chairs’ Group

14 PB Working Group

16 Community Planning Strategic Partnership Sub-Committees

2 Community & Voluntary Sector Panel

8 Community & Voluntary Sector Panel Steering Group

Community Planning Partnership Meetings		
Baseline 2017-2019	Where we were in 2019-2021	Where we were in 2021-2023
61 meetings	41 meetings	41 meetings

HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

84  shared leadership support sessions

20  partners from 15 organisations

3  learning events

94  from 48 organisations

“Partners are actively involved and know their purpose and the contribution they can make. Partners are also well supported to take on leadership roles which impacts positively on buy-in and accountability.”

CONNECTED REVIEW

DEVELOPMENT PHASE



63
partners from
31 organisations



18
meetings and
workshops

PUBLIC CONSULTATION



151
people from 43 organisations
fed into consultation



25
consultation
events



69
responses to
online survey

HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?

PARTNER PARTICIPATION

ATTENDANCE



58%

Statutory Partner CPSP
meeting attendance rate

Baseline:
(2017-2019) **69%**

LEADERSHIP ROLES



13

Chair & Vice-Chair Roles

13 held by 5 Statutory Partners

6 held by Community &
Voluntary Sector Partners

LEADING ACTIONS

21

Actions in the
Covid-19 Response
& Recovery Plan

27¹⁶

Action Leads from 4
Statutory Organisations
and 4 Community
& Voluntary Sector
Organisations

14

Actions led or
jointly led by
ABC Council

DELIVERY



90%
of actions
are on track

“Our focus is on provision of front line support to those in need, which can put a squeeze on the time available for strategic committee work”.

16 Some actions have joint Action Leads

PARTNER SATISFACTION^{1 2}

COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP



78% agree meetings are well run

Baseline 2017-2019

100% CPSP

85% Wider Partnership

81% agree papers for the meeting are clear and include relevant information



69% agree the partnership has a **shared purpose** that is understood by all members

63% agree they have **clear roles & responsibilities**



63% agree there are **clear lines of accountability**

66% agree **communication** across the partnership is effective



Baseline 2017-2019

75% CPSP

63% Wider Partnership

“Representation from across the statutory voluntary and community sector at the different panels and sub committees has been consistent which enables strong connections to be built. The meetings are well run and agendas are clear. I find that a lot gets covered within the time available and is well worth the cost.”

“Raise profile of community-based organisations and provide a platform for them to meet other groups”.

“I feel that the relationship development work has been extremely strong and that as a partnership these relationships have other unintended outcomes for our statutory sector delivery which supports additional outcomes in the area e.g. development of the Growth Deal.”

¹ 32 partners responded to an online survey administered between 20 September 2025 - 09 October 2025

² These figures show a decline from the previous reporting period with more partners indicating 'don't know' in their response

IS ANYONE BETTER OFF? IMPACT OF THE PARTNERSHIP

BENEFITS



91%

agree that the benefits of the partnership outweigh the costs

Baseline 2017-2019

100% CPSP

85% Wider Partnership

BIGGEST BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP MEMBERSHIP TO DATE



28%

shared learning & networking



27%

making a positive impact on the borough

23%

collective thinking and problem solving



22%

raising awareness of issues/organisations



72%

agree the partnership is a **learning environment**

82%

have developed or **deepened relationships**



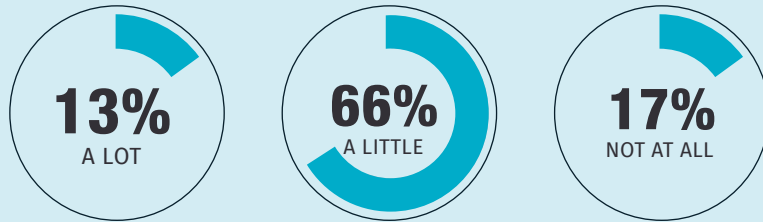
47%

have developed or **deepened relationships** with those working in a different sectors



INFLUENCING RESOURCE ALLOCATION

79% of Partners whose **resource allocation** has been influenced by the partnership and its action plans



Baseline: (2017-2019) **21%**

“Membership requires commitment (time & resource) but the added value of the wide network and enhanced relationships with other sectors and partner bodies is not available through other structures.”

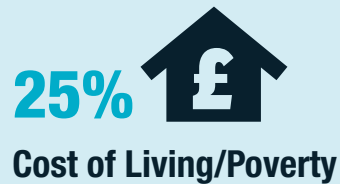
“Able to work in partnership to achieve goals.”

“The opportunity to build relationships and to actively contribute to shared outcomes for our customers and citizens of the borough outweighs any individual cost to partners or pressure on resources.”

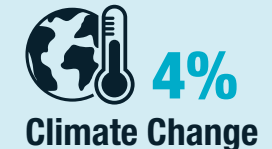
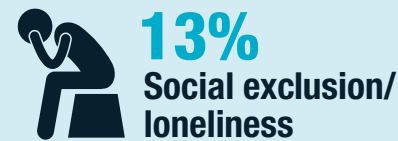
PARTNER CONSULTATION

ISSUES FOR THE BOROUGH

Poverty and mental health remain the issues identified by the biggest number of partners surveyed:



Other issues identified include:



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

“Tackling isolation and loneliness, particularly among older people, carers, and vulnerable groups, by supporting volunteer-led initiatives.”

“Opportunities for young people, including safe spaces, youth programmes, and intergenerational projects that strengthen community ties.”

“The partnership already priorities mental health and poverty and that needs to remain a priority going forward. I would also like to see a continued focus on regeneration through place plans to make town centres more welcoming and safer and to increase employment through new businesses.”

“Shared budgets - addressing common challenges collectively”

Meet the Community Planning Team in ABC Council's Community Planning, Policy and Research Department

The Community Planning, Policy & Research Department sits within the Deputy Chief Executives Department within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council.

The core responsibilities of the Department are detailed below:

- Registration of Deaths Births & Marriages
- Community Planning
- Place Shaping & Corporate Planning

The department facilitates the Community Planning Partnership and lead on seven actions in the Covid-19 Response and Recovery Plan including Tak£500+ Your Community, Your Voice Your Choice Participatory Budgeting programme and the development of Place Plans.

While the work of the partnership is supported by officers across the department the key officers for contact are:

Elaine Gillespie

Head of Department

Jennie Dunlop

Community & Strategic Planning Manager

Emma O'Carroll

Community Planning & Evidence Officer

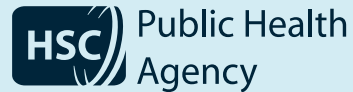
Michelle Markey

Community Planning & Engagement Officer

General queries can be made to

✉ communityplanning@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

Community Planning Partners



INTERESTED IN COMMUNITY PLANNING

in the Armagh City,
Banbridge and
Craigavon Borough
Council area?

Please contact the Community Planning, Policy &
Research Department at Armagh City, Banbridge
and Craigavon Borough Council

- ☎ 0300 0300 900
- ✉ communityplanning@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk
- 🌐 armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/communityplanning
- 📱 Find us on Facebook and Twitter

