

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



**Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties  
Annual Progress Report 2022-2023**

**Contact:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme</li></ul>	Name: Mary Hanna Telephone: 0300 0300 900 Email: <a href="mailto:mary.hanna@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk">mary.hanna@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan</li></ul>	As above x Name: Telephone: Email:

Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

[Equality - Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council \(armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk\)](http://armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk)

**Signature**

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mary Hanna'.

**This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.  
It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties, and  
implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.**

**This report reflects progress made between April 2022 and March 2023**

## **PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme**

### **Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice**

- 1 In 2022-23, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

*Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.*

#### Corporate and Business Plans

The Performance Improvement Plan 2021-2023 was implemented. The first objective for this period included:

1. We will improve the availability of more inclusive services for those with Autism and their carers.

This objective first measure reflects the Council's commitment to its equality duties.

During the reporting period the Autism Action Plan 22-23 was updated and the Autism Working Group continued to meet in order to implement the plan. Examples of measures include staff training, maintenance of Pre-visit Guides, maintenance of the inclusive section of the website, delivering a range of inclusive summer schemes and other programmes in partnership and obtaining customer feedback.

In April staff were advised via the staff newsletter how to access the Autism Awareness e-learning module.

The dedicated online inclusive section on our website hosts a range of pre-visit guides, which have been designed for tourism, leisure and community facilities to support visitors to prepare for their visit. This section also provides a wide range of facility and service information including changing places, accessibility information from working in partnership with AccessAble and a range of other services and inclusive activities. Customers who request information on accessible services are frequently advised to consider this section of the website. The inclusive section will continue to be updated and during the reporting period it was agreed that all social media communications relating to accessible activities and events would be directed to the inclusive page as this would be beneficial to our customers.

2 Focus groups were held at South Lake Leisure Centre on 2 March for those with Autism/other neurodiverse conditions and their carers. 12 young people and 13 carers attended. These sessions were jointly facilitated by Council Officers and representatives from IncredAble. Participants provided a range of feedback on Council services and all suggestions will be considered by relevant Council departments.

A range of summer schemes and other sports programmes were delivered in partnership. Some examples include the Inclusive Sport & Leisure Programme which works with children & adults with disabilities e.g. Wheelie Active Club, South Lake Disability Sports Club, Inclusive Gym and Inclusive Cycling Programmes. The Get Out Get Active Programme is open to everyone and inclusive of people with a disability or lifelong health condition. Council's summer schemes are offered to children with a

range of disabilities including Autism – All Stars is for children (referred through Southern Health and Social Care Trust) who require a high level of support. Advertised through our summer brochure the Disability Sport NI Scheme is an inclusive scheme suitable for children who can attend independently. Our Autism in Sport Programme is delivered three times a year in Dromore or Richhill Community Centre.

The departmental business plans which are renewed annually include where appropriate measures which specifically promote equality and good relations. These are linked to the objectives included in the annual Performance Improvement Plan and Corporate Plan.

The Customer Care Action Plan 2022/23 was agreed during the reporting period and a number of equality measures were incorporated into this plan. These included the delivery of equality and disability training and achieving an Autism Friendly Borough.

#### Policy development and policy screening

During the reporting period the Armagh Place Plan was launched. The plan details the aspirations for the city that will be taken forward as a shared agenda for Armagh through collaborative partnership working. The out workings of the plan align to local strategies and seek to deliver upon key aims within the regional Community Plan. These carefully considered outcomes provide a guiding framework for organisations and individuals in Armagh to improve the spaces and places in the city. The four key themes for development focus on making Armagh; a connected city, a greener city, an engaged city and a healthy city.

During the previous reporting period over 400 people including 172 children and young people fed into the development of the draft plan through public online workshops, an online survey, a schools creative challenge, live engagement days in Armagh, youth focussed workshops and stakeholder meetings. The plan was issued for formal consultation in November 2021. All relevant information including the equality screening exercise was made available on the Council's Consultation Hub.

In May the Council called on residents to share their views on a new Age Friendly Strategy and three year Action Plan for the area. Led by the Age Friendly Alliance – comprising of representatives from council, key stakeholders and older people – the strategy and action plan will work to ensure all residents in the borough can live in security, enjoy good health, continue to participate fully in society and feel valued and respected – regardless of age. Residents were asked to have their say on key outcomes within the new strategy and action plan by completing a short online or paper-based survey, or by taking part in a local focus group. It was developed following extensive consultation with people aged 50 and over living in the borough

The draft equality screening exercise was included on the Consultation Hub alongside the Strategy and Action Plan and they were issued to the Council's full list of section 75 consultees

The plan was launched at an International Day for Older Persons celebration event on 3 October which saw 100 local older people along with public, community and voluntary sector partners come together to celebrate and champion older people.

In November the Council organised Business Consultation Workshops in Banbridge, Craigavon and Armagh as part of the development of a Labour Market Partnership Action Plan for 2023-2024 and called on local businesses to engage and provide their

input. Potential initiatives would support key groups such as young people, adults returning to the workforce and those with disabilities to gain employment.

In February 21 the Labour Market Partnership was established through funding from the Department of the Communities in the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council area.

The ABC Labour Market Partnership undertook a strategic assessment of employability outcomes and local labour market conditions within the region to inform a locally focussed action plan. The 22-23 action plan identified four thematic areas: Unemployed young people, recently unemployed, economically inactive and furthest from the labour market.

The Council drafted a Changing Places Policy and issued it for consultation in December. The policy includes the following:

- Priority locations for Changing Places Toilets (CPTs), including outdoor sites, to ensure reasonable coverage
- The provision of a portable CPT at Council led large events
- Provision of CPTs with local businesses and communities
- Changing Places Toilets meet the needs of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities such as spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis.

The Council consulted with key stakeholders and the public to engage opinion on the Changing Places Policy to ensure it meets the needs of those who require additional equipment and/or space to use a toilet or change in a dignified and hygienic manner.

The draft equality screening exercise was included on the Consultation Hub alongside the policy and they were issued to the Council's full list of section 75 consultees. Information about the consultation was also posted on the Council's Facebook page.

Work has begun on the development of the Banbridge Place Plan. Council is leading on this plan on behalf of the ABC Community Planning Partnership. This is an exciting initiative that will look at how Banbridge could be improved for its people. Every effort is being made to create a shared vision for the town's future growth and development that is as broad as possible and informed by strong community engagement.

The Community Planning Partnership engaged with 113 children and young people in the development of the draft Banbridge Place Plan. This included a workshop with a youth club, a schools engagement worksheet plus attending a wellbeing event for students in the Southern Regional College, Banbridge Campus. Actions such as exploring options to increase structured and unstructured play, and implementation of smart street furniture within the town are associated with needs identified.

The Keep Well Keep Safe event provided the opportunity to engage and seek the opinions of Older Persons. Issues mentioned are reflected in the plan: The town's green spaces are key assets to be built upon and there are actions within the plan to build connections and make it more accessible for people to get about and enjoy.

The Council's section 75 consultees were invited to attend an online meeting and an Age Friendly group meeting were held just beyond the reporting period. Consultation will continue throughout the process of developing the Banbridge Place Plan, which is not yet complete, and will include further engagement with section 75 groups.

The Council's draft Performance Improvement Plan 2023-2024 went out for public consultation just before the end of March. It was made available on the consultation hub and an equality screening exercise accompanied the plan. The Council's full list of section 75 consultees were advised of its availability.

Policy screening reports were issued in April, October and January.

New guidance for developing a Strategy & Action Plan was finalised and made available on the Council's Intranet. The guide outlines the methodology used to develop a Strategy & Action Plan, a strategy framework which provides guidance on the content required and a flow diagram which summarises the methodology for developing a Strategy & Action Plan which includes information on when to conduct equality screening.

The Equality Screening Guidance Notes and summary Equality Scheme were reviewed and updated with contact details added for both members of staff in the equality unit. This information was made available on the policy section of the Intranet.

During the reporting period details of all Council policies were transferred to a Smartsheet with all relevant dates added to include approval date, equality screening and automated review dates. This has created a more efficient procedure for policy review and it has a traffic light system in place for all ABC Council approved policies. The Heads of Department were advised of the new process and have viewer access. Regular reports will be presented to the Heads of Department to ensure all policies remain up to date with screening exercises conducted in a timely manner.

#### Equality Initiatives and Events

The Council supported Mental Health Awareness Week in May. During that week three new wellbeing initiatives were launched. These included the ABC Choir, a knitting class and drawing class to take place over lunchtime in a range of locations. Staff were also reminded of who our Mental Health First Aiders are. They were also encouraged to visit the new dedicated Health and Wellbeing hub on the intranet to explore the range of services, resources, initiatives, activities, policies, procedures on offer that help support health and wellness in the workplace.

Health and Wellbeing News and Updates were also issued regularly throughout the reporting period

In recognition of Men's Health Week in June a cancer awareness session was provided for male colleagues by Action Cancer. Residents were also advised that Men's Health Week offers an ideal time to focus our attention upon the needs of males and to make a positive and meaningful difference to their lives.

On 30 June Portadown Peoples Park was the perfect location for a stimulating sensory walk. The event was enjoyed by a total of 165 participants.

Delivered by Live Active NI's Active Recreation Officer, the Council's Sports Development Unit and a team of valuable volunteers, the family friendly event encouraged participants of all ages and abilities to complete a mile long course filled with an array of multi-sensory experiences including sound, touch and colour.

The sensory experiences, which included a ribbon walkway, parachute games, bubbles, plus smell and taste stations, were specially designed to help engage

participants, especially those with learning disabilities, people with autism and those with dementia.

During the summer months there were a number of schemes organised by the Community Development Department for young people. These included the Good Relations Youth Summer Programme, STEM Scheme and a Good Relations Summer Scheme. The Health and Recreation Department organised a range of programmes. Examples include Water Sports Activity Days, Family Snow Tubing and Multi Sports Camps.

The All Inclusive Summer Scheme provides inclusive sports and physical activity opportunities for children with a disability, along with siblings and friends. This scheme was held in Richhill in July and Dromore in August.

The All Stars Summer Scheme 2022 which is organised and delivered by the Council's Sports Development team and supported by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust brings together young people with disabilities aged between 7 and 17 to enjoy a range of inclusive physical and sporting activities in a series of weeklong sessions throughout July and August.

Based at Gilford Recreation Centre, the scheme saw 41 participants enjoy and experience everything from outdoor play, nature walks, football, inclusive bike and wheelie boat sessions to dance classes, boccia, curling, clay modelling, arts and crafts as well as an away day to South Lake Leisure Centre.

The National Play Day initiative ran from 1-5 August 2022. The theme was 'Building Play Opportunities For All Children'. The Council provided a number of free activities for children across the Borough which included Teddy Bear Picnics and Family Fun Days.

As part of Hate Crime Awareness Week in October the Community Development & Good Relations Team in partnership with the Policing & Community Safety Partnership organised two Romani Awareness Workshops. These workshops provided information on the Romani culture, history and traditions and was aimed at statutory and voluntary organisations working with Roma Communities in the Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough.

The Inclusive Physical Activity Programme 'Get Out, Get Active (GOGA) In Action' was named overall winner for Best Health and Wellbeing Initiative at the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) Awards in October.

Run in partnership with Disability Sport NI and involving a range of partners and local volunteers, our GOGA Programme targets the hardest to reach, least active disabled and non-disabled people in the borough to encourage participation in inclusive fun activities together, such as Tai Chi for Health, Buggy Fit, Nordic Walking, GOGA Fit.

The APSE Awards are specific to frontline services provided by UK local authorities and aim to promote and celebrate outstanding achievement and innovation within this sector.

The Enterprise Pathway Programme which provides grant and mentoring support for Young Entrepreneurs was developed by the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Labour Market Partnership in collaboration with the Council. The Programme is open to ABC borough residents aged between 16 and 24 years old and is designed to promote the creation of new businesses by providing eligible individuals with tailored start-up

advice, mentoring and financial support. The programme was launched in November and Lord Mayor, Councillor Paul Greenfield commented:

“Equipping local borough residents – particularly our young people –with the funds, tools and support needed to start their own business is fundamentally important to the long-term recovery and growth of the ABC economy. The Enterprise Pathway Programme is a fantastic opportunity for young eligible entrepreneurs to access vital grant funding to help support key business start-up activities but also, and equally important, it offers the chance to benefit from invaluable mentoring around financial planning, marketing, and promotion as well as guidance on how to support the future development of a new business”

The AccessAble contract was reviewed for another year. The Council has agreed to fund the review of the detailed Access Guides on [www.AccessAble.co.uk](http://www.AccessAble.co.uk) relating to Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon. Working with over 150 partners AccessAble produce Access Guides to places people want or need to visit, publishing them on [www.AccessAble.co.uk](http://www.AccessAble.co.uk) and the AccessAble App. The Access Guides are for anyone with accessibility requirements. The annual review of surveyed venues was carried out in 2022 and the review report was produced in January 2023. A number of survey updates were detailed in the report. A meeting was held with our representative from AccessAble to consider how further improvements could be made and residents and visitors to the borough are made aware of the access guides.

In February the Market Place Theatre in Armagh had an Evening of Multicultural Celebration which was a free event. The event featured world-class performers who showcased Ulster-Scots, Irish, Chinese and South Asian cultures featuring traditional music, song and dance.

In March the Council organised two events for International Women’s Day. The theme for 2023 was ‘Embrace Equity’ 30 members of staff attended an event in Craigavon Civic Centre. Providing a platform to learn from and inspire one another the event saw Charlene Stoops, Deputy Chief Executive and Tracey Toner from the Lush Larder share insights into their personal and professional journeys, highlighting the importance of strong female role models in their lives and the need to step outside their comfort zones.

Meanwhile Gary Scott, Safeguarding Coordinator provided a thought-provoking address and discussion around the topic of sexual harassment emphasising that everyone has a responsibility to call it out to create a culture where it is not acceptable.

The second event was organised for post primary schools and was also held in Craigavon Civic Centre. 80 secondary school students attended. The event brought together an inspiring line up of speakers to shine a spotlight on women, their achievements, and the need for us all to play our part in driving a gender equal world.

Compered by award-winning presenter and produced, Lynette Fay, the event’s guest speakers included Dr Megan Smyth from Almac Pharmaceuticals, Sharon McNicholl, Strategic Director at ABC Council, Monica McGeary from Source Business Leads and Caroline O’Neill from Digg for Success.

While providing insights and first-hand experiences into a diverse range of roles, sectors and perspectives, the guest speakers collectively highlighted the many opportunities open to us all and the importance of supporting one another- to believe in ourselves so that we have the courage to embrace all opportunities.

During the week of International Women's Day the Council and the Southern Health and Social Care Trust teamed up for the second year in a row to host a 'This Girl Can' Inspiration Day at Dromore Community Centre following the success of last year's pilot organised in May 22. The event was designed to inspire students to create targeted campaigns that encourage and support their peers to become active irrespective of age, ability and shape. Thanks to funding provided by the Public Health Agency 25 students aged 13 to 16 were able to take part in team building exercises, physical activity sessions and interactive workshops.

They also had the opportunity to listen to local athlete, coach and business owner, Jemma Farrell- co-founder of Arise Fitness, who inspired them by sharing her experiences in sport and physical activity to date. Launched in 2015, the UK-wide 'This Girl Can' campaign aims to inspire more women and girls to be active and at the same time break down the barriers that prevent them from participating in sport and physical activity.

### Equality Training

During the reporting period 10 sessions of Equality and Diversity Training were delivered to staff. 5 of these sessions were delivered online and 5 were delivered face to face at Induction. This training covers the section 75 duties and the Disability Action Plan, anti-discrimination legislation with further emphasis on the Disability Discrimination Act and communicating with people with a range of disabilities. A total of 93 staff attended. Evaluation of the training revealed that staff found it useful for understanding the needs of a wide range of customers. There was a suggestion to use more visual aids and the slides were subsequently updated. An online workshop was organised for the Council's elected members and it also covered information on the section 75 duties. 8 elected members attended the workshop.

Code of Conduct and Equality Training was delivered to front line staff in October and December and a total of 233 staff attended.

3 sessions of Policy Screening, Equality and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Training were delivered online via Microsoft Teams to staff members responsible for policy development. This training covers an outline of the equality and good relations duties, when and how to screen and when to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment. A total of 31 staff attended. Evaluation of this training showed that staff liked the use of case studies and their relevance to the work of the Council.

154 staff completed the Equality and Diversity in the workplace e-learning module. It includes equality section 75 duties, disability duties, equality in the workplace, respectful language and DDA and reasonable adjustments.

Other training was delivered to ensure Council staff have a better understanding of the needs of our residents, customers and employees and to further promote equality of opportunity.

6 staff members attended face to face Autism Awareness Training and 102 staff completed the Autism Awareness e-learning module.

11 staff attended an Introduction to Sighted Guiding and a further 12 staff attended a session on How to Guide People with Sight Loss and make your Workplace and Community more inclusive.



15 staff attended Dementia Awareness Training.

6 staff attended a Carers Information Session.

As part of the Council's commitment to health and wellbeing the following training sessions were offered: Menopause Awareness Training for Managers in which 30 staff attended, mental health first aid in which 22 members attended.

The Council's Community Development Department delivered 4 level 1 Makaton Training courses for individuals and groups within the ABC Borough. The training sessions were aimed at parents, family members, carers and workers who need to use Makaton at home and in their work as well as participants who need a more detailed knowledge about using and applying Makaton to develop the communication skills of others. A total of 51 people completed the Level 1 course.

### Translation and Interpretation and Access to Information and Services

In December 2021 it was agreed that access audits would be conducted on six Council owned Community Centres and Town Halls and these were completed during the reporting period. The recommendations were categorised with high priority actions to be completed at the earliest opportunity. Improvement works were carried out at Portadown Town Hall, Lurgan Town Hall and Ashgrove Community Centre.

In October Disability Sport NI officially recognised the Council for championing the needs of people with disabilities and fully embracing the inclusivity agenda in the design, construction and management of South Lake Leisure Centre.

Opened in November 2020 the leisure centre has become one of the only sports facilities in NI to achieve the highest level of accreditation possible in the Inclusive Sports Facility (ISF) scheme. First introduced in 2010, this scheme recognises excellence in the design of sports facilities which are inclusive of people with disabilities.

Delighted to be presented with a certificate of ISF accreditation for this landmark facility from Disability Sport NI, Lord Mayor Councillor Paul Greenfield said:

"South Lake Leisure Centre represents a major investment in the health and wellbeing of all people in this borough.

In delivering our largest capital project, there was a collective will by all stakeholders to ensure it meets the highest accessibility standards and is inclusive and welcoming to all.

This accreditation is a ringing endorsement that we have raised the bar in creating a centre of excellence where people with disabilities can increase their participation in sport and physical activity.

Thanks to the highly skilled team whose hard work and dedication helped create this jewel in the crown of inclusive leisure facilities. With its excellent facilities and unrivalled activity programme, it is already having a positive impact on addressing health inequalities in this borough.

Going forward, we are committed to working closely with statutory partners and local groups to provide quality opportunities for people with disabilities, who are often under-represented in sport, to lead active and healthy lives.

It is guaranteed to be a game changer in realising our vision of making this borough the most physically active in Northern Ireland by 2030, as outlined in our Get Moving ABC Framework.”

Acknowledging the scope of the work involved in ensuring inclusivity was a design driver of this large scale project from start to finish, Disability Sport NI Chief Executive Officer, Kevin O’Neill added:

“Disability Sport NI is delighted to award South Lake Leisure Centre the Excellence Level of our Inclusive Sports Facility Accreditation scheme. We would like to congratulate Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, McAdam Design, Farrans Construction and our Access Consultant for working together to create one of the most inclusive sports facilities not only here in Northern Ireland but throughout the UK and Ireland.

Statistics show that people with disabilities in Northern Ireland are still almost half as likely to regularly participate in sport and recreation as non-disabled people. Therefore, we would like to thank the Council and everyone involved in the project for pro-actively tackling the under-representation of disabled people in sport and recreation and designing a sports facility that meets the optimum levels of good practice for access and sporting needs of disabled people.”

Disability Sport NI also presented a special award to McAdam Design in recognition of their work supporting South Lake Leisure Centre to achieve ISF Accreditation.

The Orchard Leisure Centre introduced quiet hour swim sessions and Gulliver’s Soft Play Autism Friendly sessions. Banbridge Leisure Centre ran a 4 week trial of quiet hour swim sessions.

During the reporting period the Council availed of funding for a Mobile Accessible Toilet. It is an excellent facility for wheelchair users and anyone with mobility impairments. It was made available for the first time at the Georgian Festival. This facility will be used at key events throughout the year.

In November the Council became the first local authority in Northern Ireland to launch a multi-lingual information hub for the area’s migrant newcomer communities.

Developed in collaboration with the Law Centre NI, the online information hub is designed to help migrant newcomers understand what their immigration status means and how it impacts their eligibility to access public funds and other services.

The comprehensive online resource – that features 12 different languages across more than 30 videos – provides tailored guidance and advice to people with settled, pre-settled, visa holder and refugee immigration statuses. Based on these statuses, the videos talk through individual rights and entitlements around employment, health care, social security, housing, and education as well as signpost to key support organisations

The Relaxed Christmas Experience events were held at Bleary Business and Community Centre. These events which are specially designed for children with sensory processing issues, autism or special educational needs and their families took place over two weekends, Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> to Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December and Friday 9<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December, with all events booked out. The experiences offered the opportunity for

the children to enjoy the magic of meeting Santa, Mrs Claus, and the Elves, along with other festive activities in a calm and supportive environment.

Visitors to the experience were guided on their journey by the North Star Elf to meet with Father Christmas who presented each with a special gift before being invited to enter a sensory room and enjoy a range of festive activities including arts and crafts, multi-sensory installations, making their own reindeer dust and posting their letter to Santa in the special North Star mailbox.

Over 140 very special children and their families attended the events throughout the two weekends.

South Lake Leisure Centre also provided quiet/relaxed Santa sessions on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of December. The Orchard Leisure Centre provided Christmas Autism soft play sessions on 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of December.

Lord Mayor Councillor Paul Greenfield launched a New Resident Guide to help people choosing to live and work in the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough settle in and be better informed about how to access key services.

Produced in multiple languages, this comprehensive resource covers a range of topics including Council services; housing; employment and social security; education; health and social care services; public libraries; legal advice and advice services; road safety and driving; emergency services; support for businesses and employees; and community/voluntary support organisations.

Available in English, Bulgarian, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Polish, Romanian, Tetum and Ukrainian, the guide can also be downloaded.

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In March the Council installed two brand new modular Changing Places toilet facilities at Gosford Forest Park and Lurgan Park to improve accessibility.

The new Changing Places toilets are situated in Lurgan Park and at Gosford Forest Park enabling easy access for families and those needing support from a carer.

In addition to the two new Changing Places toilets, other projects were successfully delivered including a new wheelchair swing at Scarva Park, powered doors at the Market Place Theatre and the new mobile accessible toilet which is now available for largescale events.

Through the Access and Inclusion Capital Grant Programme, five projects have been completed with over £122k investment funded by the Department of Communities. The programme is aimed at promoting a more inclusive society by enabling disabled people to participate more fully in arts, cultural and active recreation activities.

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2022-23 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

**1. Inclusion of equality and good relations measures into the Council's Performance and Improvement Plan, Departmental/operational plans and service plans.**

The Performance Improvement Plan 2021-2023 was implemented. The first objective for this period included:

We will improve the availability of more inclusive services for those with Autism and their carers.

This objective reflects the Council's commitment to its equality duties.

During the reporting period the Autism Action Plan 22-23 was updated and the Autism Working Group continued to meet in order to implement the plan. Examples of measures include staff training, maintenance of Pre-visit Guides, maintenance of the inclusive section of the website, delivering a range of inclusive summer schemes and other programmes in partnership and obtaining customer feedback.

In April staff were advised via the staff newsletter how to access the Autism Awareness e-learning module.

The dedicated online inclusive section on our website hosts a range of pre-visit guides, which have been designed for tourism, leisure and community facilities to support visitors to prepare for their visit. This section also provides a wide range of facility and service information including changing places, accessibility information from working in partnership with AccessAble and a range of other services and inclusive activities. Customers who request information on accessible services are frequently advised to consider this section of the website. The inclusive section will continue to be updated and during the reporting period it was agreed that all social media communications relating to accessible activities and events would be directed to the inclusive page as this would be beneficial to our customers.

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A range of summer schemes and other sports programmes were delivered in partnership. Some examples include the Inclusive Sport & Leisure Programme which works with children & adults with disabilities e.g. Wheelie Active Club, South Lake Disability Sports Club, Inclusive Gym and Inclusive Cycling Programmes. The Get Out Get Active Programme is open to everyone and inclusive of people with a disability or lifelong health condition. Council's summer schemes are offered to children with a range of disabilities including Autism – All Stars is for children (referred through Southern Health and Social Care Trust) who require a high level of support. Advertised through our summer brochure the Disability Sport NI Scheme is an inclusive scheme suitable for children who can attend independently. Our Autism in Sport Programme is delivered three times a year in Dromore or Richhill Community Centre.

The departmental business plans which are renewed annually include where appropriate measures which specifically promote equality and good relations. These

are linked to the objectives included in the annual Performance Improvement Plan and Corporate Plan.

## **2. All Council strategies, plans, projects and services to be screened for equality of opportunity and good relations in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Equality Scheme**

New guidance for developing a Strategy & Action Plan was finalised and made available on the Council's Intranet. The guide outlines the methodology used to develop a Strategy & Action Plan, a strategy framework which provides guidance on the content required and a flow diagram which summarises the methodology for developing a Strategy & Action Plan which includes information on when to conduct equality screening.

The Equality Screening Guidance Notes and summary Equality Scheme were also reviewed and updated with contact details added for both members of staff in the equality unit. This information was made available on the policy section of the Intranet.

During the reporting period details of all Council policies were transferred to a Smartsheet with all relevant dates added to include approval date, equality screening and automated review dates. This has created a more efficient procedure for policy review and it has a traffic light system in place for all ABC Council approved policies. The Heads of Department were advised of the new process and have viewer access. Regular reports will be presented to the Heads of Department to ensure all policies remain up to date with screening exercises conducted in a timely manner.

All policies are required to have a completed screening form attached before they are considered by the relevant Council Committee. The Committee reporting template also includes a section – Equality or Good Relations implications. This ensures that any equality or good relations implications are brought to the elected members' attention. Equality Impact Assessments are conducted where it is considered proportionate to do so in order to further examine the policy for equality impacts, mitigation and/or opportunities to promote equality of opportunity. Staff members are regularly reminded to adhere to these guidelines. During the reporting period 24 policies were screened as part of the policy development process. Policy screening reports were issued in April, October and January.

## **3. Delivery of Equality and Disability Training to elected members, line managers and employees. A minimum of 2 sessions to be delivered each year.**

### **Delivery of Policy Screening and EQIA training to Heads of Department and Managers. A minimum of 2 sessions to be delivered each year.**

During the reporting period 10 sessions of Equality and Diversity Training were delivered to staff. 5 of these sessions were delivered online and 5 were delivered face to face at Induction. This training covers the section 75 duties and the Disability Action Plan, anti-discrimination legislation with further emphasis on the Disability Discrimination Act and communicating with people with a range of disabilities. A total of 93 staff attended. Evaluation of the training revealed that staff found it useful for understanding the needs of a wide range of customers. There was a suggestion to use more visual aids and the slides were subsequently updated. An online workshop was

organised for the Council's elected members and it also covered information on the section 75 duties. 8 elected members attended the workshop.

Code of Conduct and Equality Training was delivered to front line staff in October and December and a total of 233 staff attended.

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#### **4. Introduce an equality e-learning module.**

The Equality and Diversity in the workplace e-learning module was launched in the previous reporting period. 154 staff completed the Equality and Diversity in the workplace e-learning module. It includes equality section 75 duties, disability duties, equality in the workplace, respectful language and DDA and reasonable adjustments.

#### **5. The Council workforce will be monitored for section 75 breakdown.**

This measure was not achieved. Further work will be undertaken in the next reporting period to consider how best to progress section 75 monitoring of Council services. This will be included in the 23/24 business plan. The Equality Unit will also participate in regional working groups co-ordinated by the Local Government Staff Commission in order to progress this matter.

#### **6. Identify any gaps in section 75 involvement and those facing barriers to inclusion and deliver targeted projects with communities to ensure everyone can shape the community plan and its actions.**

#### **7. Work with children and young people to develop innovative models to engage them in the partnership.**

Council led on the community planning partnership's Take500+ Participatory Budgeting Project to promote public involvement in decision making, improve individual wellbeing and create community connections. Any group of 3 people aged 8 years and over could put forward an idea to bring to life the Take 5 public health message. 3770 people attended the three decision events and voted to allocate £76,412 to 81 community driven health and wellbeing projects. The largest age group of voters was those aged 8-15 years. For more information see:

<https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/take500plus/>

### **8. Organise a Local Democracy Event**

Due to the prolonged industrial action an event was not organised during the reporting period.

### **9. Organise an International Women's Day Event for post primary schools and organise an International Women's Day Event for staff.**

In March the Council organised two events for International Women's Day. The theme for 2023 was 'Embrace Equity' 30 members of staff attended an event in Craigavon Civic Centre. Providing a platform to learn from and inspire one another the event saw Charlene Stoops, Deputy Chief Executive and Tracey Toner from the Lush Larder share insights into their personal and professional journeys, highlighting the importance of strong female role models in their lives and the need to step outside their comfort zones.

Meanwhile Gary Scott, Safeguarding Coordinator provided a thought-provoking address and discussion around the topic of sexual harassment emphasising that everyone has a responsibility to call it out to create a culture where it is not acceptable.

The second event was organised for post primary schools and was also held in Craigavon Civic Centre. 80 secondary school students attended. The event brought together an inspiring line up of speakers to shine a spotlight on women, their achievements, and the need for us all to play our part in driving a gender equal world.

Compered by award-winning presenter and produced, Lynette Fay, the event's guest speakers included Dr. Megan Smyth from Almac Pharmaceuticals, Sharon McNicholl, Strategic Director at ABC Council, Monica McGeary from Source Business Leads and Caroline O'Neill from Digg for Success.

While providing insights and first-hand experiences into a diverse range of roles, sectors and perspectives, the guest speakers collectively highlighted the many opportunities open to us all and the importance of supporting one another- to believe in ourselves so that we have the courage to embrace all opportunities.

### **10. Further develop the capacity of the ABC Women's Network. 2 outreach programmes to be delivered.**

No programmes were delivered in relation to an ABC Women's Network. However, other programmes which support women have been delivered. Examples include a 'Hen's Shed' and a programme supporting mothers and their families dealing with a drugs crisis in their community.

### **11. 3 Holistic Health Programmes to be delivered in the Borough.**

#### Armagh Community

#### Keady 8 Week Men's Health & Wellbeing Programme

The young men's health programme began on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> January in Keady Recreation Centre. A group of 18 men completed the program, which consisted of various physical activity classes along with educational seminars promoting healthy nutrition, mental health and self-worth.

### Banbridge Community

#### Loughbrickland's Intergenerational Male Health & Wellness Project

In partnership with the Right Key Recovery & Wellness Centre, Loughbrickland Senior Social Work Practitioner MDT and Newbridge Integrated School, an 8 week Intergenerational Project was developed and commenced on Monday 10 October 2022. A total of 19 men and boys completed the programme which included 8 students age range 14/15 years old and 11 older men who are service users from the Right Key Recovery Café. The following subjects were covered:

- Anger/Rage/Communication
- Relationships
- People/places/things (responsibilities, choices)
- Safety nets (trusted people, where to get help, resources)
- 'Brilliant me' (looking at self-esteem)
- Naming emotions
- Hope and Aspirations
- Share and celebrate

There was a lot of positive feedback from the participants and many friendships were developed.

### Craigavon Community

#### Craigavon Locality Men's Health & Wellbeing Programme

The Health Inequalities Officer coordinated a 10 week male health and lifestyle programme for the Legahory and surrounding areas of Craigavon. The programme commenced on Wednesday 11 January 2023. A total of 15 men completed the programme. Various health information sessions and physical activities took place each week including health screenings at the beginning and at the end of the programme. Talks included healthy eating; drugs & alcohol; cancer awareness; male domestic abuse; 5 ways to wellbeing. Physical activities included football; table tennis; Yoga Pilates; Boccia/Kurling; circuits and pickle ball. Evaluation was carried out and feedback and results were very positive.

## **12. Support the annual male health conference**

The Health Inequalities Officers continue to support and contribute to the Southern Area Men's Health Steering Group in the planning and development of the annual Men's Health Seminar which takes place in March each year. The 'Worth The Risk' event planned for Friday 10 March 2023 did not take place due to the weather conditions. There are plans to reschedule the event and hold it on International Men's Day, Friday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

## **13. Organise an annual consultation event to be held with consultees. Explore additional ways of raising awareness of the initiative with AccessAble and members of the Customer Care Project Team**

The AccessAble contract was reviewed for another year. The Council has agreed to fund the review of the detailed Access Guides on [www.AccessAble.co.uk](http://www.AccessAble.co.uk) relating to



Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon. Working with over 150 partners AccessAble produce Access Guides to places people want or need to visit, publishing them on [www.AccessAble.co.uk](http://www.AccessAble.co.uk) and the AccessAble App. The Access Guides are for anyone with accessibility requirements. The annual review of surveyed venues was carried out in 2022 and the review report was produced in January 2023. A number of survey updates were detailed in the report. A meeting was held with our representative from AccessAble to consider how further improvements could be made and residents and visitors to the borough are made aware of the access guides.

**14. The Jam Card initiative and the availability of the e-learning module will be publicised on the Council Intranet. Information to be publicised biannually.**

In April an article was included in the staff magazine about the Jam Card initiative. Staff that attend the equality and diversity training are also reminded about this initiative.

**15. Provision of Community Support Helpline**

The community support helpline is still operational and there are 2 officers dedicated to dealing with queries received via email and phone. These Officers signpost to the crisis support network. All details are available on the Council website under the Community Development section

**16. The Council's Community Development Working Group will explore and develop options for progression on the arrangements around flags and emblems**

Further meetings of the Emerging Issues Working Group will be held in the next reporting period to discuss a policy approach that will address issues that arise in relation to Flags and Emblems.

**3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

x Yes                       No (go to Q.4)                       Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

New guidance for developing a Strategy & Action Plan was finalised and made available on the Council's Intranet. The guide outlines the methodology used to develop a Strategy & Action Plan, a strategy framework which provides guidance on the content required and a flow diagram which summarises the methodology for developing a Strategy & Action Plan which includes information on when to conduct equality screening.

The Equality Screening Guidance Notes and summary Equality Scheme were reviewed and updated with contact details added for both members of staff in the equality unit. This information was made available on the policy section of the Intranet.

During the reporting period details of all Council policies were transferred to a Smartsheet with all relevant dates added to include approval date, equality screening and automated review dates. This has created a more efficient procedure for policy review and it has a traffic light system in place for all ABC Council approved policies. The Heads of Department were advised of the new process and have viewer access. Regular reports will be presented to the Heads of Department to ensure all policies remain up to date with screening exercises conducted in a timely manner.

The Performance Improvement Plan 2021-2023 was implemented. The first measure highlights the Council's commitment to its equality duties which is that we will improve the availability of more inclusive services for those with Autism and their carers. This is a clear reflection of the Equality Scheme commitments. During the reporting period the Autism Action Plan 22-23 was updated and the Autism Working Group continued to meet in order to implement the plan. Examples of measures include staff training, maintenance of Pre-visit Guides, maintenance of the inclusive section of the website, delivering a range of inclusive summer schemes and other programmes in partnership and obtaining customer feedback.

During the reporting period the Armagh Place Plan was launched. During the previous reporting period over 400 people including 172 children and young people fed into the development of the draft plan through public online workshops, an online survey, a schools creative challenge, live engagement days in Armagh, youth focussed workshops and stakeholder meetings. The plan was issued for formal consultation in November 2021. All relevant information including the equality screening exercise was made available on the Council's Consultation Hub.

In May the Council called on residents to share their views on a new Age Friendly Strategy and three year Action Plan for the area. Led by the Age Friendly Alliance – comprising of representatives from council, key stakeholders and older people – the strategy and action plan will work to ensure all residents in the borough can live in security, enjoy good health, continue to participate fully in society and feel valued and respected – regardless of age. Residents were asked to have their say on key outcomes within the new strategy and action plan by completing a short online or paper-based survey, or by taking part in a local focus group. It was developed following extensive consultation with people aged 50 and over living in the borough.

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The draft equality screening exercise was included on the Consultation Hub alongside the Strategy and Action Plan and they were issued to the Council's full list of section 75 consultees.

The plan was launched at an International Day for Older Persons celebration event on 3 October which saw 100 local older people along with public, community and voluntary sector partners come together to celebrate and champion older people.

The Council drafted a Changing Places Policy and issued it for consultation in December. The Council consulted with key stakeholders and the public to engage opinion on the Changing Places Policy to ensure it meets the needs of those who require additional equipment and/or space to use a toilet or change in a dignified and hygienic manner.

The draft equality screening exercise was included on the Consultation Hub alongside the policy and they were issued to the Council's full list of section 75 consultees. Information about the consultation was also posted on the Council's Facebook page.

Work has begun on the development of the Banbridge Place Plan. Council is leading on this plan on behalf of the ABC Community Planning Partnership. This is an exciting initiative that will look at how Banbridge could be improved for its people. Every effort is being made to create a shared vision for the town's future growth and development that is as broad as possible and informed by strong community engagement.

The Community Planning Partnership engaged with 113 children and young people in the development of the draft Banbridge Place Plan. This included a workshop with a youth club, a schools engagement worksheet plus attending a wellbeing event for students in the Southern Regional College, Banbridge Campus. Actions such as exploring options to increase structured and unstructured play, and implementation of smart street furniture within the town are associated with needs identified.

The Keep Well Keep Safe event provided the opportunity to engage and seek the opinions of Older Persons. Issues mentioned are reflected in the plan: The town's green spaces are key assets to be built upon and there are actions within the plan to build connections and make it more accessible for people to get about and enjoy.

The Council's section 75 consultees were invited to attend an online meeting and an Age Friendly group meeting were held just beyond the reporting period. Consultation will continue throughout the process of developing the Banbridge Place Plan, which is not yet complete, and will include further engagement with section 75 groups.

The Orchard Leisure Centre introduced quiet hour swim sessions and Gulliver's Soft Play Autism Friendly sessions. Banbridge Leisure Centre ran a 4 week trial of quiet hour swim sessions.

During the reporting period the Council availed of funding for a Mobile Accessible Toilet. It is an excellent facility for wheelchair users and anyone with mobility impairments. It was made available for the first time at the Georgian Festival. This facility will be used at key events throughout the year.

In November the Council became the first local authority in Northern Ireland to launch a multi-lingual information hub for the area's migrant newcomer communities.

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Developed in collaboration with the Law Centre NI, the online information hub is designed to help migrant newcomers understand what their immigration status means and how it impacts their eligibility to access public funds and other services.

The comprehensive online resource – that features 12 different languages across more than 30 videos – provides tailored guidance and advice to people with settled, pre-settled, visa holder and refugee immigration statuses. Based on these statuses, the videos talk through individual rights and entitlements around employment, health care, social security, housing, and education as well as signpost to key support organisations.

The Relaxed Christmas Experience events were held at Bleary Business and Community Centre. These events which are specially designed for children with sensory processing issues, autism or special educational needs and their families took place over two weekends, Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> to Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December and Friday 9<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December, with all events booked out. The experiences offered the opportunity for the children to enjoy the magic of meeting Santa, Mrs Claus and the Elves, along with other festive activities in a calm and supportive environment.

South Lake Leisure Centre also provided quiet/relaxed Santa sessions on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of December. The Orchard Leisure Centre provided Christmas Autism soft play sessions on 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of December.

Lord Mayor Councillor Paul Greenfield launched a New Resident Guide to help people choosing to live and work in the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough settle in and be better informed about how to access key services.

Produced in multiple languages, this comprehensive resource covers a range of topics including Council services; housing; employment and social security; education; health and social care services; public libraries; legal advice and advice services; road safety and driving; emergency services; support for businesses and employees; and community/voluntary support organisations.

Available in English, Bulgarian, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Polish, Romanian, Tetum and Ukrainian, the guide can also be downloaded.

In December 2021 it was agreed that access audits would be conducted on six Council owned Community Centres and Town Halls and these were completed during the reporting period. The recommendations were categorised with high priority actions to be completed at the earliest opportunity. Improvement works were carried out at Portadown Town Hall, Lurgan Town Hall and Ashgrove Community Centre.

In March the Council installed two brand new modular Changing Places toilet facilities at Gosford Forest Park and Lurgan Park to improve accessibility.

The new Changing Places toilets are situated in Lurgan Park and at Gosford Forest Park enabling easy access for families and those needing support from a carer.

In addition to the two new Changing Places toilets, other projects were successfully delivered including a new wheelchair swing at Scarva Park, powered doors at the Market Place Theatre and the new mobile accessible toilet which is now available for largescale events.

Through the Access and Inclusion Capital Grant Programme, five projects have been completed with over £122k investment funded by the Department of Communities.

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The programme is aimed at promoting a more inclusive society by enabling disabled people to participate more fully in arts, cultural and active recreation activities.

- 3a** With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

The introduction of guidance for the development of strategies which highlight the section 75 duties will ensure that opportunities are taken to promote equality of opportunity for a range of section 75 groups during strategy development. The updated equality screening guidance and the improved process for reviewing policies will ensure that screening is undertaken and in a timely manner.

The commitment to improve the availability of more inclusive services for those with Autism and their carers will ensure that our services are accessible to a greater number of our residents and customers. During the reporting period a range of measures within the Autism Action Plan were achieved.

The Armagh Place Plan commits the partnership to ongoing dialogue with section 75 groups to ensure that their needs are addressed in its implementation.

As stated above the Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan will work to ensure all residents in the borough can live in security, enjoy good health, continue to participate fully in society and feel valued and respected – regardless of age.

The Banbridge Place Plan will be informed by community engagement. Consultation will continue throughout the process of developing the Banbridge Place Plan, which is not yet complete, and will include further engagement with section 75 groups.

The Changing Places Policy is a statement of the Council's commitment to meet the needs of those who require additional equipment and/or space to use a toilet or change in a dignified and hygienic manner.

The other service delivery changes referenced in 3a will improve access to services for disabled customers, those of a different race and migrant newcomers.

- 3b** What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

x As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*

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The Armagh Place Plan, The Age Friendly Strategy and Changing Places Policy were equality screened and subject to public consultation. The Banbridge Place Plan will be subject to a screening exercise.

- As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*
  
- As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*
  
- x As a result of changes to access to information and services *(please specify and give details):*  
  
Changes to services to make them more inclusive include the quiet swim sessions, the relaxed Christmas experiences, the introduction of Changing Places Toilets the Mobile Accessible Toilet, the resident guide produced in multiple languages and the online information hub for migrant newcomers.
  
- Other *(please specify and give details):*

**Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures**

**Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)**

- 4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*
- Yes, organisation wide
  - x Yes, some departments/jobs
  - No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
  - No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
  - Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Strategy, Policy & Equality Support Officer

- 5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*
- Yes, organisation wide

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- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The section 75 duties are most clearly reflected in the Strategy and Performance Department's Business Plan

6 In the 2022-23 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? (*tick all that apply*)

- Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- Yes, in some departments/jobs
- No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan
- No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2022-23 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Borough Community Plan has three strategic themes of Community, Economy and Place from which nine long term outcomes have been identified. The plan is underpinned by three cross-cutting themes of equality, connectivity and sustainability.

These three cross-cutting themes are also included in the Corporate Plan.

The departmental business plans include where appropriate measures which specifically promote equality and good relations. These are linked to the objectives included in the annual performance improvement plan and the Corporate Plan.

The section 75 duties are most clearly reflected in the Strategy and Performance Department's Business Plan.

The Equality Action Plan links the relevant Community Planning Theme and relevant Corporate priority to each of the measures included in the plan.

**Equality action plans/measures**

7 Within the 2022-23 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:

11

Actions ongoing:

5

Actions to commence:

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Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

- 8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2022-23 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

N/A

- 9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2022-23 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

- Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities
- Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

**Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)**

- 10 Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: (*tick one box only*)

- All the time                       Sometimes                       Never

- 11 Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2022-23 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

As part of the Council’s commitment to improving access for those with Autism and their carers 2 focus groups were held at South Lake Leisure Centre on 2 March for those with Autism/other neurodiverse conditions and their carers. 12 young people and 13 carers attended. These sessions were jointly facilitated by Council Officers and representatives from IncredAble. Participants provided a range of feedback on Council services and all suggestions will be considered by relevant Council departments.

In May the Council called on residents to share their views on a new Age Friendly Strategy and three year Action Plan for the area. Led by the Age Friendly Alliance – comprising of representatives from council, key stakeholders and older people – the strategy and action plan will work to ensure all residents in the borough can live in security, enjoy good health, continue to participate fully in society and feel valued and respected – regardless of age. Residents were asked to have their say on key outcomes within the new strategy and action plan by completing a short online or paper-based survey, or by taking part in a local focus group. It was developed following extensive consultation with people aged 50 and over living in the borough.



## PART A

The draft equality screening exercise was included on the Consultation Hub alongside the Strategy and Action Plan and they were issued to the Council's full list of section 75 consultees.

In November the Council organised Business Consultation Workshops in Banbridge, Craigavon and Armagh as part of the development of a Labour Market Partnership Action Plan for 2023-2024 and called on local businesses to engage and provide their input. Potential initiatives would support key groups such as young people, adults returning to the workforce and those with disabilities to gain employment.

In February 21 the Labour Market Partnership was established through funding from the Department of the Communities in the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council area.

The Council drafted a Changing Places Policy and issued it for consultation in December. The policy includes the following:

- Priority locations for Changing Places Toilets (CPTs), including outdoor sites, to ensure reasonable coverage
- The provision of a portable CPT at Council led large events
- Provision of CPTs with local businesses and communities
- Changing Places Toilets meet the needs of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities such as spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis.

The Council consulted with key stakeholders and the public to engage opinion on the Changing Places Policy to ensure it meets the needs of those who require additional equipment and/or space to use a toilet or change in a dignified and hygienic manner.

The draft equality screening exercise was included on the Consultation Hub alongside the policy and they were issued to the Council's full list of section 75 consultees. Information about the consultation was also posted on the Council's Facebook page.

Work has begun on the development of the Banbridge Place Plan. Council is leading on this plan on behalf of the ABC Community Planning Partnership. This is an exciting initiative that will look at how Banbridge could be improved for its people. Every effort is being made to create a shared vision for the town's future growth and development that is as broad as possible and informed by strong community engagement.

The Community Planning Partnership engaged with 113 children and young people in the development of the draft Banbridge Place Plan. This included a workshop with a youth club, a schools engagement worksheet plus attending a wellbeing event for students in the Southern Regional College, Banbridge Campus. Actions such as exploring options to increase structured and unstructured play, and implementation of smart street furniture within the town are associated with needs identified.

The Keep Well Keep Safe event provided the opportunity to engage and seek the opinions of Older Persons. Issues mentioned are reflected in the plan: The town's green spaces are key assets to be built upon and there are actions within the plan to build connections and make it more accessible for people to get about and enjoy.

The Council's section 75 consultees were invited to attend an online meeting and an Age Friendly group meeting were held just beyond the reporting period. Consultation will

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continue throughout the process of developing the Banbridge Place Plan, which is not yet complete, and will include further engagement with section 75 groups.

The Council's draft Performance Improvement Plan 2023-2024 went out for public consultation just before the end of March. It was made available on the consultation hub and an equality screening exercise accompanied the plan. The Council's full list of section 75 consultees were advised of its availability.

**12** In the 2022-23 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

- Face to face meetings
- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- Internet discussions
- Telephone consultations
- Other *(please specify)*: online meetings, online consultation hub

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

As described above the Council used a range of consultation methods in order to engage section 75 categories in the development of its policies, plans and strategies.

**13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes                       No                       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Consultees are frequently advised of the Council's equality duties throughout the Community Planning Process. Section 75 consultees were contacted in relation to the consultations described above in q.11. Many of the screening exercises were included on the consultation hub. A section 75 monitoring form was issued to stakeholders as part of the development of the Performance Improvement Plan.

E-mails and hard copies of documentation are forwarded to potentially interested groups.

During the reporting period staff were reminded of the Council's equality duties as training was made available to staff throughout the year. This was advertised via e-mail and in the staff newsletter. The Equality Screening Guidance Notes and summary Equality Scheme

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were reviewed and updated with contact details added for both members of staff in the equality unit. This information was made available in the policy section of the Intranet.

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes       No       Not applicable – no commitment to review

**Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

[\[Equality - Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council \(armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk\)\]](http://armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk)

15 Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year *(as recorded in screening reports)*:

24
----

16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2022-23:

3	Policy consultations conducted with <b>screening</b> assessment presented.
	Policy consultations conducted <b>with an equality impact assessment</b> (EQIA) presented.
	Consultations for an <b>EQIA</b> alone.

17 Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

As detailed in q.11 the consultations include the Age Friendly Strategy, the Changing Places Policy and the Performance Improvement Objectives 2023-2024. Work has also begun on the development of the Banbridge Place Plan.

The Age Friendly Strategy and Three Year Action Plan went out to public consultation from 20 May – 15 July 2022. Views were sought using a number of different methods:

- By completing an online survey
- Requesting a paper-based survey
- By taking part in a local focus group

59 responses (42 online and 17 hard copies) were received. Two rural and two urban focus groups considered the findings of the Strategy and Action Plan

Suggested actions have been taken into consideration when finalising the Strategy and Action Plan and include:



- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2022-23 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:
- 23** Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

### **Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)**

- 24** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2022-23, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

During the reporting period 10 sessions of Equality and Diversity Training were delivered to staff. 5 of these sessions were delivered online and 5 were delivered face to face at Induction. This training covers the section 75 duties and the Disability Action Plan, anti-discrimination legislation with further emphasis on the Disability Discrimination Act and communicating with people with a range of disabilities. A total of 93 staff attended. Evaluation of the training revealed that staff found it useful for understanding the needs of a wide range of customers. There was a suggestion to use more visual aids and the slides were subsequently updated. An online workshop was organised for the Council's elected members and it also covered information on the section 75 duties. 8 elected members attended the workshop.

Code of Conduct and Equality Training was delivered to front line staff in October and December and a total of 233 staff attended.

3 sessions of Policy Screening, Equality and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Training were delivered online via Microsoft Teams to staff members responsible for policy development. This training covers an outline of the equality and good relations duties, when and how to screen and when to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment. A total of 31 staff attended. Evaluation of this training showed that staff liked the use of case studies and their relevance to the work of the Council.

154 staff completed the Equality and Diversity in the workplace e-learning module. It includes equality section 75 duties, disability duties, equality in the workplace, respectful language and DDA and reasonable adjustments.

Other training was delivered to ensure Council staff have a better understanding of the needs of our residents, customers and employees and to further promote equality of opportunity.

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6 staff members attended face to face Autism Awareness Training and 102 staff completed the Autism Awareness e-learning module.

11 staff attended an Introduction to Sighted Guiding and a further 12 staff attended a session on How to Guide People with Sight Loss and make your Workplace and Community more inclusive.

15 staff attended Dementia Awareness Training.

6 staff attended a Carers Information Session.

As part of the Council's commitment to health and wellbeing the following training sessions were offered: Menopause Awareness Training for Managers in which 30 staff attended, mental health first aid in which 22 members attended.

The Council's Community Development Department delivered 4 level 1 Makaton Training courses for individuals and groups within the ABC Borough. The training sessions were aimed at parents, family members, carers and workers who need to use Makaton at home and in their work as well as participants who need a more detailed knowledge about using and applying Makaton to develop the communication skills of others. A total of 51 people completed the Level 1 course.

- 25** Please provide **any examples** of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

The training programmes have the objectives outlined at the beginning of the training and the programme is again reviewed and summarised at the end. An evaluation sheet is issued at the end of the training. The information received in the evaluation forms is used to inform further developments to the training programmes.

### **Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)**

- 26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2022-23, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

In December 2021 it was agreed that access audits would be conducted on six Council owned Community Centres and Town Halls and these were completed during the reporting period. The recommendations were categorised with high priority actions to be completed at the earliest opportunity. Improvement works were carried out at Portadown Town Hall, Lurgan Town Hall and Ashgrove Community Centre.

The new Changing Places toilets are situated in Lurgan Park and at Gosford Forest Park enabling easy access for families and those needing support from a carer.

In addition to the two new Changing Places toilets, other projects were successfully delivered including a new wheelchair swing at Scarva Park, powered doors at the Market Place Theatre and the new mobile accessible toilet which is now available for largescale events.

Through the Access and Inclusion Capital Grant Programme, five projects have been completed with over £122k investment funded by the Department of Communities. The programme is aimed at promoting a more inclusive society by enabling disabled people to participate more fully in arts, cultural and active recreation activities.

Further information was added to the Inclusive section of the Corporate website to ensure residents have access to information about all the accessible facilities, activities and events the Council has to offer.

### Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27 How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2022-23?

Insert number here:

0
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Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

### Section 3: Looking Forward

28 Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

The Equality Scheme will be due for review in 2025

29 Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

The Council will remain focused on all of the above and will continue to offer support and training to staff in relation to the equality and good relations duties.

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- Employment
- Goods, facilities and services
- Legislative changes
- Organisational changes/ new functions
- x Nothing specific, more of the same
- Other (please state):

**PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans**

**1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:**

16

Fully achieved

4

Partially achieved

2

Not achieved

**2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.**

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs <sup>i</sup>	Outcomes / Impact <sup>ii</sup>
National <sup>iii</sup>			
Regional <sup>iv</sup>	Community & Voluntary Sector Panel	The Panel was established in 2018 as part of the ABC Community Planning Partnership. The Panel has over 60 members from community, voluntary and social enterprise organisations from across the Borough working together to create a shared vision for community and voluntary support across the Borough	The Community & Voluntary Sector Panel was established to ensure the community and voluntary sector has a voice on the community planning partnership promoting the active participation of underrepresented groups and to promote collaborative working and facilitate wider engagement with local residents



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Local <sup>v</sup>	A range of section 75 groups are contacted during consultation exercises and many are within the disability sector	As stated in the equality section of this report, these views are taken into account before a final decision on the plan/policy/strategy is made.	The needs of disabled customers are taken into account in policy development
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2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	<p>Induction Training which is mandatory for all new employees</p> <p>Training covers:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to Equality Scheme</li> <li>• The Disability Action Plan and DVD highlighting different types of disabilities</li> <li>• The Council's Equal Opportunities and Dignity at Work policies and procedures</li> </ul>	100% of New starts received training	Evaluation of the training revealed that staff found it useful for understanding the needs of a wide range of customers. There was a suggestion to use more visual aids and the slides were subsequently updated.
2	10 sessions of Equality and Diversity Training were delivered to staff. 5 of these sessions were delivered online and 5 were delivered face to face at Induction.	A total of 93 staff members attended.	Evaluation of the training revealed that staff found it useful for understanding the needs of a wide range of customers. There was a suggestion to use more visual aids and the slides were subsequently updated.

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3	Equality and Disability Training for elected members	8 elected members attended the workshop	Elected members will have increased awareness of the equality and disability duties
4	<p>Introduce equality e-learning module</p> <p>Module covers:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality section 75 duties</li> <li>• Disability Duties</li> <li>• Equality in the workplace</li> <li>• Respectful Language</li> <li>• DDA and reasonable adjustments</li> </ul>	154 staff completed the Equality and Diversity in the workplace module	There is a questionnaire available at the end of the module
5	<p>There was a commitment in the plan to provide training on specific disabilities where a need is identified. Staff attended courses to assist a wide range of disabled people.</p>	<p>6 staff members attended face to face Autism Awareness Training</p> <p>102 staff completed the Autism Awareness e-learning module.</p> <p>11 staff attended an Introduction to Sighted Guiding</p> <p>12 staff attended a session on How to Guide People with Sight Loss and make your Workplace and Community more inclusive.</p> <p>15 staff attended Dementia Awareness Training</p> <p>6 staff attended a Carers Information Session</p> <p>30 staff attended Menopause Awareness Training for Managers</p> <p>22 staff attended mental health first aid Training</p>	<p>The training will improve the customer service offered to customers with a range of disabilities.</p>

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2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1			
2			

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to '**encourage others**' to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Junior Sports Awards Annual	The awards were held in the Armagh City Hotel	The event celebrates the achievement of sports people within the Borough and as a result raises awareness of disability in sport
2			

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact

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1	Policy screening – ongoing implementation of screening requirements in relation to new and amended policies (screening form includes questions relating to the disability duties)	The completed screening forms will address the disability duties.	All new or amended policies will incorporate the disability duties where appropriate.
2	Appoint elected member Diversity Champion at the AGM	The Council appointed two elected member champions. The Council's Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor	Together they will promote equality, good relations and diversity as well as act as points of contact for advice, guidance and support.
3	Further develop working relationships with voluntary organisations such as Cedar, Mencap and others so that the Council can successfully respond to requests for work placement opportunities	A new Work experience and Placement Procedure was approved.	<p>These work placement opportunities will provide relevant employability and skills development to assist people to prepare for the world of work by assisting with their development in becoming valued and successful members of a workplace.</p> <p>Work experience and placement opportunities are open to all school, college and university students and those persons who are part of an Employability Support Organisation (persons with a disability) regardless of what equality category they fall within.</p>
4	Appoint Disability Sport NI to conduct an access audit of the new South Lake Leisure Centre.	<a href="#">The Leisure Centre achieved the ISF accreditation</a>	The Leisure Centre is inclusive and welcoming to all. South Lake Leisure Centre among first in NI to achieve excellence level in Inclusivity – Oct 22
5	Non-fixed inclusive play programmes Play in the Community and Forest School Programme	Programmes developed to ensure play opportunities for all children and young people regardless of their needs and abilities.	<p><b>Play in the Community</b></p> <p>A number of children with different abilities and disabilities attended the sessions and engaged with the same play offered to the group as a whole. Play sessions were adjusted to suit all the children attending.</p>

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			<b>Forest School Programme</b> It was noted at least two children with disabilities attended each programme and the play/learning is developed around each child.
6	The GetActive website will provide access information where appropriate	Addition of 'Access, Independence and Inclusion' information section for Leisure/Community facilities as well as virtual tour for South Lake Leisure Centre.	More people with a disability accessing sport and physical activity opportunities independently
7	Undertake an Audit of public life positions and review how the positions are advertised	The Audit was completed and a report prepared for Heads	The information in the Audit of Public Life positions shows that disabled people, like other equality groups are targeted as part of engagement and consultation. They are also represented on some decision-making bodies.
8	Prepare annual report on the implementation of the plan	To monitor and report on progress	

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones/ Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	Ensure strapline advising that documents can be obtained from the Council in alternative formats is included in all external publications	On the Home Page of the Council website there is an accessibility section where customers are advised to contact the Council if they require a publication in a different format.	It is intended that publications will be accessible to a wide range of people	Ongoing communication will be required with relevant departments to ensure that all external publications advise that documents are available in alternative formats.
2	To have a database of images for use in Council publications that	The initial work was to be included as part of an overall photography	We still plan to address this as	Budget wasn't allocated to allow this to happen in 22/23 however

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	display positive images of disabled people.	tender. Despite the lack of budget allocation the Marketing & Communications Team increased the visibility of disabled people in website and social media photographs throughout the year displaying positive images of disabled people.	part of the corporate plan project, through ongoing funded initiatives and the use of stock imagery.	there has been an increased visibility of disabled citizens in website and social media photographs
3	To work with stakeholders to achieve an Autism Friendly Borough	The Autism Action Plan 22-23 was updated and the Autism Working Group continued to meet in order to implement the plan.	To raise awareness of the needs of those with Autism and ensure appropriate steps are taken.	There are some outstanding measures that will be included in the revised Disability Action Plan. Examples of measures achieved are detailed in Part A, section 1 of this report.
4	Play Strategy 2018-2026. 46 play parks to be completed as part of a 5 year Capital Programme	32 Play Parks complete  2022-23 6 play parks completed  Thornhill Play Park – Complete April 2022  Cline Road Play Park – Complete May 2022  Kernan Play Park (New) – Complete July 2022	These play parks are designed to be inclusive to ensure there are opportunities for children regardless of their needs and abilities.  2 new pieces of inclusive equipment added to Oxford Island and the first of	The Play Strategy is 2018-2026

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		<p>Scarva Play Park – Complete July 2022</p> <p>Ervine Place Play Park – Completed November 2022</p> <p>Scotch Street Play park (New) – completed January 2023</p> <p>39 Play parks completed all with pieces of inclusive equipment as well as being accessible.</p> <p><b>Local</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wheelchair Roundabout</li> <li>• Inclusive Panel</li> <li>• Basket Swing – suitable for transfer from wheelchair</li> <li>• Harness Swing – suitable for transfer from wheelchair or different ability children</li> </ul> <p>Play Panel</p> <p><b>Neighbourhood</b></p> <p>All of the above and including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra seating or Picnic Table</li> <li>• Extra Inclusive Panels</li> <li>• One other inclusive pieces of equipment e.g. Spinning bowl</li> </ul>	<p>their kind for ABC Council.</p> <p>1 Wheelchair Seesaw</p> <p>2 Communication Boards</p> <p>Play Development will continue to access funding opportunities to add more of this equipment going forward.</p>	
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		<p>or an inclusive springer sea/saw</p> <p><b>District</b></p> <p>All of the above and including:</p> <p>Wheelchair Swing (Gosford)</p> <p>Inclusive Trampoline</p> <p>Inclusive Play Panels-roleplay and sound</p> <p>Inclusive Picnic Tables</p> <p>4 Play Parks remain on the Capital Play Development Programme for 2023/24</p> <p>The Birches (New)</p> <p>Mahon Road (New)</p> <p>Lissize &amp; Cross Heights (Refurbishment)</p> <p>Gap sites with no lands agreements to date</p> <p>Blackskull</p> <p>Moyraferty</p> <p>Tandragee Road</p>		
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		Existing play park looking new land location Corbet Lough		
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4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	Equality Commission for N.I – Every Customer Counts. The Council will demonstrate its commitment to customers by signing up to deliver the Commission’s Every Customer Counts Disability Access initiative	Beyond the reporting period work was undertaken to raise awareness with local businesses about this initiative. Council’s Facility Managers will be invited to attend an information session alongside businesses. This work will be further progressed as part of the revised Disability Action Plan.
2	Senior Sports Awards Annual	Due to bad weather the awards were postponed from March 23 to April 23

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

The disability sector engaged with the Council when the plan was issued for consultation in October 2019. A number of these measures are included in the Strategy and Performance Business Plan and are included

(b) Quantitative

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6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

No

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

As the current plan is 2020-2023 the plan will be updated in 23/24 and further engagement and consultation will be undertaken.

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- <sup>i</sup> **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.
- <sup>ii</sup> **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.
- <sup>iii</sup> **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments
- <sup>iv</sup> **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level
- <sup>v</sup> **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.