

TAKE500+

YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR VOICE, YOUR CHOICE!

LEARNING AND EVALUATION REPORT

ARMAGH, BANBRIDGE & CRAIGAVON
COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP
NOVEMBER 2023



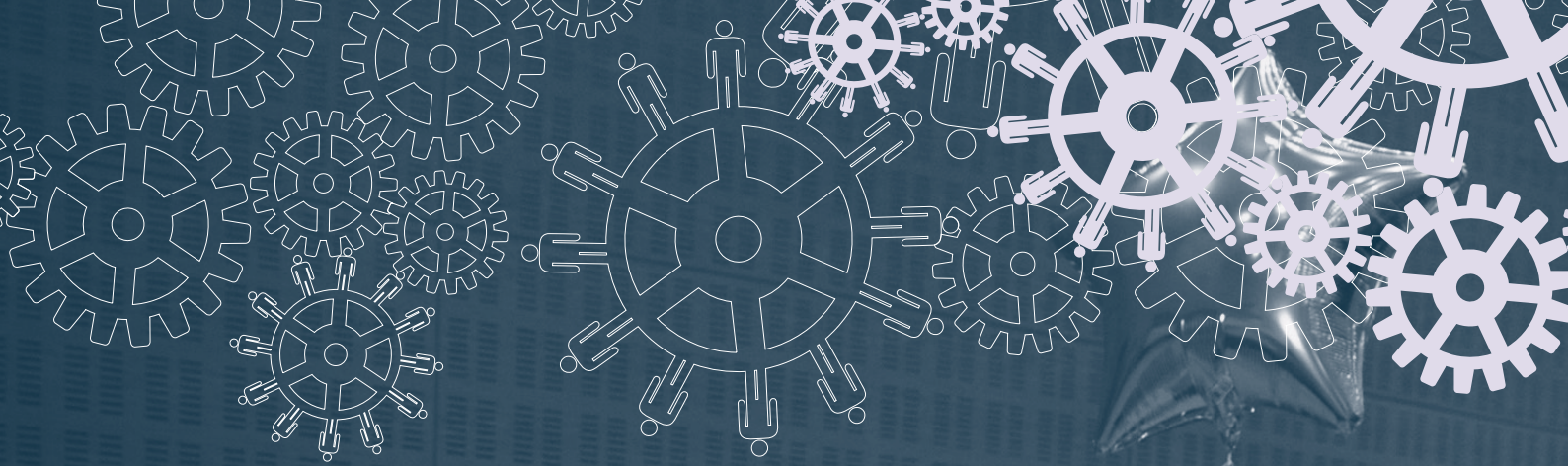


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This report was prepared by Community Places. A special thanks to the Community Planning Team, PB Working Group and all of those who participated and provided their feedback to the Tak£500+ learning and evaluation process.



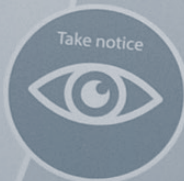


TAKE500+

YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR VOICE, YOUR CHOICE!



#tak£500+



FOREWORD



Colette Rogers

Public Health Agency
Chair of the ABC Community
Planning Strategic
Partnership



Catherine McFarland

Northern Ireland Housing
Executive
Chair of the ABC Shared
Leadership & Community
Engagement Sub-Committee



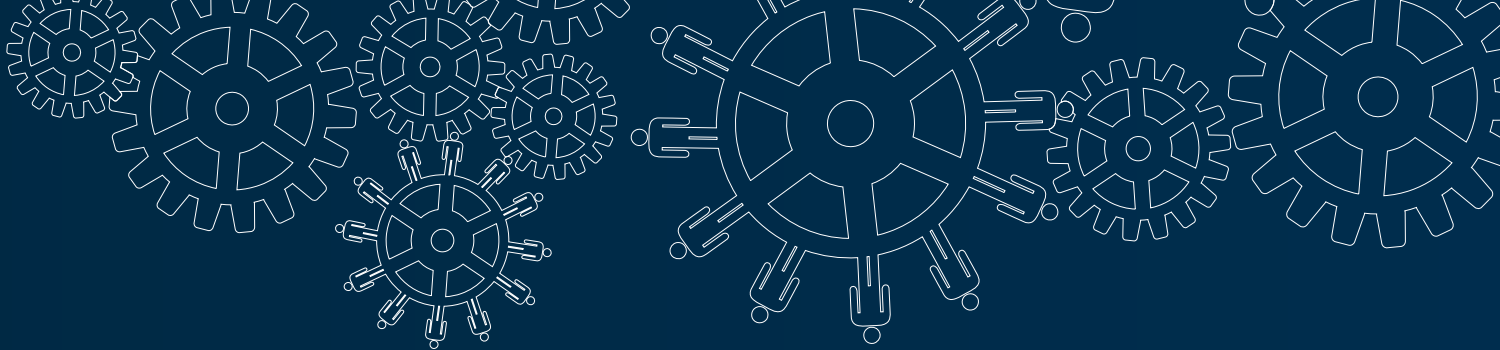
Donna Stewart

Craigavon & Banbridge
Volunteer Bureau and
ABC Vice-Chair of the
Shared Leadership &
Community Engagement
Sub-Committee

“ We are delighted to present this Learning and Evaluation Report on our community planning partnership's second Participatory Budgeting (PB) project. Tak£500+ has exceeded our expectations through the number of applications we received and the number of people who came to the events to vote. ”

This report was prepared by Community Places. A special thanks to the Community Planning Team, PB Working Group and all of those who participated and provided their feedback to the Tak£500+ learning and evaluation process.





We view PB as an essential part of our decision making in ABC – it is important to us that our community has the opportunity to contribute to making decisions that are meaningful to them and make a difference. We want children and young people to be involved. We were especially pleased that so many children voted for the projects they wanted to see in their area.

The report shows us that we achieved what we set out to do. Local people decided where investments were made to meet local needs. Countless community connections were made at the decision events and through the projects delivered across the borough. The Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing public health message was promoted and brought to life through the communications, the decision events and the projects.

The success of Tak£500+ is due to the commitment and expertise of local communities who put forward ideas and came to vote at the events. There is a rich community life in this borough and the project has shone a light on the countless volunteers and staff in the Community, Voluntary and Social Enterprise sectors who do important work in their communities. We thank you for the work that you do to promote the wellbeing of people in ABC and make the borough a great place to live.

We would also like to thank the community planning partnership's PB Working Group who designed and implemented the project. It is a great example of partnership working across the community, voluntary and statutory sectors and we are proud of what the group has achieved. Partners have pooled their time, expertise, money and put decision making into the hands of local people who know best what is needed in their communities.

This report is also about making sure that we learn from Tak£500+ and that we carry that learning into any future PB processes. There are 31 recommendations in this report, devised from feedback from applicants, voters, partners and Elected Members. We are grateful to all those who gave their views and shared their experiences of Tak£500+. The Community Planning Strategic Partnership has endorsed the recommendations in the report and we are committed to building them into future PB processes.

The numbers who took part in Tak£500+ and the feedback we got through the evaluation show that there is a real appetite for Participatory Budgeting in ABC. To grow PB we need more partners to come on board to contribute their expertise and resources to the process and we hope that this report will help us to do this by communicating the impact and potential of PB, as well as the readiness and capacity of our partnership to deliver.



01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



BACKGROUND

Latest figures show that only 19% of people in ABC feel they have an influence on decisions made in their neighbourhood¹. Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a way for people to get involved and directly vote on how local money is spent. ABC Community Planning Partnership is committed to PB as a way to deliver the community plan for the borough and Take500+ is its second PB project taken forward by the PB Working Group. The PB Working Group set the shared purpose for the project as:

- To empower communities and support a sense of ownership for investment and decision-making;
- To better meet needs, as defined by the local community;
- To strengthen partnership working;
- To promote innovation and community connections; and
- To promote the Take 5 public health message.

The survey of voters and successful groups shows overwhelming support for more PB in the borough. The partnership has undertaken this Learning and Evaluation Report to assess how the project met its shared purpose and the ambition in the partnership's Community Engagement Strategy and to capture learning for future PB processes. It also hopes to influence regional policy relating to PB and community planning.

TAK£500+ SHARED PURPOSE & IMPACT

The Learning and Evaluation Report found that Take500+ met its shared purpose. However, feedback from successful groups, voters and project partners was more positive than groups who were unsuccessful or withdrew before the decision events.

To empower communities and support a sense of ownership for investment and decision-making

3770 people from across the borough attended the decision-making events and voted to allocate £76,412 to 81 local projects which they wanted to see happen under the Take 5 public health message.

- Any three people aged eight and over could apply for money to bring the Take 5 public health message to life.
- 119 applications were received – 13% from non-constituted groups. All 119 applications were invited to attend the decision-making events.
- 3 decision making events were held showcasing 91 community projects.
- 90% (81) of projects represented at the events were funded through the community vote. There were 10 unsuccessful projects.
- Children and young people were able to vote along with adults. The largest age group of voters were those aged between 8 and 15 years old.
- Voters aged between 16-24 and 75+ were the least represented (5.6%).

Voters and community groups surveyed think it is important to have a say in how public money is allocated.

- 98% (508) of voters surveyed.
- 96% (53) of successful groups surveyed.
- 100% (7) of both unsuccessful groups and groups who withdrew before the decision-making events surveyed.

Successful community groups felt more empowered by having a voice in how resources are allocated and increased their energy and confidence as a group.

- 87% (48) felt more empowered by taking part in the decision-making events.
- 92% (51) agreed that attending the decision-making event had energised their group.
- 91% (50) increased their confidence as a group through the decision-making event.
- All groups increased their confidence through delivering their project and felt empowered by creating positive change in their community.

¹Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK) 2020-2022

Unsuccessful groups were less likely to agree that they were empowered by having a voice in how resources are allocated or that they increased their energy and confidence as a group.

- 57% (4) strongly disagreed that they felt more empowered, disagreed that attending the decision-making event had energised their group or had increased their confidence.
- 29% (2) strongly agreed that they felt more empowered, that attending the decision-making event had energised their group and that they had increased their confidence as a group.

Voters and Successful groups would like to see more PB happening across the Council area.

- 97% (37) of successful groups.
- 98% (510) of voters would vote again.

To better meet needs, as defined by the local community

81 community-led health and wellbeing projects delivered across the borough.

- 100% (38) of successful groups agreed that they had addressed needs in the community through their project delivery.
- 92% (51) of successful group respondents felt they were supported to access resources to address needs in the community.

"It gives the public the opportunity to have their say on what's needed and delivered."

"We were blown away by the turn out from the public at the event. It really goes to show that people do care about how finances are spent."

To promote innovation and community connections

Voters felt more involved in the community and more aware of what was happening in their area from attending the decision-making events.

- 94% (491) feel more involved in the community.
- 97% (506) feel more aware of what is happening.
- 78% of younger children surveyed at the events felt more involved in the community from attending.

Groups feel that they have raised awareness of their group and are more aware of what is happening in their area.

- 98% (54) of successful groups agreed they have raised awareness of their group.
- 95% (52) of successful groups are more aware of what is happening in their area.
- 69% of unsuccessful groups agreed they had raised awareness of their group.

Successful groups agreed they had created and strengthened connections.

- 95% (52) created new connections with other groups or individuals at the decision-making event and through delivery of their project.
- 91% strengthened connections with other groups or individuals at the decision-making event and all agreed they strengthened connections through their project delivery.
- 100% agreed that they created stronger connections with Council and service providers through being involved in Tak£500+.

Unsuccessful groups were less likely to feel that they had created and strengthened connections through participating in the decision-making events.

- 57% (4) created new connections with other groups or individuals.
- 57% (4) strengthened connections with other groups or individuals.
- 57% (4) disagreed that they created stronger connections with Council and service providers.

To strengthen partnership working

A key enabler of Tak£500+ was the strength, commitment and positive partnership working demonstrated by the PB Working Group.

- 29 partners from across seven thematic sectors.
- Eight partners pooled £91,700 for a PB Fund and financial administration. Council provided project management and running costs.
- All partners supported the planning and delivery of the process.
- The PB Working Group ranked themselves as Excellent under the Working Together Community Engagement Standard.
- 100% of PB Working Group respondents feel they are better equipped to plan future PB processes.

To promote the Take 5 public health message



Voters and successful groups are more aware of the Take 5 public health message as a result of taking part.

- 73% (384) of voters were more aware.
- 96% (53) of successful groups.

Unsuccessful groups were less likely to respond that they are more aware of the Take 5 public health message.

- A split response with 43% (3) more aware and 43% (3) not more aware of the message.

Over half of voters responded that they would incorporate the Take 5 message into their daily routine.

- 62% (322) of voters.

Successful groups felt that they had implemented the Take 5 public health message through delivery of their projects.

- 100% (38) agreed that they had improved mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- 84% (32) agreed that they had reduced loneliness.
- 92% (35) agreed that they had developed new skills themselves.
- 43% (35) of successful projects were sport or physical activity related.

TAK£500+ LEARNING FOR THE PARTNERSHIP & BEYOND

The report sets out 31 recommendations. It looks at what went well and what could be improved and includes recommendations for the PB Working Group for future grants processes, summarised below:

Project Design & Securing the Funding Pool

- PB Working Group to increase access and participation of underrepresented groups in the next process. Recruit youth champions to increase number of young people taking part.
- Explore opportunities for business to invest in PB.
- Make clearer to applicants what is involved in the decision events.

Decision Events

- Reduce the duration and provide more support to groups taking part.
- Further opportunities to promote the Take 5 message at the events.
- Explore hybrid voting (online and in person).

Project Delivery

- Allow a longer time period for groups to deliver their projects.
- Provide additional support to unsuccessful groups to make their idea happen a different way.
- A dedicated PB Support Officer is required to deliver the PB grants process.

The report found that the Tak£500+ project exemplifies what community planning was developed to achieve. It links regional and local priorities and partners were able to meet their own objectives around individual wellbeing and early intervention & prevention, while contributing to the realisation of long-term outcomes in the community plan. Whatever each partner contributed; they gained much more through leveraging their own resources against the combined contributions of all partners to the project.

The report also includes recommendations for the Community Planning Strategic Partnership on how it can support PB, for example:

- All community planning partners to incorporate PB into their business plans.
- Investment in a dedicated PB Support Officer.
- Seek buy-in from The Executive Office and Department for Communities to invest in PB to support delivery.
- Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to streamline arrangements for pooling budgets.
- Hold a Tak£500+ learning and impact event.
- The partnership should prioritise time and resources to identify a challenging issue to address through PB of a mainstream budget.



02

INTRODUCTION



The Take500+ Participatory Budgeting (PB) process launched in October 2022 and is the second PB process to be taken forward by Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Community Planning Partnership. The project builds on the achievements and learning from the first Take500 process which took place in 2020 and due to Covid restrictions was run online. The process enabled communities to develop ideas and decide how public funds could be best used to address locally defined needs. 119 project ideas were put forward and 3,770 people from across the borough voted to decide which ideas were funded. 81 projects have now been delivered around the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing public health message.

Involving communities in decisions is important to ABC Community Planning Partnership, both as an outcome itself and also as a way to realise other outcomes in the community plan. For this reason, the partnership has embedded public participation in decision making into its plans, strategies, and governance structures.

The Take500+ Participatory Budgeting project contributes to both the Confident Community² and Healthy Community³ Outcomes in *Connected*⁴, the community plan for the borough, and is an action prioritised in the partnership's Community Engagement Strategy⁵. One of the statistics used by the partnership to measure progress towards the Confident Community Outcome is the percentage of people who feel they have an influence on decisions made in their neighbourhood. Latest figures show that only 19% of people in the borough feel that they have an influence, and this has been decreasing over time⁶. PB is a democratic innovation which goes beyond traditional consultation putting final decisions about budget allocations into the hands of the public.

Take500+ was taken forward by the PB Working Group, with oversight by the Community Planning Strategic Partnership through its Shared Leadership & Community Engagement Sub-Committee. Membership of the PB Working Group includes six statutory and nine community & voluntary sector partners. Effective partnership working has been a feature of the project and is examined later in the report.

Aims of the Evaluation and Learning Report

The aims of the evaluation and learning report are:

- To assess how the project has met the shared purpose set by the PB Working Group;
- To capture learning to inform future PB projects;
- To assess to what extent the project has met the ambition of the Partnership's Community Engagement Strategy; and
- To influence regional policy.



Lord Mayor Margaret Tinselly with members of the PB Working Group

The evaluation and learning report draws together a number of rich data sources including project statistics; GIS Mapping; survey responses from voters, children participants and applicants; and meetings with various partnership groupings and Elected Members. The evaluation took place between March and June 2023.

²Confident Community: Everyone has opportunities to engage in community life and shape decisions – we have a strong sense of community belonging and take pride in our area.

³Healthy Community: People are making positive lifestyle choices. They are more resilient and better equipped to cope with life's challenges.

⁴Connected: A Community Plan for Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough see: <https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/download/9210/community-planning-2018/24006/connected-community-plan-3.pdf>

⁵Community Engagement Strategy see <https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/resident/involving-our-communities/>

⁶Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK) 2020-2022

03

TAK£500+ YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR VOICE, YOUR CHOICE PROCESS



Building on the success and learning from the first Tak£500 process the PB Working Group agreed a shared purpose to guide the planning and design of the process.

SHARED PURPOSE

- To empower communities and support a sense of ownership for investment and decision-making;
- To better meet needs, as defined by the local community;
- To strengthen partnership working;
- To promote innovation and community connections; and
- To promote the Take 5 public health message.

The Council's Community Planning Team facilitated the PB Working Group to take forward Tak£500+ and provided support and resources to support the promotion, animation and delivery of Tak£500+.

TAK£500+ KEY STAGES

The PB process commenced in April 2022 and followed six key stages as outlined below with the process coming to a close with a Celebration Event in June 2023.



STAGE 1 - Project Design and Sourcing the Funding Pool



STAGE 2 - Applications



STAGE 3 - Eligibility Check



STAGE 4 - Decision-making Events



STAGE 5 - Project Delivery



STAGE 6 - Celebration and Learning



STAGE 1 - Project Design and Sourcing the Funding Pool

The PB Working Group includes community planning partners from nine community and voluntary sector and six statutory organisations. Beginning in April 2022, the group met in-person and online to plan and design the Take500+ process. The design process focused on meeting the challenges of quality engagement as outlined in the Partnership's Engagement Strategy and achieving a PB approach which is inclusive and diverse; that enables dialogue and deliberation and ultimately has a positive impact in the community. In measuring against these ambitions, the PB Working Group drew on the Engagement Standards presented in the Engagement Strategy and the regional www.participatorybudgetingworks.org/charter.

The Working Group considered that to meet the shared purpose and in particular to enable communities and groups to connect with each other that it was essential that the decision-making process was held in-person. This was a distinct change in delivery from the first Take500 process which was delivered online as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was decided to hold three events spread across the Borough in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon. The amount of resource available per group was increased from £500 to up to £1,000 to reflect cost of living increases. The PB Working Group purposefully decided to include a lower age limit of 8 years to encourage participation from younger people.

The Working Group agreed the following eligibility criteria with a focus on ensuring the process was inclusive and easy to access.

- A group of three or more members.
- Open to both constituted and non-constituted groups.
- Non-constituted groups required a sponsoring organisation to hold funds.
- Children and young people aged 8 and above can form a group and apply.
- Each group can apply for one project per area (Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon).
- A maximum of three applications can be received from groups from any one organisation or umbrella group.
- Safe.
- Legal.
- In line with one or more of the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing and with the overall ethos of Take 5.
- Feasible, within budget (up to £1,000) and timeframe (delivered by 31st May 2023).
- Of benefit to people living in the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough.

The Community Planning Team worked with partners from the Community Planning Partnership to identify and secure resources for the PB fund. Considerable time was invested in this process and a number of partners found it challenging to make an early resource commitment. With further support, eight partners were able to pool together a resource of £76,412 with other partners including the Council providing in-kind support and resources to facilitate project delivery.



STAGE 2 - Applications

An application pack was developed including a short application form, guidance notes and frequently asked questions. Groups could apply online or complete hard copy applications. A video animation and a series of in-person (3) and online (1) information sessions were held across the borough to promote and share information about the process and how to apply. The Working Group members drew on their established connections and reach into the community to promote and share information about how to get involved. This included through newsheets and briefings, social media, a video animation, dedicated webpages on the Council's website and word of mouth. Contact numbers for each of the PB Working Group members were made available for anyone who wanted to find out more about the process. Elected members played an important role in promoting the application process and encouraging community groups to apply.

Over a six-week period commencing in October 2022, constituted and non-constituted groups of a minimum of three people, aged 8 years and over were invited to apply for up to £1,000 to implement the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing public health message. The application process closed on 25 November 2022. A further four online sessions were provided to share information on and explain the Market Stall format of the decision-making events.



STAGE 3 - Eligibility Check

119 applications were received. Partners undertook an eligibility check of each application ensuring they met the set criteria. This process flagged a number of applications which required further information or clarification. With additional support, all of the 119 applications were considered eligible and were invited to attend the in-person decision-making events. 13% of applications received were from non-constituted groups.



STAGE 4 - Decision-making Events

Although all the applications were eligible and invited to attend the next stage, 28 groups did not continue through to the decision-making events. This represented a drop-off rate of 23%. 91 (76%) groups continued to the next stage and attended one of three market stall decision making events. In Armagh, 38 groups attended; in Banbridge, 15 groups attended and in Craigavon, 38 groups attended. 12% of participating groups were non-constituted.

Each event was held on a Saturday during January 2023 from 10.30am in the morning to 3.30pm in the afternoon.

- Saturday 14th January 2023 10.30am – 3.30pm: Armagh City Hotel
- Saturday 21st January 2023 10.30am – 3.30pm: Banbridge Leisure Centre
- Saturday 28th January 2023 10.30am – 3.30pm: Craigavon Civic Centre

All of the venues chosen were accessible to the public. Banbridge Leisure Centre attracted passing footfall and those who were already enjoying services at the centre took the opportunity to get involved.

	No. of Applications	No. of Applicants attending decision events	% of Applicants attending decision events
Armagh	49	38	78%
Banbridge	19	15	79%
Craigavon	51	38	75%
Total	119	91	76%

Total number of applications and attendance at decision-making events

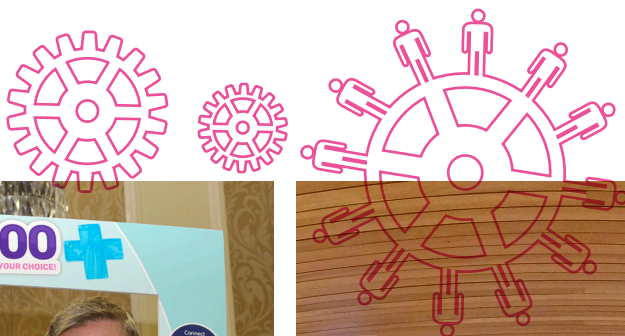
Each group was assigned a market stall and groups with the support of volunteers showcased their project ideas which addressed one or more of the Take 5 themes. These community led ideas were wide-ranging from youth focused, intergenerational initiatives, health and wellbeing, growing projects, exercise and sporting activities, industrial heritage, learning new skills, crafts, equipment, community choirs and community and sensory gardens. The market stall events captured the imagination of the participating groups and the community voters. A high energy, engaging atmosphere was created through the stall displays, music and entertainment, a skilled compere, decorations and welcoming refreshments. Each event was designed to enable conversations and connections to be made between stall holders, groups and the community voters.

A dedicated children's space and play activities were provided to ensure the events were family friendly. Over 3,770 people attended the decision-making events and a real buzz was created by the community's participation in the Take500+ PB process.

On arrival, voters were given a summary sheet with information on each of the projects and a separate Voting Sheet. Voters were invited to visit each of the stall holders to hear about their ideas and ask questions before they chose which of the projects they wanted to vote for. In addition, the compere visited each of the stall holders and asked them to share information about their idea to the audience.

A Voting Station was created at each of the events and those aged 8+ were invited to allocate 10 votes, one per project idea to the projects they wanted to see happen. After each person voted they were asked to provide feedback by completing a short evaluation form either online or through a hard copy on the day. Younger people below the age of 8 years who were not able to vote, were asked for their comments and feedback through an interactive dot-mocracy process.

The PB Working Group manually counted the votes after each event. Given the high volume of participants this delayed the announcement of the winning projects until February 2023.





STAGE 5 - Project Delivery

Across the three areas 90% of projects received support from the local community and secured funding. In total, 81 projects received a share of £76,412 to take forward projects which addressed the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing theme. Each group had four months to deliver their projects, commencing in February until the end of May 2023. The full list of successful projects is available at Appendix 2 and includes a wide range of activities for example, social inclusion programmes, IT training and skills, youth development programmes, social and sporting activities, crafts, health and fitness programmes, cultural and historical projects, outdoor learning, intergenerational projects, and community gardens and growing projects.

	No. of projects eligible for funding	Total amount applied for	No. of projects funded	Total amount funded
Armagh	38	£37,204.80	34	£33,104.81
Banbridge	15	£14,444.75	13	£12,674.75
Craigavon	38	£34,233.12	34	£30,633.12
Total	91	£85,882.67	81	£76,412.68

Total number of projects receiving funding

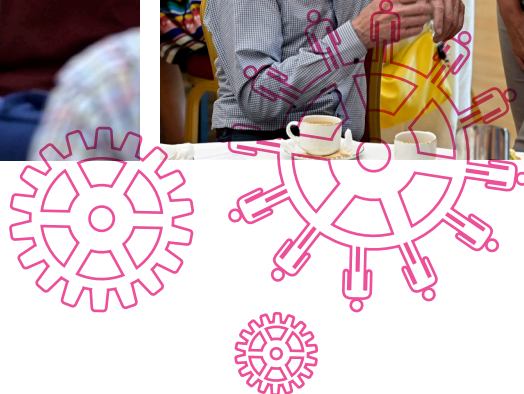
East Border Region were commissioned to undertake the grant administration and worked with each of the 81 successful projects to administer their grant and get monies to the groups to make their ideas happen.

Representatives from the PB Working Group contacted each of the 10 projects who were unsuccessful to thank them for taking part and to discuss their ideas and suggest alternative forms of funding or other groups or connections who could support them to take their idea forward.



STAGE 6 - Celebration and Learning

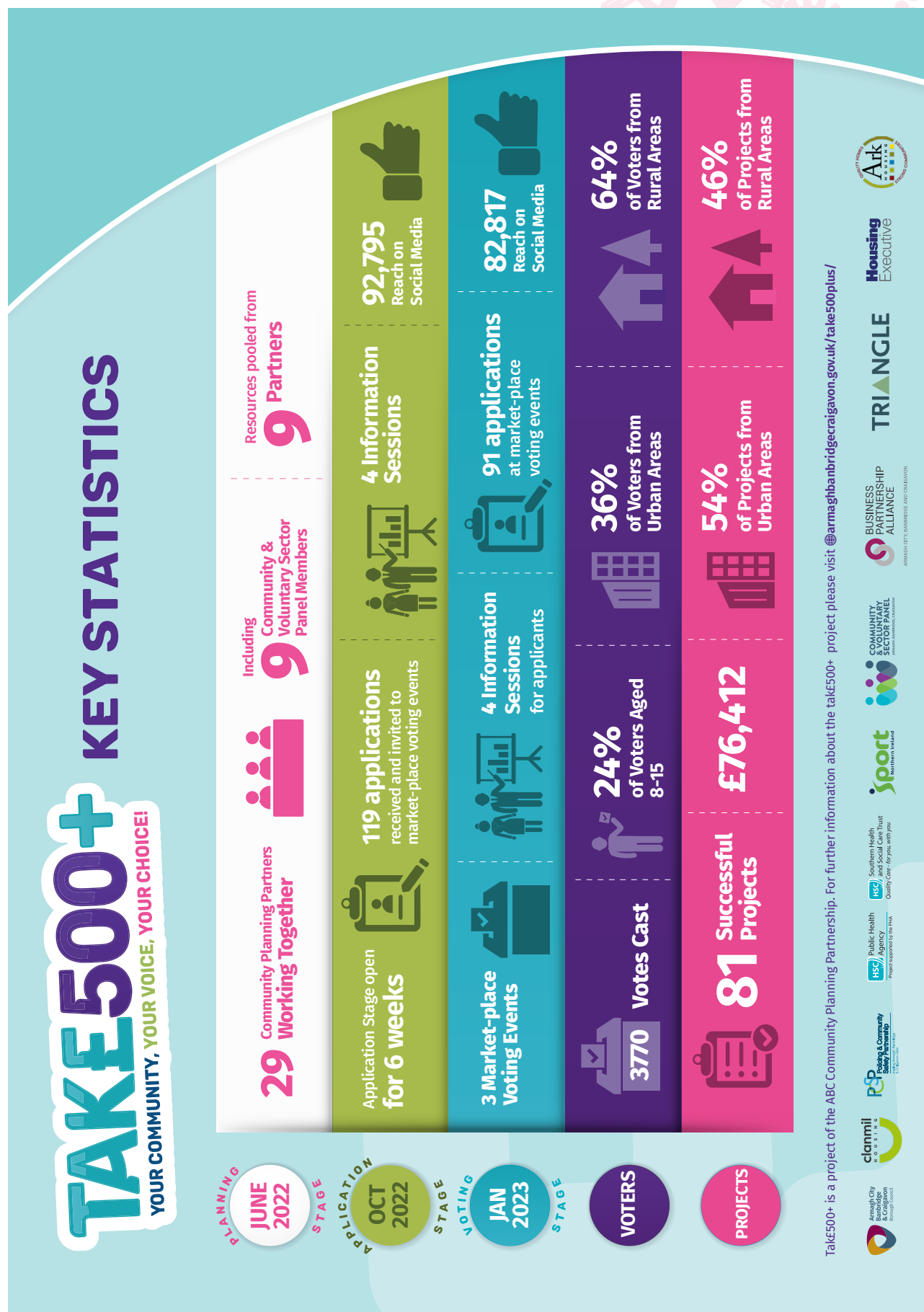
After project completion, groups were invited to participate in a Celebration Event in June 2023. Over 150 participants attended to share and hear about the achievements and positive impacts which had been delivered through the 81 community-led health and wellbeing projects. The event showcased and celebrated the care and commitment demonstrated by each of the groups and their volunteers. It provided space for participants to reflect on and be inspired by what had been achieved both individually and as a collective community. Importantly, it created a further opportunity for community connections across the borough and it enabled the PB Working Group, the Community Planning Partnership and the Council to acknowledge and celebrate the active participation and dedication of the community through Tak£500+.



An evaluation framework was developed to capture feedback and learning from the process. Surveys were conducted with Voters, Successful Groups (pre and post-delivery), Unsuccessful Groups and Groups who withdrew from the process. A series of workshops and meetings were held with the PB Working Group, elected members, the Shared Leadership and Community Engagement Sub-Committee and the Community Planning Chairs' to gain their insights on TAKE500+ and gather their views on the future direction of PB across the borough.

TAK£500+ KEY STATISTICS

A summary of the key project statistics is illustrated below:



Voters

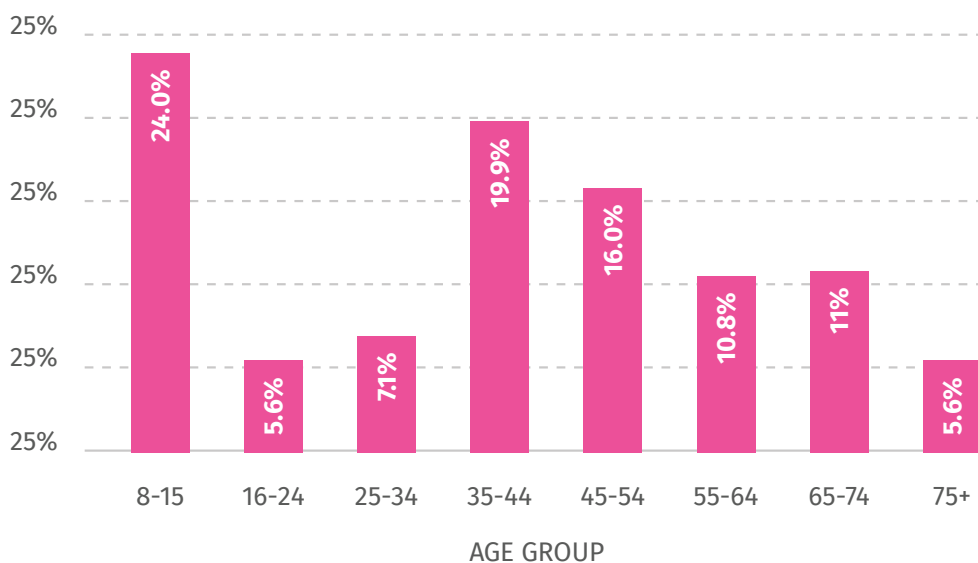
Tak£500+ reached 3770 voters from across the borough: Armagh (2,007); Banbridge (524); and Craigavon (1,239). There was a small percentage of void votes (approximately 2%) across the three areas. 99% (515) of voters who responded found it easy to take part in the process and 98% (510) would vote again in another PB process. All voters were asked to provide their age range and postcode on their voting forms and 89% (3350) provided this information.

	Armagh	Banbridge	Craigavon	Total
Total No. of Votes	2,007	524	1,239	3,770
Total Voids	41	11	31	83
% Voids	2.0%	2.1%	2.5%	2.2%
Total Eligible	1,966	513	1,208	3,687
% Eligible	98.0%	97.9%	97.5%	97.8%

Total number of votes, voids and eligible votes

Age Category of Voters

The process attracted a majority of voters from the 8-15 years age category, representing nearly a quarter (24%) of voters. The next highest category was those aged 35-44 years (20%). People aged between 16-24 and 75+ were least represented with 5.6% of voters.



Age Category of All Voters

Urban-Rural⁷ Split of Voters and Projects

In Armagh, the majority of voters were from the surrounding rural area with a split of Urban: 26% and Rural:74%. In Banbridge and Craigavon there was a more equal split of voters with 46%: Urban and 54%: Rural in Banbridge; and in Craigavon 48%: Urban and 52%: Rural. See Appendix 3.1-3 for GIS mapping of distribution of voters across the district.

Area of Voters	Total Voters	Within SDL	Outside SDL	% Urban	% Rural
Armagh	1815	476	1339	26	74
Banbridge	476	217	259	46	54
Craigavon	1059	511	548	48	52
Overall	3350	1204	2146	36	64

Number and Percentage of Urban-Rural Split of Voters

Across all applications (successful, unsuccessful and withdrawn) there was a slightly higher percentage from urban areas (55%) than rural areas (45%). The same picture emerged for successful projects, (54%) were from urban areas, with 46% from rural areas. In terms of unsuccessful projects there was a higher percentage from urban areas with 60% compared to 40% for rural areas. The same pattern emerged with those projects which withdrew with 56% representing urban areas and 44% representing rural areas. See Appendix 3.4-6 for GIS mapping of distribution of successful, unsuccessful and withdrawn projects across the borough.

Project Status	Total	Armagh Locality	Banbridge Locality	Craigavon Locality	Within SDL	Outside SDL	% Urban	% Rural
Successful	81	34	13	34	44	37	54	46
Unsuccessful	10	4	2	4	6	4	60	40
Withdrawn	25	10	3	12	14	11	56	44

Number and Percentage Urban-Rural Split of Successful, Unsuccessful and Withdrawn Projects

⁷The boundaries for localities were taken from the legacy Council areas. SDL is an abbreviation for Settlement Development Limit. The Urban SDLs used for the purpose of analysing the urban/rural split included the Hubs and Local Towns of Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon Urban Area, Dromore, Gildford, Keady, Markethill, Rathfriland and Tandragee.

04

DID TAK£500+ MEET ITS SHARED PURPOSE?



This section presents participant and stakeholder feedback under each element of the shared purpose:

- To empower communities and support a sense of ownership for investment and decision-making;
- To better meet needs, as defined by the local community;
- To strengthen partnership working;
- To promote innovation and community connections; and
- To promote the Take 5 public health message.

A full analysis of survey responses from Voters, Successful and Unsuccessful Groups, and Groups who Withdrew from the process is included as a separate document. Surveys from Successful and Unsuccessful Groups received the highest response rates with 68% and 70% respectively. A second survey was issued to successful groups to capture comments on project completion, this returned a response rate of 47%. 14% of Voters and 39% of groups who withdrew from the process provided feedback.

To empower communities and support a sense of ownership for investment and decision-making

3770 people from across the borough attended the decision-making events and voted to allocate £76,412 to 81 local projects which they wanted to see happen under the Take 5 public health message.

- Any three people aged eight and over could apply for money to bring the Take 5 public health message to life.
- 119 applications were received – 13% from non-constituted groups. All 119 applications were invited to attend the decision-making events.
- 76% (91) of applicants continued through to the market stall decision-making events, representing a drop off rate of 23%. Interestingly, this was approximately the same drop off rate experienced in the first online Take500 process despite the different format.
- 3 decision making events were held showcasing 91 community projects.
- 90% (81) of projects represented at the events were funded through the community vote. There were 10 unsuccessful projects.
- Children and young people were able to vote along with adults. The largest age group of voters were those aged between 8 and 15 years old.
- Voters aged between 16-24 and 75+ were the least represented (5.6%).

Voters and community groups surveyed think it is important to have a say in how public money is allocated and feel more involved in the community as a result of participating.

- 98% (508) of voters.
- 96% (53) of successful groups.
- 100% (7) of both unsuccessful groups and groups who withdrew before the decision-making events.

Voters and community groups surveyed found it easy to take part in the process and felt that there was adequate support to participate.

- 99% (515) of voters.
- 100% (55) of successful groups.

Unsuccessful groups surveyed were less likely to find it easy to take part and felt there was inadequate support to participate.

- 43% (3) did not find it easy to take part.
- 71% (5) felt there was not adequate support to help their group submit an idea.

Successful community groups felt more empowered by having a voice in how resources are allocated and increased their energy and confidence as a group.

- 87% (48) felt more empowered by taking part in the decision-making events.
- 92% (51) agreed that attending the decision-making event had energised their group.
- 91% (50) increased their confidence as a group through the decision-making event.
- All groups increased their confidence through delivering their project and felt empowered by creating positive change in their community.

Unsuccessful groups were less likely to agree that they were empowered by having a voice in how resources are allocated or that they increased their energy and confidence as a group.

- 57% (4) strongly disagreed that they felt more empowered, disagreed that attending the decision-making event had energised their group or had increased their confidence.
- 29% (2) strongly agreed that they felt more empowered, that attending the decision-making event had energised their group and that they had increased their confidence as a group.

Voters and Successful groups would like to see more PB happening across the Council area.

- 97% (37)⁸ of successful groups on completion of their project.
- 98% (510) of voters would vote again.

"We were really encouraged by the number of people who came out and voted for our project. We also enjoyed speaking to members of the public and talking to them about our project."

"Great - More members of the public became aware of the fantastic work carried out by many different organisations. We were very impressed with the turn out to the event."

"This physical event is a fun community event. And it brings real "buy-in" from the whole community."

"It was wonderful to have the students of our school take part by talking about our project to the community and to receive encouragement and support from the wider community."

"It seems as if we were scored highly by the general public. So, a great and humbling experience indeed. Also...It was exciting to speak to 100s of people on the day allowing them to see our work and hear our story."

"After we saw the results, we were feeling disappointed. At the same time, we are happy that we were part of this Event as we learnt a lot. It was the first time we participated in this programme."

"It was disappointing, but having seen so many great projects out there, we could understand."

⁸Successful groups who responded to Part B Survey after project completion.

To better meet needs, as defined by the local community

81 community-led health and wellbeing projects delivered across the borough.

- 100% (38)⁹ of successful groups agreed that they had addressed needs in the community through their project delivery.
- 92% (51) of successful group respondents felt they were supported to access resources to address needs in the community.

"It gives the public the opportunity to have their say on what's needed and delivered."

"We were blown away by the turn out from the public at the event. It really goes to show that people do care about how finances are spent."

"It's a great way for local people to have a say in how some resources are allocated."

"Being able to make the dream of the project become reality."

"Staff and volunteers did their bit on the day, really great feel-good factor." Cllr McNeill

"Great feedback, great to see kids getting involved and people really made an effort to come out and vote. There was a lot of work, but great to get that number of people attending, a real buzz and really enjoying the occasion." Lord Mayor, Paul Greenfield

"Joyous of days, the video really captures this. I haven't seen the centre as full as that before, it was buzzing, very evident on the day." Cllr Julie Flaherty

To promote innovation and community connections

Voters felt more involved in the community and more aware of what was happening in their area from attending the decision-making events.

- 94% (491) feel more involved in the community.
- 97% (506) feel more aware of what is happening.
- 78% of younger children surveyed at the events felt more involved in the community from attending.

Successful groups agreed they had created and strengthened connections.

- 95% (52) created new connections with other groups or individuals at the decision-making event and through delivery of their project.
- 91% (50) strengthened connections with other groups or individuals at the decision-making event and all agreed they strengthened connections through their project delivery.
- 100% agreed that they created stronger connections with Council and service providers through being involved in TakE500+.

Unsuccessful groups were less likely to feel that they had created and strengthened connections through participating in the decision-making events.

- 57% (4) created new connections with other groups or individuals.
- 57% (4) strengthened connections with other groups or individuals.
- 57% (4) disagreed that they created stronger connections with Council and service providers.

⁹Successful groups who responded to Part B Survey after project completion.

Groups feel that they have raised awareness of their group and are more aware of what is happening in their area.

- 98% (54) of successful groups agreed they have raised awareness of their group.
- 95% (52) of successful groups are more aware of what is happening in their area.
- 69% of unsuccessful groups agreed they had raised awareness of their group.

"It was great to network with other groups at the market stall event."

"Learnt a lot about other community groups and extended our social network through contacts made at the event."

"We'd a fantastic day at the Market Stall, meeting and greeting people, and loving the buzz and positive vibe."

"There was an immense feeling of pride in the room with everything that is happening in our local community."

"It was great being part of the enthusiasm and dedication on the Day with the people there who like myself believed in their project and the good that would come from it for their group & their community."

To strengthen partnership working

A key enabler of Tak£500+ was the strength, commitment and positive partnership working demonstrated by the PB Working Group.

- 29 partners.
- Eight partners pooled a PB Fund of £76,412.
- All partners supported the planning and delivery of the process.
- 100% of PB Working Group respondents feel they are better equipped to plan future PB processes.

Responses from the PB Working Group

"Great to be part of an interdisciplinary group working through a process with a shared purpose and desire to empower the wider community to action. It was satisfying to know that the process has made an impact by realising community groups to deliver programs around the theme of 5 pathways to wellbeing, when it is much needed!"

"Brilliant experience, lovely to meet the groups and build relationships with groups, partners and PB working group members."

"Educational and rewarding. Such an interesting concept that I think could be applied to many more funding decisions."

*"Innovative and inclusive way to distribute public funding to marginalised communities and groups."
"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success."
– Henry Ford*

To promote the Take 5 public health message



Voters and successful groups are more aware of the Take 5 public health message as a result of taking part.

- 73% (384) of voters were more aware.
- 96% (53) of successful groups.

Unsuccessful groups were less likely to respond that they are more aware of the Take 5 public health message.

- A split response with 43% (3) more aware and 43% (3) not more aware of the message.

Over half of voters responded that they would incorporate the Take 5 message into their daily routine.

- 62% (322) of voters.

Successful groups¹⁰ felt that they had implemented the Take 5 public health message through delivery of their projects.

- 100% (38) agreed that they had improved mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- 84% (32) agreed that they had reduced loneliness.
- 92% (35) agreed that they had developed new skills.
- 43% (35 of the 81) successful projects were sport or physical activity related.



"Armagh Harps have welcomed up to 30 kids off all abilities from 4 years to 12 years over the past 3 months during their session and for a lot of these young kids with special needs it's what they look forward to in their weekly routines. We have been overwhelmed with the positive response to the programme."

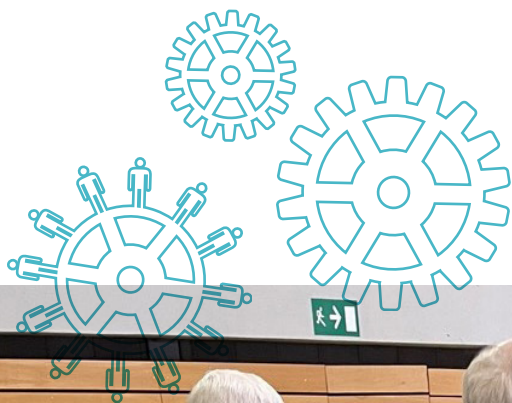
"Families are really delighted with the sensory football experience for their children and the children themselves are loving meeting new friends and getting the time to develop their skills."

¹⁰Successful groups who responded to Part B Survey after project completion. TAKEE500+ LEARNING AND EVALUATION REPORT NOVEMBER 2023

"Yes, we had much more contact with other people. The project was brilliant for our physical and mental health."

"Brought our clubs confidence back again and closer together ... after the Covid isolation."

"Confidence has improved by being involved with the choir. They are happy just singing together for a few hours every Wednesday and the tutor has been very useful in empowering them."





05

WHAT IS THE LEARNING FOR THE NEXT PB PROCESS?



The next section presents learning under the six key stages of the Tak£500+ process and explores what worked well, what could be improved and advances practical recommendations for the PB Working Group to consider for future PB projects.



STAGE 1 - Project Design and Sourcing the Funding Pool

What worked well?

Commitment and complementary skills of the Working Group

The PB Working Group members demonstrated strong ownership of and commitment to working together to deliver the shared purpose of the Tak£500+ process. A number of the partners had been part of the first PB Working Group which provided a solid foundation to further refine and develop positive partnership working. The range of expertise and complementary skills of the partners in the Working Group, ranging from community development, health, housing and youth engagement to name a few, enriched the design process and extended the reach of Tak£500+ into the wider community. Strong relationships and friendships have been established which heightened the effectiveness of the working group, enabling the group to work flexibly and respond to challenges which contributed to the overall success of the Tak£500+ process.

Tailoring the process

Tak£500+ was planned and designed to reflect the local context and needs of the community. An in-person market stall format was preferred over an online process to enable groups and the community to connect. In order to ensure equal access to the process from across the borough it was decided to host three decision-making events in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon with groups choosing which area was most appropriate for them. The overall timeline was agreed to ensure there was adequate time to promote and support involvement at each stage of the Tak£500+ process. Information and support sessions both in person and online were provided and there was a variety of ways to complete the application, both online and hard copy.

Inclusion and Empowering Youth Voice

The Working Group designed the process to enhance inclusion and participation. For example, non-constituted groups could apply, groups of three people, and younger people aged eight and above were encouraged to participate in both the application and voting process to find out about and have the opportunity to support projects in their area. Significant efforts were made to support people to both get and stay involved.

“This was well set up and it was great that the younger people in the community were also given a voice as to where the funds should be allocated.”

Pooled PB Resource

Eight partners pooled a combined PB budget resource of £76,412 to deliver community led health and well-being projects across the borough.

Strengthening knowledge and skills of PB

Participating in the design and delivery of Tak£500+ has increased the knowledge, skills and confidence of partners to participate in future PB processes.

What could be improved?

Membership of the PB Working Group

The PB Working Group and community planning structures are committed to expanding and building on the inclusivity and diversity of participation in the process. Widening the membership of the PB Working Group to include underrepresented groupings for example, minority ethnic groups, youth and disability sectors, and non-constituted groups could improve the inclusivity and diversity of the reach of Tak£500+.

Pooling the PB Resource

Community Planning Partners, including from the Community & Voluntary Sector Panel, through Tak£500+ have been able to deliver shared outcomes through the pooling of resources. However, the lack of innovative and flexible governance arrangements has meant that this has been a time intensive and challenging process despite partners' commitment to the collaborative gain which can be achieved through the pooling of budgets. The time and administration required to pool partners resources of almost £92,000 was challenging. Partners should build PB into their business planning processes to provide greater certainty on the resource they can contribute. This will require support for partners to communicate the positive impacts which participation in Tak£500+ can achieve within their organisation. Developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) would help to streamline governance arrangements and better facilitate the pooling of resources and reporting procedures between partners. Several partners are keen to explore and test the development of a MoU for the next PB project. This would act an exemplar of good practice and innovation within the public sector.

Extending pool of resources to include the private sector

As awareness of the TAK£500+ grows, coupled with the difficult funding landscape being experienced across the community and voluntary sector, it is likely to become oversubscribed increasing demand on the total pooled budget. This is happening at a time when community planning partners across all sectors are facing budget constraints. There are opportunities to explore the role of the private sector in contributing to the PB fund or to sponsoring and contributing resources to the running and delivery of the process.

Recommendations for Project Design and Securing the Funding Pool

1. The membership of the PB Working Group should be expanded to include representatives from groupings which have been underrepresented in Tak£500+. This should include representatives from minority ethnic communities, disability groupings, younger people and non-constituted groups.
2. The PB Working Group should conduct targeted outreach and support sessions with the identified underrepresented groupings to enable them to participate. Community development support from across partners, including Council District Electoral Area officers, should be drawn on to support those who are further away from power and decision-making processes to engage in the design and delivery of Tak£500+.
3. Partners should consider incorporating Tak£500+ into their budget planning cycles to provide greater and more timely certainty of the resource input they can contribute to the process. To support this approach partners should be assisted to communicate the benefits of participating in Tak£500+ to bolster wider support and commitment within their respective organisations.
4. A Memorandum of Understanding should be developed for partners to streamline pooling of budgets and reporting on a partnership basis. This would provide accountability and clarity to all partners about what each is contributing and gaining from the process. It also shares responsibility across partners and sustains arrangements in the event of personnel changes.
5. The opportunity for the business sector to invest in Tak£500+ should be explored and promoted to secure additional resources or sponsorship for the process to meet the expected increase in levels of demand.



STAGE 2 - Applications

What worked well?

Awareness Raising and Communications

A range of approaches was adopted to raise awareness and promote Tak£500+. This included: a dedicated webpage, applications packs and guidance notes (hard copy and online), information sessions, video animations, sharing the contact numbers of the Working Group to potential bidders and word of mouth by each of the PB Working Group Members and through the local contacts and reach of Elected Members. Across the board, groups felt that information about the process was clear and well communicated.

"It was well promoted throughout and felt it was a very fair process for all."

"The communication was excellent with all the information but especially with the availability of staff to be contacted if we had questions."

"Easy to engage, having contact details for people within council to engage with was a bonus. Information was clear and in general all was informative & worthwhile."

Good Reach

Time and efforts were put in place to support the inclusion and involvement of groups which resulted in 119 applications being received from across the borough. This included a number of applications from unconstituted groups (13%).

"Refreshingly light touch minimal paperwork."

"Minimal paperwork. Clear explanation of process. Made it fun to be involved. Less daunting process than expected."

"The concept was completely new to us; however, we did get good help to understand it all."

Supporting Participation

Across the board, feedback from groups acknowledged and valued the levels of support and guidance which had been provided by the PB Working Group. The availability of the helpful and informative staff and facilitators was noted and the part which they played in creating a welcoming and friendly environment at the information sessions.

"Facilitators have been very helpful throughout the process as this can be a daunting experience for participants."

"Great process- simple application and events were well organised. Council staff were very helpful."

"Amazing event today, well done to everyone that made it successful. My local area will definitely be involved next year. Thanks again for all your help & support."

Support for the Take 5 Theme

There is strong support for the relevance and breadth of the Take 5 theme from participants, the PB Working Group, Community Planning governance structures and elected members. What could be improved?

What could be improved?

Enhancing Communications

Despite deploying a variety of channels of communication, further steps could be taken to improve awareness of Tak£500+ and in particular, the market stall and voting elements of the process. Additional local media and radio coverage, a school's campaign, banners and continued word of mouth by PB Working Group members, Elected Members, peer to peer promotion by groups who have participated in Tak£500 and Tak£500+ and a targeted session with migrants or newcomers who may not have English as a first language should be undertaken. The application form should also clearly indicate the requirement and commitment of attending the decision-making event.

"Good way to see what is available in the local community. Maybe a little more media coverage to invite attendees needed."

"I only realised this event was taking place as I was in the leisure centre at the pool. Better advertisement would be beneficial next time. Great to see community initiatives and chat with those involved."

"Posters and word of mouth."

Targeted Support

Additional targeted support at the application stage is required to achieve greater participation from ethnic minorities, youth led projects (especially the 16-24 age group) and disability groupings – all of which were underrepresented in applications received for the Tak£500+ process.

"As we are a charity organisation that helps migrants, we would say that migrants are not involved. Some of them wouldn't be aware of these events or they wouldn't feel included."

Data Collection Alignment

It was noted that having standardised categories of data collection across partners would be useful for comparison purposes, for example, age category breakdowns. It was suggested that additional information could be collected on the application form asking people to categorise the type of project idea they were submitting e.g., working with older people, children or youth.

Recommendations for the Application Process

6. Consideration should be given to incorporating participation from underrepresented groups as a specific element of the shared purpose for the next PB project.
7. The application form should highlight the requirement to attend the decision-making event so that groups are aware of this time commitment from the outset.
8. Standardise categories of data collection across partners to aid usage and compatibility.



STAGE 3 - Eligibility Check

What worked well?

Simple criteria

The simple criteria ensured that each of the 119 applications received passed the eligibility check and were invited to participate in the decision-making event.

What could be improved?

Technical expertise

It is important to have partners with technical expertise at the eligibility check of the applications to assess the safety, legality, and feasibility of the project ideas.

Recommendations for the Eligibility Check

9. Ensure partners with technical expertise sit on the eligibility check panel.



STAGE 4 - Decision-making Events

What worked well?

Building connections

The market stall approach fostered relationship building and connections between participating groups and between the groups and the community members who attended to support and vote in each area. Groups viewed the market stall events as an important opportunity to showcase and celebrate their work and services to the wider community and to attract additional volunteers and members.

"This was a really fantastic day and the atmosphere at the event was one of positivity and it was so uplifting to meet so many other groups and connect with older, younger and cross community groups."

"It was good to be able to promote our ideas to a wider audience and listen to their feedback."

"It was great that the local community could come out and vote. It gave other people the opportunity to find out about our organisation that didn't know about it before."

"Learnt a lot about other community groups and extended our social network through contacts made at the event."

"We have already linked with two new groups who attended the TakE500+PB."

"Was great to see everyone out again following Covid."

Energising and Empowered

Both successful and unsuccessful project groups expressed that they enjoyed and were re-energised by the market stall events noting that they were proud of their efforts; connected with new people, organisations and groups; were encouraged by the variety of groups in attendance and increased their knowledge of the range of community activity across the council area. Groups felt supported by the public and received positive feedback about their project ideas. Groups and voters felt empowered as the voice of the community was heard. There was wide acknowledgment of the dedication and commitment of volunteers from each of the participating groups, Community Planning Partners and Council members and officers.

“There was an immense feeling of pride in the room with everything that is happening in our local community.”

“Very important that everyone has the opportunity. Benefitted from voting and finding out about the other groups.”

“We felt happy, supported, thankful and our confidence as a group has improved.”

“It was great being part of the enthusiasm and dedication on the Day with the people there who like myself believed in their project and the good that would come from it for their group & their community.”

Accessibility

A sign language interpreter was provided to support the access needs of participants from one of the groups which supports deaf people and those with hearing loss. The sign language interpreter played a vital role in enabling all of the participants to find out about each of the project ideas and to make an informed decision on how they would allocate their votes. On the day, one of the youth-based groups benefitted from learning some sign language.

“We loved meeting all the groups in the area. We also had lots of fun linking in with Lurgan deaf club on the day. The day brought lots of groups together who may not normally cross paths.”

Number of decision-making events

In the round, there was agreement that three events across the borough was fair. It was acknowledged that an alternative approach of hosting seven decision making market stall events would potentially increase access for groups as they would be delivered on a smaller geographic basis (DEA level). It was noted that this may better meet rural needs and perceptions of access of rural communities to the process. However, it was recognised that holding seven events would require even greater levels of support and commitment from partners.

Month and Day of decision-making events

January proved a popular month for the decision-making events, it is a period when groups are often less busy, and the market stall events brought the community together after the winter break. The choice of day ‘Saturday’ worked well for groups although a few comments noted that an evening time session may be more beneficial for groups who rely on volunteers and those living in rural areas.

The Voting Process

Tak£500+ attracted a new audience from the first PB process with 89% of voters voting for the first time. Voters carefully considered how they would allocate their 10 votes. They visited each of the stalls to hear about project ideas and took their time to choose which ideas they wanted to support. Younger people in particular were excited and enthused about having equal voting power and the same responsibility as adults and embraced the process with relish. Feedback from groups emphasised that Tak£500+ had made funding transparent and fun to be part of. Ensuring that voters must spread their 10 votes aided groups who may not have had as many direct supporters present at the market stall events. This approach helps to create an equal playing field for all groups regardless of their size and membership base.

"Great community initiative and only right that the community gets a chance to vote and be involved in events. Event was well organised and hopefully moving forward there will be more events that cater to all."

"Excellent way to conduct a fund-raising promotion, making funding transparent and fun to be part of."

"The event was great fun and a great way to connect with others in our community and share the good work we are involved in!"

"Felt very included in the community. Nice to have a chance to vote."

"Exhilarating, informative and very worthwhile experience."

"We'd a fantastic day at the Market Stall, meeting and greeting people, and loving the buzz and positive vibe."

"Fantastic team building exercise as a club which resulted in full community engagement."

"It was wonderful to have the students of our school take part by talking about our project to the community and to receive encouragement and support from the wider community."

"I love being a part of things and I had lots of fun today."

"Thank you for letting kids take part."

Youth Participation

The voice of younger people was elevated with nearly a quarter of voters aged between 8-15 years. Younger people were enthused to exercise equal voting power as adults. Younger children below the age of eight were also asked to share their views on the decision-making events and found them fun and enjoyable and felt that it was important for young people to have a say.

Supported by Elected Members

Elected representatives¹¹ shared overwhelmingly positive comments and feedback which they had received about the TakE500+ decision-making events. They noted that they were joyous, attracted huge numbers of citizens, and had a feel-good factor. Several councillors highlighted the importance of local people and younger children having the opportunity to vote for and support groups, and the importance of the space that the market stall events created for groups to connect and come together post Covid.

"Joyous of days, the video really captures this. I haven't seen the centre as full as that before, it was buzzing, very evident on the day." Cllr Flaherty

"Staff and volunteers did their bit on the day, really great feel-good factor." Cllr McNeill

"I was at the Armagh event, great turn out of people, the enthusiasm, tremendously successful, people at stalls had taken on board their task, very positive." Alderman Twyble

"Great to see the success in the three different areas, good to see more in Banbridge. Now that people have seen it and experienced it, will engage others to come next time." Lord Mayor, Paul Greenfield.

¹¹Alderman Kenneth Twyble, Cllr McNeill, Cllr Julie Flaherty; Cllr Sam Nicholson, Cllr Jill Macauley, Cllr Ciaran Toman, Cllr Brona Ni Eachaidh, Lord Mayor Paul Greenfield

What could be improved?

Supporting Participation

There was a 23% drop off rate from the application process through to the decision-making events. Interestingly, this is the same drop off rate experienced in the first online Tak£500 PB process. This suggests that additional support is required for groups between successfully completing the application form and preparing for the market stall events. The commitment and requirements of the stage 2 market stall approach should be more clearly communicated. Applicants should be asked to confirm through the application process that they are aware of and are available to attend the market stall decision-making event.

Trepidation around the Market Stall format

Despite the information sessions and animation setting out and explaining the market stall approach there remained a lack of understanding and some trepidation from groups around the new concept of the market stall and how best to portray their idea visually. Several groups attended one of the other market stall events to familiarise themselves with the process and format. It was noted that the video and photographs of the market stall events and displays will be invaluable tools in demonstrating and widening understanding of this approach for future processes.

“Original application straight forward with good correspondence of approval of project. The voting event was not well communicated, a lot of groups were unsure of the process. Zoom call was offered but a flier with all the key information probably more beneficial.”

Duration of the decision-making events

The market stall methodology was chosen to encourage groups to share their project ideas and connect with each other in an informal and friendly manner. The duration of the market stall events was scheduled to ensure voters had time to visit each of the stalls and to consider how they wanted to allocate their votes. However, there was clear feedback from all groups and voters that the duration of the market stalls was too long. Consideration should be given to shortening the timing of the market stall events to a two hour or morning session to reduce pressure on volunteer time. This needs to be delicately balanced to ensure that the process is not overly burdensome but also to safeguard that there is adequate time for exchange and discussion between the groups and the community voters. Sharing information on each of the project ideas in advance of the market stall events could also help voters to consider how they best allocate their votes.

Consideration should also be given to increasing the number of volunteers allowed per stall so that the responsibility can be shared between more people. Craigavon and Banbridge Volunteer Bureau and TADA, members of the CVS Steering Group, have offered to provide practical support to lower capacity groups and volunteers to help them participate in and host market stalls in future PB processes which is welcomed. This type of in-kind people support is invaluable given the support requirements of quality PB processes.

“We had a long but enjoyable day at the event and were well supported on the day by facilitators, other stall holders and the public. A community experience.”

“We are a school and staff were unavailable to commit an entire Saturday to stand at the stall.”

“The market stall must be made clear in the initial application process.”

Take 5 Theme and Voters

More information should be provided on the Take 5 theme at the decision-making events for voters. It was felt that while groups engaged well with the themes, voters were more connected to the ideas presented by the groups and further information on how they linked to the Take 5 message could be promoted.

Perceptions of Urban and Rural Participation

There was a perception from participants that smaller and rural based groups were at a disadvantage at the decision-making events to larger urban centred groups. It was felt that urban based groups would be better able to mobilise and attract their members and supporters. In practice, there was only a slightly higher percentage of successful projects (54%) from urban areas, with 46% from rural areas. In terms of unsuccessful projects there was actually a higher percentage from urban areas with 60% compared to 40% for rural areas. The same pattern emerged with those projects which withdrew with 56% representing urban areas and 44% representing rural areas.

"It was a very long day felt it was very unfair for small groups trying to compete against large clubs who have lots of followers to vote for them."

"It was good to be supported. However, it seemed rural groups were at a disadvantage as they had fewer supporters to start with and tended not to be as well-known as bigger urban groups."

"Popularity contest superseded the need of the projects. Voting favours larger populated areas in contrast to rural areas. Groups having to travel to vote as opposed to groups right beside voting station. Online voting system also flawed but probably fairer as a whole."

Voting process

Voters found it easy to take part in Tak£500+ and would vote again. Some participants found the limit of 10 votes restrictive when there were so many worthwhile projects to choose from. It was suggested that posters with written instructions for the voting process would be beneficial.

"Great event. Lots of interest. Just a pity more money wasn't available for the efforts each of the participants put into it."

"A lot of work - budget bigger!!"

"Lots of worthy causes. Choice of 10 very restrictive."

Hybrid Decision-making Events and Voting

Tak£500+ was purposefully designed to be an in-person process with in-room voting. The central reasoning behind this was to create the best circumstances for groups to establish or strengthen connections. This was viewed of heightened importance given the isolating impact which Covid-19 had on local communities. Adopting an in-person approach also enabled the PB Working Group to compare and contrast the merits of both the online Tak£500 and the in-room Tak£500+ processes. It is evident from the feedback from voters, groups and partners that the in-person decision-making events enabled excellent community connections. However, limiting the process and voting to in-room only does exclude those who are housebound, face mobility issues, have caring responsibilities or who prefer to participate online. Hybrid approaches should be considered for the next PB process to enable groups and voters to participate both in-room and online, or through the introduction of proxy voting at in-room decision-making events for those who face barriers to participating in-person.

This may, however, reduce attendance at the events and lessen the additional benefits of connecting with other groups and individuals.

"A hybrid approach of video/online/email voting and on site would be better. Rural groups and especially those who have elderly and disabled users find it more difficult to attend in person."

"Online voting as well as in person voting."

"I found the Market Stall Event made it impossible for us to continue with the application which was a real shame when so much hard work had been done to fulfil requirements and ultimately be successful in the first stage. I personally don't think this way of voting for a community event is the right way to go about it. The previous year people had to vote online which made it so much more accessible to those unable to attend a physical event. If there has to be a physical aspect to the voting, there should also be an online aspect. Having one way of voting that was impossible for some people to take part in was very short-sighted."

Electronic Voting

The high participation at the decision-making events elongated the time required by the Working Group members to count the votes, this had the knock-on effect of extending the time required to announce the results to the groups. The four-month timeframe from initial application to groups finding out if they have been successful was too long and should be shortened. Consideration should be given to investing in electronic voting options which would produce instant results and reduce delay in announcing results. It would also reduce time and input requirements of partners at this stage of the process.

Youth Participation

While the 8-15 age category was well represented through the voting process, younger people in the 16-24 age category were less likely to get involved making up only 5.6% of the vote. Including younger people on the Working Group, identifying youth champions, tailored information sessions or youth specific entertainment (e.g., Youtuber) may support further participation from this age category.

Recommendations for the Decision-making events

10. Reduce the duration of the decision-making events to a three hour or morning session to reduce the pressure on volunteer time.
11. Draw on the expertise of the Community and Voluntary Sector Panel members and community development officers to provide support to lower capacity groups and volunteers hosting the market stalls.
12. Targeted communications and messaging should be planned to increase understanding of the 'market stall' and 'voting' elements of the PB process. The Tak£500+ video of the decision-making events should be drawn on as a supporting tool to demonstrate and widen understanding for future PB processes.
13. Further promote the Take 5 message to Voters at the decision-making events.
14. Consideration should be given to a hybrid model which enables both in-person and online or proxy voting to reduce barriers to carers and those who may be housebound or face barriers to in-person participation.
15. To improve the efficiency of the vote count and reduce delay in announcing the results of Tak£500+ consideration should be given to the introduction of electronic voting (both in-person and online).
16. Youth Champions should be identified and supported to raise awareness of Tak£500+ and to represent the needs of younger people on the PB Working Group.



STAGE 5 - Project Delivery

What worked well?

Addressing community defined needs

81 community-led and supported health and well-being projects were delivered across the borough to meet locally defined needs. All of the successful groups felt that they had addressed needs in the community. Project delivery promoted the Take 5 public health message and groups felt that they were empowered to make a positive change in their local communities. Groups felt more confident, increased skills, increased their visibility within the community and created new connections with other groups and individuals in the community.

"Groups well guided and supported through the process."

"Providing clear guidance on do's and don'ts after receiving grant."

Financial administration

The financial administration of the PB funding was outsourced to East Border Region who effectively and efficiently managed the grant process. This was essential to the process as the Community Planning Team did not have the staff resource to undertake this role.

What could be improved?

Support for Unsuccessful Groups

Additional formalised support is required for groups that are unsuccessful to signpost them to other sources of funding or to support them to connect with other relevant groups or organisations. Despite Working Group members contacting each of the ten unsuccessful groups, the majority of groups (71%) felt that there was inadequate support to help their group after they heard their idea was unsuccessful. As awareness of Tak£500+ grows there is likely to be an increase in applications which will inevitably translate to larger numbers of unsuccessful groups. This will increase the demands on levels of support required at this stage in the process.

“While we are delighted, we were successful we feel it must have been extremely disappointing for those who weren’t. Creating competition between community groups isn’t necessarily helpful.”

“After we saw the results, we were feeling disappointed. At the same time, we are happy that we were part of this Event as we learnt a lot. It was the first time we participated in this programme.”

“It was disappointing, but having seen so many great projects out there, we could understand.”

Financial administration

Although it would not have been possible for the Community Planning Team to undertake the financial administration, the team felt somewhat disconnected from the groups as they had no further contact with groups after the decision-making events until the Celebration event. A dedicated financial administrative support within the Community Planning Team would enable connections to be continued with groups from start to end.

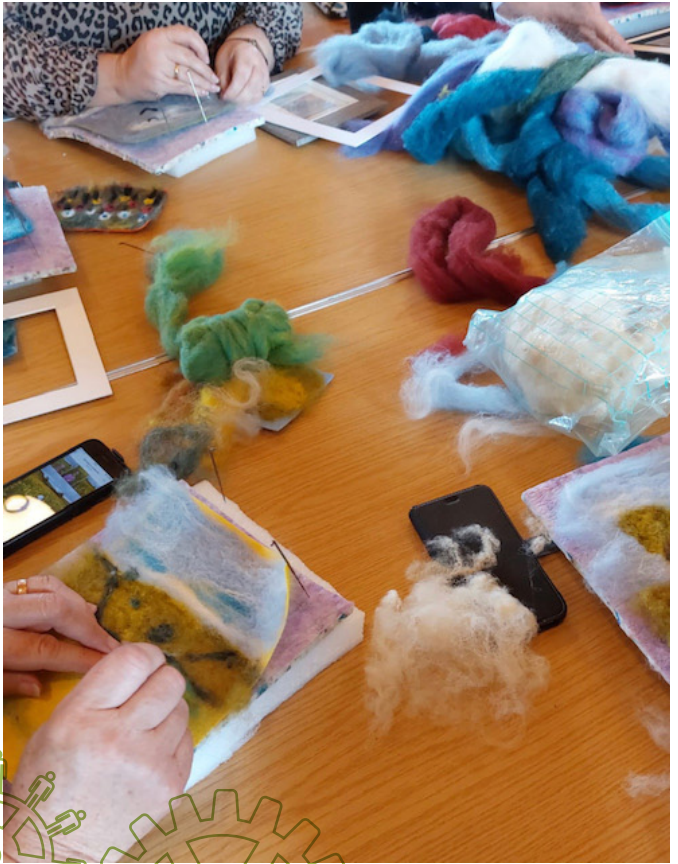
Project delivery time

Due to the delay in announcing the results of the vote at the decision-making events, projects had a shorter delivery period of just under four months. It was felt by a number of groups that it would be beneficial to extend the project delivery period.

Recommendations for Project Delivery

17. Additional formalised support is required to support unsuccessful groups. Demand for this support is likely to grow as the Tak£500+ process progresses.
18. Consideration should be given to extending the project delivery period to six months.

“The process was easy and the only comment I would make is the time frame to have it spent by was quite short.”





STAGE 6 - Celebration and learning

What worked well?

Sense of achievement and connection

The Celebration Event enabled groups to come together and hear the positive difference and impacts which each of the projects had delivered within their communities. This is an important accountability step in the PB process. There was a real sense that groups and individuals who participated valued the process as much as the resource available, it clearly wasn't just about securing the money but the connections that were made and the opportunity to raise awareness of their work.

It was an opportunity to showcase the range and variety of projects and acknowledge and applaud the achievements, commitment and passion demonstrated by the groups, their members and volunteers. It provided a further opportunity for the Community Planning Partners, CVS Sector Panel and the Council to connect meaningfully with groups across the borough.

Benefits beyond the PB resource

Several additional benefits beyond securing resources were advanced by participating groups including attracting new members, securing additional funding, developing links and connections with other groups, voluntary organisations, and the Council team, exchanging ideas, strengthening relationships between group members and improved confidence and physical and mental health of group members after participating in Tak£500+ and delivering project ideas.

"Through this funding and events, we were connected with TADA and now have a membership with this organisation that has opened up more opportunities for our group."

"Brought our club confidence back again and closer together...after the Covid isolation."

"We are a small club for disabled persons, and it made the members feel great that their community wants to support them."

"We were very appreciative of the support and all the positive comments we received on the day. We have also gained three new members attending our group and a few ladies who can't attend but are making hats, cardigans and trauma teddies for our hospitals and emergency services."

"At the PB celebration event meeting with other groups with similar projects and swapped ideas to tackle poverty, isolation and mental health."

"We were able to apply for the Community Foundation Fibrous fund through the networks with TADA and were successful in securing funding for laptops."

"We feel that we have made connections with other groups and other funding bodies."

"Yes, we had much more contact with other people. The project was brilliant for our physical and mental health."

Space to reflect and learn

It was emphasised that the PB Working Group was able to reflect and learn at each stage of the process. This enabled the Tak£500+ process to respond quickly to community needs and changing circumstances and ensured the process was agile and flexible. It will be important to capture learning from the process to shape and tailor future processes and to contribute to development of PB across the region.

What could be improved?

Capturing learning

In order to capture the learning and rich content from participants groups were asked to provide feedback on a number of occasions, this could be streamlined to reduce the burden on group time.

Dedicated PB Support Resource

A dedicated people support resource is required to successfully deliver PB. There are particular pinch points throughout the process where levels of support and people power are essential. For example, undertaking the criteria check process; facilitating the decision-making events; counting the votes; administering the grants; follow up support with unsuccessful groups; the celebration event; and capturing feedback to inform evaluation and learning.

Scaling PB

Across the board, participants think it is important to have a say on how public money is allocated, ranging from 96-100%. There is a clear appetite and support from voters and participating groups for further PB with communities deciding on larger sums of money across the borough. Groups noted that additional resources should be made available per project idea to better match the level of input and preparation required compared to other funding processes. It should be noted that while increasing the pot size may be more attractive to established groups it could also be off-putting to new or unconstituted groups.

Only two groups indicated that they were not supportive of the concept of PB feeling that it encourages competition between groups. They preferred an approach where all groups get an equal share of the budget.

“It was a great experience and would highly recommend to any group to avail of this.”

“A lot of preparation for a minimal amount of money.”

“The only reason we would potentially not take part again is due to the cost for covering staff time in the application process, market day, celebration event and evaluation. The level of work and time required for the £1,000 we received is considerable compared to other funding.”

“Take all the applications & divide funding equally.”

“Probably not unless the voting aspect changed. There shouldn’t be a vote to be honest. There should be a better criteria and community groups selected based on that.”

Recommendations for Celebration and Learning

19. Consider streamlining survey feedback questions for groups and voters.
20. Consideration should be given to increasing and offering a choice of individual pot sizes in the next PB project to reflect the differing needs and capacity of groups across the borough. This would require a larger PB Fund and additional administrative support.



06

HOW DID THE PROJECT MEET THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE PARTNERSHIP'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY?



There is a duty on all statutory community planning partners to seek the views of communities and to take them into account in community planning. ABC Community Planning Partnership has built and embedded this duty into its plans, strategies, and structures. The commitment to undertake the Tak£500+ process is rooted in the Community Planning Partnership's Community Engagement Strategy which was published in June 2019. The strategy seeks to enhance the partnership's community engagement through agreed standards, defined roles and clear actions; and to maximise opportunities for people to be more involved and have a meaningful say in decisions which affect their lives.

The Strategy sets out varying levels of engagement and ways that communities can participate with differing levels of influence. It supports partners to determine which level and style of engagement is most appropriate and presents a set of seven standards¹² to shape consistent engagement processes and to be used as a lens to assess and improve impact. Through Tak£500+ the partnership has demonstrated its commitment to working together to empower communities by creating and supporting meaningful opportunities for people to influence decisions on how local projects are delivered.

TAK£500+ AND THE PARTNERSHIP'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

a) Responding to the challenges of engagement

The Strategy highlights that as the Partnership's ambition grows towards achieving engagement where the public have more influence on its decisions, it will encounter three main challenges¹³.



¹²<https://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards>

¹³Escobar, O 2014, Towards Participatory Democracy in Scotland. in POST (ed.), Scotland 44: Ideas for a new nation.

Participatory Budgeting is identified in the strategy as an engagement method that can help to address and respond to these three challenges.

- 1) **Inclusive and diverse:** views and perspectives should be representative of wider society. As stated elsewhere in the report, the largest age-group of voters in the Tak£500+ process was those aged 8 to 15. Children's voices are less often heard in public consultations and more can be done to increase the inclusion of younger people at the application stage through youth led projects and at the voting process.
- 2) **Creating spaces for dialogue and deliberation:** spaces of exchange which promote informed decision-making. At the Tak£500+ decision events space and time was allocated to enabling local people to learn about and connect with community groups to inform vote allocation. This deliberative element of Tak£500+ should be safeguarded and further developed through providing information on each of the project ideas in advance of the decision-making events.
- 3) **Impactful:** contributions are valued and make a difference. Community groups were enabled to design their own projects and voters could see the difference their participation made to the final decision of where money was allocated. Ultimately, 81 community led projects were delivered.

b) Standards: Measuring the Quality of the Tak£500+ Process

The Standards for Community Engagement¹⁴ adopted in the Community Engagement Strategy and the PB Charter¹⁵ for Northern Ireland have been drawn on by the PB Working Group to reflect and assess the quality of the Tak£500+ PB process. The PB Working Group scored the process highly across the features and elements of both quality mechanisms as illustrated in the table and star diagram below. 'Working Together' and 'Building Relationships' were viewed as particularly strong along with the approaches adopted to 'Reflect and Learn' and 'Celebrate Shared Action'. Notwithstanding this, there was recognition that there are areas for further refinement and progress including supporting the process to be even more inclusive and garnering commitment for participative democracy at a regional level. A full presentation of results is available in Appendix 4.

Standards for Community Engagement and PB Charter¹⁶ Scores

Standards (S)	Score	PB Charter (C)	Score
Inclusion	5 Very Good	Inclusive	4 Good
Working Together	6 Excellent	Building Relationships	5 Excellent
Communications	5 Very Good	Transparent	4 Good
Planning	5 Very Good	Tailored	4.5 Very Good
Support	5 Very Good	Supported	4.5 Very Good
Methods	5 Very Good	Empowering	4 Good
Impact	5 very Good	Reflect and Learn	5 Excellent
		Celebration of Shared Action	5 Excellent
		Commitment	4 Good

¹⁴ <https://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards>

¹⁵ www.participatorybudgetingworks.org/charter

¹⁶ Where there was a clear connection between the features they were considered together



Tailored' and 'Supported' scored 4.5 by PB Working Group Members

TAK£500+ AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Tak£500+ exemplifies what community planning was developed to achieve. The statutory guidance on community planning envisages partnerships as bridges linking regional and local priorities and resources more effectively through collaborative working. Community planning is viewed as a platform for integration and planning of public services to achieve better outcomes for citizens. The vision set out in the community plan should focus on tackling causes with preventative or anticipatory measures. Community involvement and partnership working are seen as integral to the process and the legislation creates duties on partners to undertake both.

In this vein, the Tak£500+ PB project links the priorities of local people and groups in ABC with the Take 5 public health message. Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing is a set of evidence-based public health messages aimed at improving the wellbeing of the whole population. By connecting with others, learning, being active, giving and taking notice we can maintain and improve our mental wellbeing. Promotion of Take 5 is led by the Public Health Agency, and because it is about early intervention and prevention, partners from other sectors such as housing, community safety, sport and the council see the benefits and collaborative gain which can be achieved in participating in the Tak£500+ PB project. It not only meets their own objectives relating to individual wellbeing and community involvement in decision making but also contributes to the realisation of the Confident Community and Healthy Community outcomes in the community plan¹⁷.

¹⁷ Confident Community: Everyone has opportunities to engage in community life and shape decisions – we have a strong sense of community belonging and take pride in our area. Healthy Community: People are making positive lifestyle choices. They are more resilient and better equipped to cope with life's challenges.

Eight statutory and voluntary partners pooled almost £92,000 for the funding pool and financial administration of the project. Council and other partners also contributed staff and volunteer time to the PB Working Group for design and delivery. Council contributed staff time to manage the project and other associated costs such as event delivery and promotion. Whatever each partner contributed; they gained much more than they contributed through leveraging their own resources against the combined contributions of all partners to the project. However, as evidenced pooling budgets from partners is not always straightforward. The contracting and funding arrangements that are necessary to facilitate contributions from some partners create an additional burden on the Council and are counterproductive to effective partnership working. PB is a time and resource intensive way of delivering public services and additional staff resource is required if the partnership is to continue to grow PB as a delivery mechanism for the community plan. While partner contributions enabled council to contract a third-party organisation to administer the funding, managing applications and running the events also requires investment in additional staff.

The broad range of partners from different sectors working together towards a shared purpose created an energy and enthusiasm that contributed to the project's success. There is potential for ABC Community Planning Partnership to build on the learning from Tak£500+ and scale up the approach through larger grant programmes and mainstreaming. This would require further commitment from partners and may require extending membership of the partnership to include government departments and local businesses in addition to existing statutory and voluntary partners.

MAKING THE CASE FOR SCALING PB AND INFLUENCING REGIONAL POLICY

Leadership and Commitment

At a borough level the Council and Community Planning Partnership have demonstrated leadership and commitment to embedding PB in community planning as part of a healthy participative democracy through the continuation of Tak£500+. There was wide acknowledgement of the energy and excitement which PB has generated within the community and the importance of empowering and enabling local communities and younger people to take decisions on spending priorities to address locally defined needs. Equally, there is a clear message from the community that there is an appetite for more and bigger PB processes.

As outlined above, despite partner enthusiasm for PB, the process of securing partner contributions is time consuming and delays in securing commitments each year can impact on project planning when the funding pool is not in place.

There is agreement across community planning structures that there is substantial evidence that PB is working, that it is delivering on shared outcomes and that this presents the opportunity for further scaling of PB with increased budgets and greater participation.

SOLACE have played an important role in elevating awareness of PB within local government and the Tak£500+ process has been showcased through a cafe conversation at a recent NI Leadership & Governance Conference where there was a high level of interest.

Elected Members, Partners and community planning governance structures including the Shared Leadership Sub Committee, the Community Planning Chairs' Group and the Partnership recognise that there is an opportunity for further buy in from central government and Departments who can provide both a people resource to support PB processes and larger budgets which could be pooled together through PB to deliver on community planning outcomes and programme for government priorities.



Influencing regional policy

Given the significant challenges which some partners face in pooling budgets on a partnership basis it is important to continue to engage and build the case to scale PB with partners. The Community Planning Partnership should play an oversight role here and enable a Memorandum of Understanding approach to be adopted. The introduction of Memorandums of Understanding could act as a regional exemplar for others in the public sector to streamline commissioning arrangements, reducing bureaucracy and delay in pooling resources and reporting between partners.

This is timely, as the Department for Communities through a regional Community Planning Working Group is currently identifying the perceived and real barriers that can limit or prevent partners from pooling resources. Guidance and good practice are expected in the next 12 months. There is an opportunity to share learning from Tak£500+ with the Community Planning Working Group and The Executive Office to inform this work programme and showcase how PB can support the delivery of community planning and programme for government outcomes.

Recommendations for making the case for scaling PB and influencing regional policy

21. The Community Planning Strategic Partnership should request that partners incorporate PB into their business plans to facilitate timely PB project design and planning.
22. Further investment for the partnership in a dedicated Participatory Budgeting Support Officer and additional resources are required to embed participative democracy and continue to grow quality PB across the borough.
23. Community Planning Partners should explore options for increasing contributions of their staff time available to the PB Working Group for the delivery and oversight of PB.
24. The Community Planning Team should work with partners to approach local businesses about contributing to PB through their social corporate responsibility commitments.
25. The Community Planning Partnership should seek buy in from The Executive Office and the Department for Communities to invest in PB to support the delivery of community planning outcomes and programme for government priorities.
26. As a regional exemplar, the Partnership should enable a Memorandum of Understanding approach to be adopted to reduce bureaucracy and delay in pooling resources between partners.

Disseminating learning and steps towards mainstreaming

Drawing on the PB Charter and Standards for Community Engagement has ensured a quality focus to both the planning and evaluation of Tak£500+. This learning should be disseminated widely to showcase the positive impacts achieved. There is an opportunity to contribute to regional learning through promoting Tak£500+ through the PB Works case study map of good practice^{18w}. Learning and the positive impacts of Tak£500+ should be disseminated widely at both a local and central government level to build the case for continued PB grant-making and the introduction of mainstream PB at both a borough and regional level.

The Community Planning Partnership is well positioned to build on the learning gleaned from the first two PB processes to consider the introduction of a mainstream PB approach where communities direct partners' service delivery and spend. However, it should be recognised that the efforts required to deliver Tak£500+ make it challenging to focus on identifying opportunities to introduce mainstream approaches. The Partnership should prioritise time and resources to identify a challenging issue which could benefit from a collective and targeted approach through mainstream PB. For example, younger people and their mental health and wellbeing. Even a project with a narrower focus would bring broad benefits and contribute to several outcomes in the community plan. This would offer an innovative approach, empowering the community to direct how partners plan and deliver services on this issue to better meet community defined priorities.

¹⁸ www.participatorybudgetingworks.org/map

Recommendations for disseminating learning and steps towards mainstreaming

27. The Community Planning Team should support partners to communicate the benefits of PB within their own organisations. For example, developing information slides and briefing materials to share with their colleagues and boards.
28. The Partnership should share practice and learning from Tak£500+ with the Department for Communities regional Community Planning Working Group to inform guidance and good practice on pooling resources on a partnership basis and the role which PB can play in delivering community planning and programme for government outcomes.
29. The Partnership and the Department for Communities should jointly host a Learning and Impact Event with community planning partners and other key stakeholders at local and central government levels to ensure the learning and positive impacts achieved from Tak£500+ is disseminated widely and contributes to regional learning.
30. The Partnership should promote and share learning from Tak£500+ through the regional PB Works Case Study Map.
31. The Partnership should prioritise time and resources to identify a challenging issue which could benefit from a collective and targeted approach through mainstream PB. For example, younger people and their mental health and wellbeing.



07

RECOMMENDATIONS TO REFINE AND GROW PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING



This section presents the recommendations outlined in sections five and six to refine and grow PB at both borough wide and regional levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PB WORKING GROUP

- 1) The membership of the PB Working Group should be expanded to include representatives from groupings which have been underrepresented in Tak£500+. This should include representatives from minority ethnic communities, disability groupings, younger people and non-constituted groups.
- 2) The PB Working Group should conduct targeted outreach and support sessions with the identified underrepresented groupings to enable them to participate. Community development support from across partners, including Council District Electoral Area officers, should be drawn on to support those who are further away from power and decision-making processes to engage in the design and delivery of Tak£500+.
- 3) Partners should incorporate Tak£500+ into their budget planning cycles to provide greater and more timely certainty of the resource input they can contribute to the process. To support this approach partners should be assisted to communicate the benefits of participating in Tak£500+ to bolster wider support and commitment within their respective organisations.
- 4) A Memorandum of Understanding should be developed for partners to streamline pooling of budgets and reporting on a partnership basis. This would provide accountability and clarity to all partners about what each is contributing and gaining from the process. It also shares responsibility across partners and sustains arrangements in the event of personnel changes.
- 5) The opportunity for the business sector to invest in Tak£500+ should be explored and promoted to secure additional resources or sponsorship for the process to meet the expected increase in levels of demand.
- 6) Consideration should be given to incorporating participation from underrepresented groups as a specific element of the shared purpose for the next PB project.
- 7) The application form should highlight the requirement to attend the decision-making event so that groups are aware of this time commitment from the outset.
- 8) Standardise categories of data collection across partners to aid usage and compatibility.
- 9) Ensure partners with technical expertise sit on the eligibility check panel.
- 10) Reduce the duration of the decision-making events to a three hour or morning session to reduce the pressure on volunteer time.
- 11) Draw on the expertise of the Community and Voluntary Sector Panel members and community development officers to provide support to lower capacity groups and volunteers hosting the market stalls.
- 12) Targeted communications and messaging should be planned to increase understanding of the 'market stall' and 'voting' elements of the PB process. The Tak£500+ video of the decision-making events should be drawn on as a supporting tool to demonstrate and widen understanding for future PB processes.
- 13) Further promote the Take 5 message to Voters at the decision-making events.
- 14) Consideration should be given to a hybrid model which enables both in-person and online or proxy voting to reduce barriers to carers and those who may be housebound or face barriers to in-person participation.
- 15) To improve the efficiency of the vote count and reduce delay in announcing the results of Tak£500+ consideration should be given to the introduction of electronic voting (both in-person and online).
- 16) Youth Champions should be identified and supported to raise awareness of Tak£500+ and to represent the needs of younger people on the PB Working Group.
- 17) Additional formalised support is required to support unsuccessful groups. Demand for this support is likely to grow as the Tak£500+ process progresses.
- 18) Consideration should be given to extending the project delivery period to six months.
- 19) Consider streamlining survey feedback questions for groups and voters.
- 20) Consideration should be given to increasing and offering a choice of individual pot sizes in the next PB project to reflect the differing needs and capacity of groups across the borough. This would require a larger PB Fund and additional administrative support.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY PLANNING TEAM, COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP AND GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

- 1) The Community Planning Strategic Partnership should request that partners incorporate PB into their business plans to facilitate timely PB project design and planning.
- 2) Further investment for the partnership in a dedicated Participatory Budgeting Support Officer and additional resources are required to embed participative democracy and continue to grow quality PB across the borough.
- 3) Community Planning Partners should explore options for increasing contributions of their staff time available to the PB Working Group for the delivery and oversight of PB.
- 4) The Community Planning Team should work with partners to approach local businesses about contributing to PB through their social corporate responsibility commitments.
- 5) The Community Planning Partnership should seek buy in from The Executive Office and the Department for Communities to invest in PB to support the delivery of community planning outcomes and programme for government priorities.
- 6) As a regional exemplar, the Partnership should enable a Memorandum of Understanding approach to be adopted to reduce bureaucracy and delay in pooling resources between partners.
- 7) The Community Planning Team should support partners to communicate the benefits of PB within their own organisations. For example, developing information slides and briefing materials to share with their colleagues and boards.
- 8) The Partnership should share practice and learning from Tak£500+ with the Department for Communities regional Community Planning Working Group to inform guidance and good practice on pooling resources on a partnership basis and the role which PB can play in delivering community planning and programme for government outcomes.
- 9) The Partnership and the Department for Communities should jointly host a Learning and Impact Event with community planning partners and other key stakeholders at local and central government levels to ensure the learning and positive impacts achieved from Tak£500+ is disseminated widely and contributes to regional learning.
- 10) The Partnership should promote and share learning from Tak£500+ through the regional PB Works Case Study Map.
- 11) The Partnership should prioritise time and resources to identify a challenging issue which could benefit from a collective and targeted approach through mainstream PB. For example, younger people and their mental health and wellbeing.



APPENDICES



Appendix 1: PB Working Group Membership

John Beattie, Triangle Housing

Annette Blaney, ABC Council

Clive Bowles, Portadown Rugby Football Club

Derek Browne, Business Partnership Alliance

Lynette Cooke, ABC Council

Edel Cunningham, Volunteer Now

Cathy Devlin, ABC Council

Elaine Devlin, ABC Council

Mark Doran, ABC Council

Jennie Dunlop, ABC Council

Stephen Fields, West Armagh Consortium

Stephen Harland, Ark Housing Association

Frances Haughey, ABC Council

Michelle Hazlett, Northern Ireland
Housing Executive

Austin Kelly, Clanmil Housing

Chris Leech, Craigavon Area Foodbank

Sophie Lester, ABC Council

Michelle Markey, ABC Council

Gerardette McVeigh, Southern Health
and Social Care Trust

Joan Noade, ABC Council

Noreen O'Callaghan, ABC Council

Laura O'Hagan, ABC Council

Patrick O'Toole, Sport NI

Tracey Powell, Southern Health
and Social Care Trust

Stephanie Rock, ABC Council

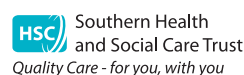
Karen Ross, PSNI

Simon Sloan, Department for Communities

Billy Stewart, ABC Council

Vicki Titterington, Linking Generations

The PB Working Group was supported by
Louise O'Kane and Sinéad McConnell from
Community Places



Appendix 2: List of Successful Projects

	ARMAGH
1	Apple Blossom 50+ Club - Don't Leave us Behind, we're important too - IT classes and room hire
2	Armagh City Girls Rugby - Girls Rugby Blitz
3	Armagh Harps GAA for ALL Group - 12 week social inclusion programme for kids with special or additional needs (4-12 years)
4	Armagh Men's Sheds - singing happy tuition costs
5	Armagh Recreational Gaelic Football - 20 football kits for lads and dads
6	Armagh Set Dancers - Let's Dance Project learning set dancing
7	Ballyhegan Davitt's GFC - replace youth goal posts
8	Bol Chumann hEireann - road bowling youth development programme
9	City of Armagh Rugby Football Club - P7 mini rugby 2023 tour to Barcelona
10	Clady Community Association - 8-week Winter Fun Programme of games and activities for children
11	Clady Gaelic Football Club - Community Gym Project, weights and cardio equipment
12	Collegeland O'Rahillys, GAC, Camogie Club - 4 week in-door fitness programme for women
13	Collegeland O'Rahillys, GAC - 10-week underage Basketball Camp
14	Crafty Stitchers' Knitting Group, Armagh - Materials and equipment to knit clothing for new-born and premature babies
15	Hub Youth, Richhill - Easter Event with crafts and activities
16	Keady First Responders - First Aid Equipment
17	Lisnadill Primary School PTA - Country Kidz Health and Wellbeing sessions
18	Longstone Residents' Association - Easter week outdoor activities for children
19	Loughgall Girl's Academy - Girls Football Group (6 -12 years)
20	Madden Creative Writing Group - A journey through landscape, memory and history - mentoring and facilitation to create a publication
21	Maidens of Macha - Showcase Anniversary Celebration
21	Middletown Friendly Club - Cultural Connections Day Trip to National Trust Address House and meal
23	O'Connell's GAC - Sensory Football Camp for children
24	O'Connell's GAC, Tullysaran - Camogie Club - 15 helmets and camogie sticks for parents
25	Our Lady's Primary School Council, Tullysaran - 8-week soccer coaching programme for girls only and boys only
26	Portadown Armagh Railway Society - caring for historical railway infrastructure
27	St Colmcille's Grange GFC - range of exercise classes and internet awareness training
28	St Joseph's Camogie Club, Madden - Exercise Classes to bring the community together
29	St Peter's Primary School Parent Support Group (PTA) - Planters, Tubs, Window Boxes and Troughs
30	Tullysaran Community Association - Nifty Fifties Club Health and Wellbeing Programme
31	Tullysaran Community Association - Teenfit, fitness programme for younger people
32	Tullysaran Walkers - Hi-Viz safety equipment, gazebo, hot water canisters and promotional t-shirts
33	Tullysaran Walking Club - Youth Beats Winter Blues 6-week programme of activities and pop up coffee shop
34	Westenders - Social Dance Therapy weekend

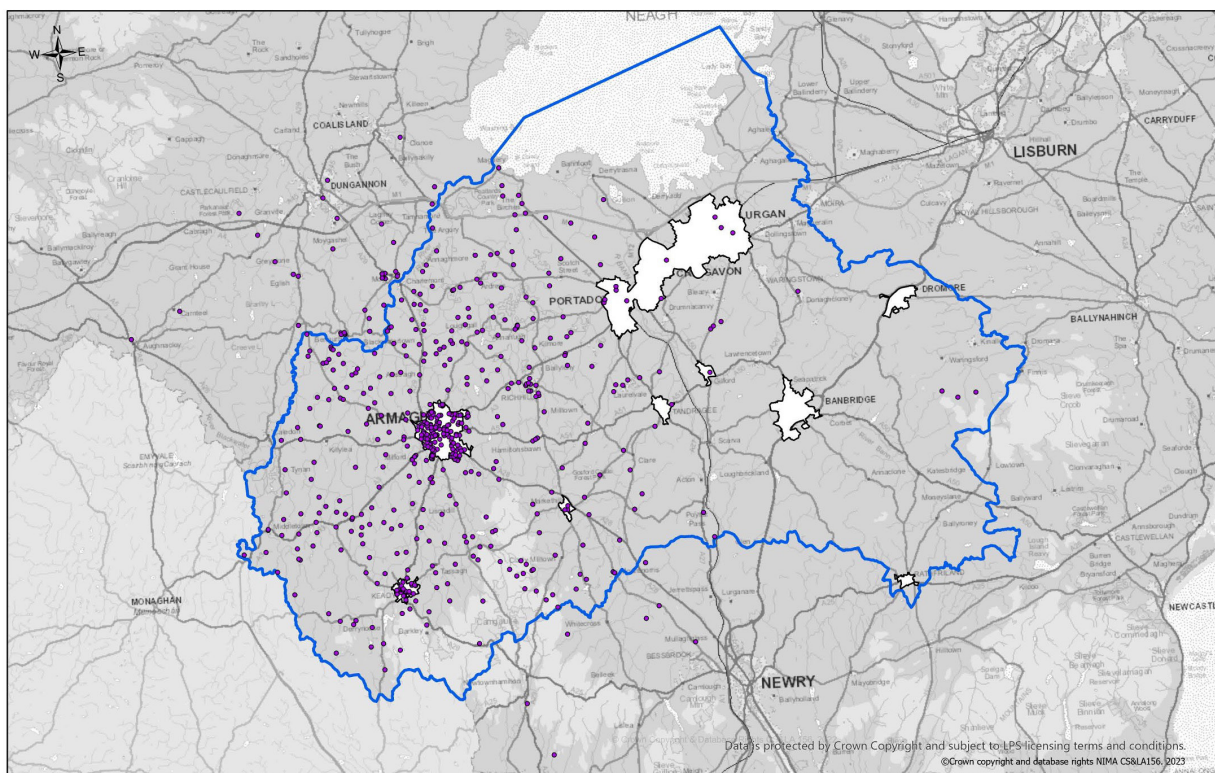
	BANBRIDGE
1	Aghaderg Circle of Friends – Let's get Going and Dance
2	Banbridge Table Tennis Club - Bat & Chat - Over 50's Social Table Tennis.
3	Carnew Rural Society - Connecting Carnew Rural Community through learning/activities
4	Changing Lives NI - Bringing the inside out
5	Friends of St John's Primary School Gilford - Bridging the Move Movement.
6	Garvaghy Parish Sunday School - The Secret Garden - a community garden.
7	Good Companions - Plant Grow and Enjoy
8	incredABLE – Community Meals
9	Inland Waterways Association Portadown and Newry branch - Scarva compound creation!
10	Inland Waterways Association Portadown and Newry branch - Sluice Keeper's Cottage refresh.
11	Magherally Parish Church - Installation of a Heartsine Defibrillator.
12	New-Bridge Intergenerational Strategy Group - Intergenerational Project
13	Via Wings - Recycled Teenagers

	CRAIGAVON
1	Annaghmore Men's Shed - Purchase of a Wood Planer for the Men's Shed and engage in more training for the young people
2	Aspire NI - After school homework sessions to explore extra-curricular activities
3	Bleary Primary School - Improving Outdoor Play, buying wellie and outdoor storage shed to enable outdoor play
4	Bleary Primary School PTA - Improving Outdoor Learning, buying and setting up tables in the playground to enable outdoor learning.
5	Clan na Gael Health and Wellbeing - Community Meal to address loneliness and bring people together
6	Clann Éireann Youth Club - Sensory Room, creation of a sensory space within the Youth Club - sensory materials
7	Craigavon Child Contact Centre - Building Connections, Nintendo game console and games
8	Craigavon Youth for Christ - Drumbeg, three sessions for at risk young people to inspire positive impact
9	Derrytrasna Playgroup - Emotional Wellbeing and Learning through Debutots, 10-week Emotional Wellbeing Programme
10	Drumgor Detached Youth Work Project - Youth Wellbeing Cafe, 12-week wellbeing cafe for Young people aged 13-18 year
11	Friends of St Francis Primary School Lurgan - Get Moving, a series of health and wellbeing activities
12	Friends of St Mary's Primary School Derrytrasna - Everybody Move, a series of health and wellbeing activities
13	Friends of St Patricks Derrynaseer - Healthy Wellness Programme, PE and wellbeing for pupils, sibling, parents and carers.
14	incredABLE - Community Meals, 200 nutritious meals for individuals and families in need
15	Knitted Knockers of Northern Ireland - Community Garden, potting shed, picnic tables, flower beds and seeds
16	Loughgall and District Improvement Association (LADIA) - Walking Tour Booklet
17	Lurgan and North Armagh George Russell Festival Society - ABC Community Literary Bus Tour, bus hire, tour guide, guide booklet and refreshments

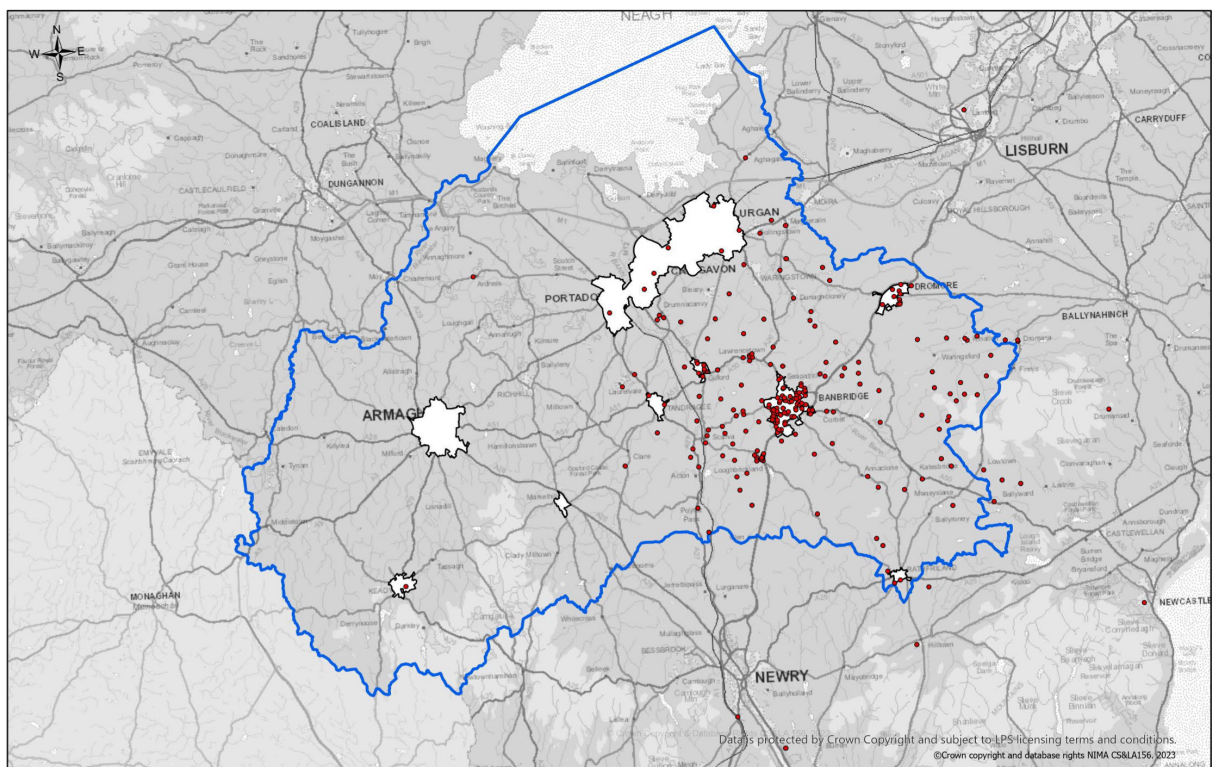
18	Lurgan Cub Scouts - Creative Camping, springtime weekend camping adventure to Gosford Forest Park
19	Magheralin Community Association - Growing Together Young and Old gardening project including St Patrick's Primary School and Magheralin Village Primary School
20	Ozanam Men's Shed - Open Door for All, an open week showcasing the benefits of men's and women's sheds
21	Portadown Men's Shed - Materials to make picnic tables for the Knitted Knockers.
21	Sean Treacy's Hurling Club - Wristy Hurling, bids and wristy hurls to develop hurling skills and social interaction
23	Ski Ability NI - Team Uniform
24	St Ronan's College - Improving the Public Environment and Promoting Wellbeing and Creativity, improvements to the front entrance, artist fee and materials
25	Tartaraghan Parish Church - Picnic and Sensory Garden including picnic tables and walkway.
26	The Deaf Club - Weaving Together - 6 weeks class group activity learning how to build willow basket specifically for people are deaf, sign language users or people who have hearing impairments.
27	The Fitzone Foundation - HIM Health in Mind, cooking and games equipment to allow men of all ages to come together
28	The Hygiene Bank (Moir/Craigavon branch) Here if you Need, Pop Up Stall Day and hygiene products
29	Totz N Teenz Day Care - Sand and Water Toddler Project, equipment for sand and water play
30	Train 2B Smart - Recycle, Imagine and Learn, 3D spool printer to allow young people to learn about the importance of recycling.
31	Tullygally Primary School - Promote Train to be smart, promotion and information Evenings to raise awareness of and fundraise for 'Train to Be Smart
32	Tullyroan Methodist Church - Tullyroan Together, activities to bring people together
33	Upper Bann - University of the Third Age (U3A) - Friday Locomotion Tour Group, entrance fees, tour guides and refreshments
34	Wolfe Tone Gaelic Athletic Club - Connecting the Community after Covid with an Old School Sports Day

Appendix 3: GIS Mapping

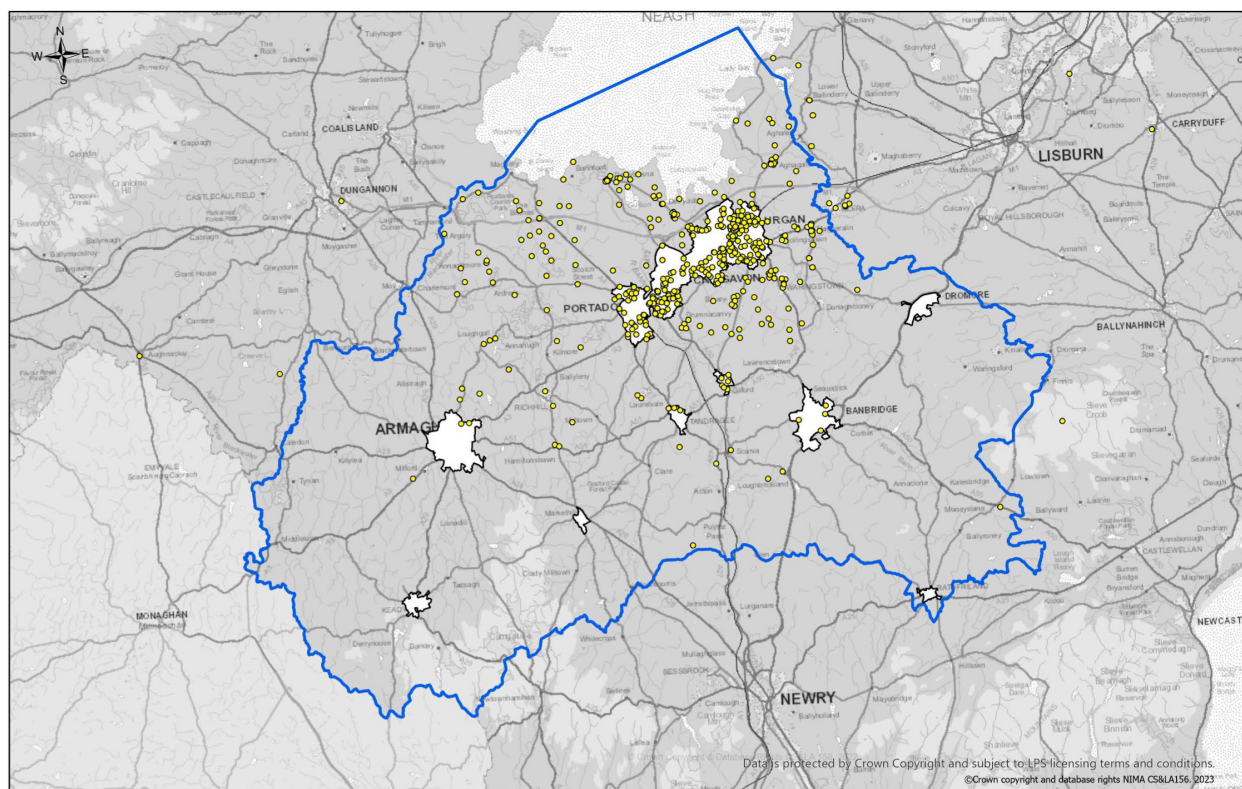
3.1: Tak£500+ Armagh Decision-making Event, distribution of voters by post-code



3.2: Tak£500+ Banbridge Decision-making Event, distribution of voters by post-code



3.3: Tak£500+ Craigavon Decision-making Event, distribution of voters by post-code



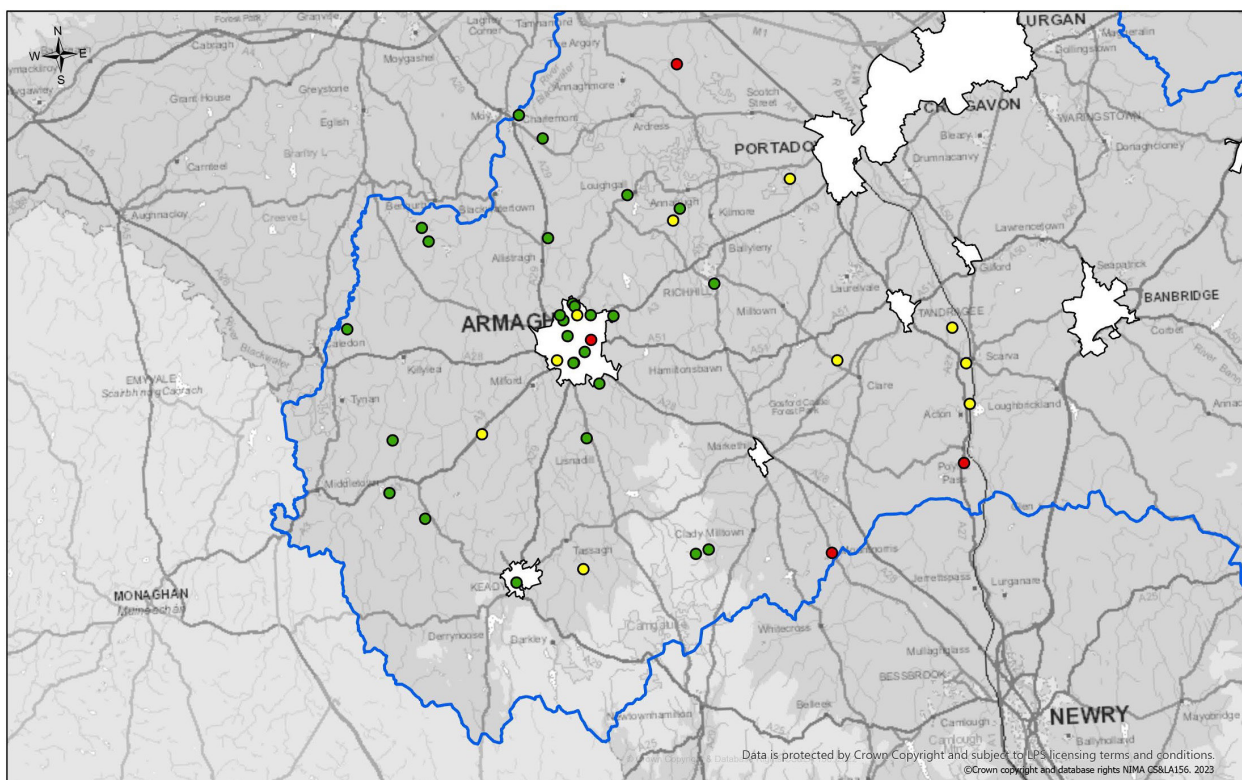
Map Key

- Voter Post Code Locality
- Urban Settlement Area
- ▬ ABC Council Boundary

Tak£500+ Voters' Home Post Codes
Craigavon Decision Event 28th January 2023
(Rural & Urban)



3.4: Tak£500+ Armagh Decision-making Event, distribution of successful, unsuccessful and withdrawn project groups by post-code



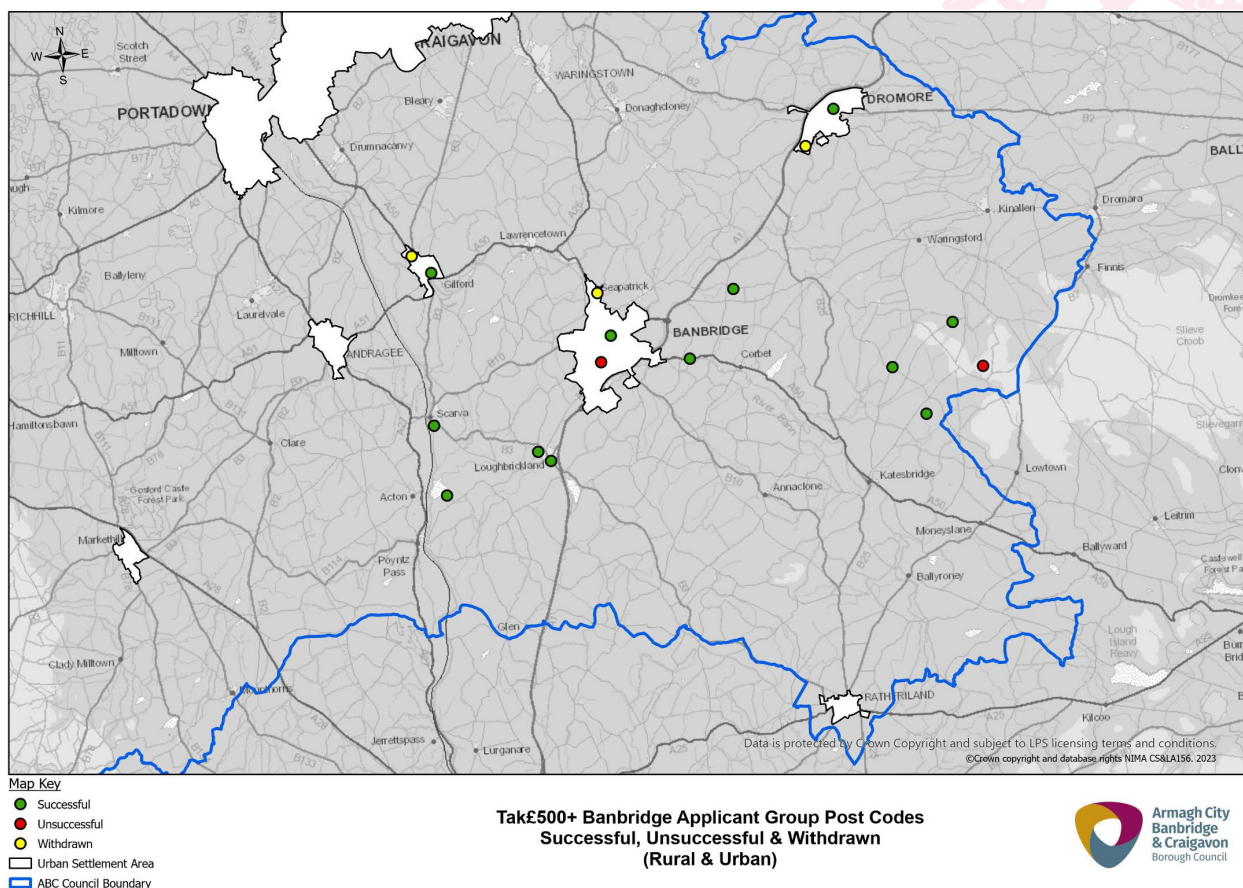
Map Key

- Successful
- Unsuccessful
- Withdrawn
- Urban Settlement Area
- ▬ ABC Council Boundary

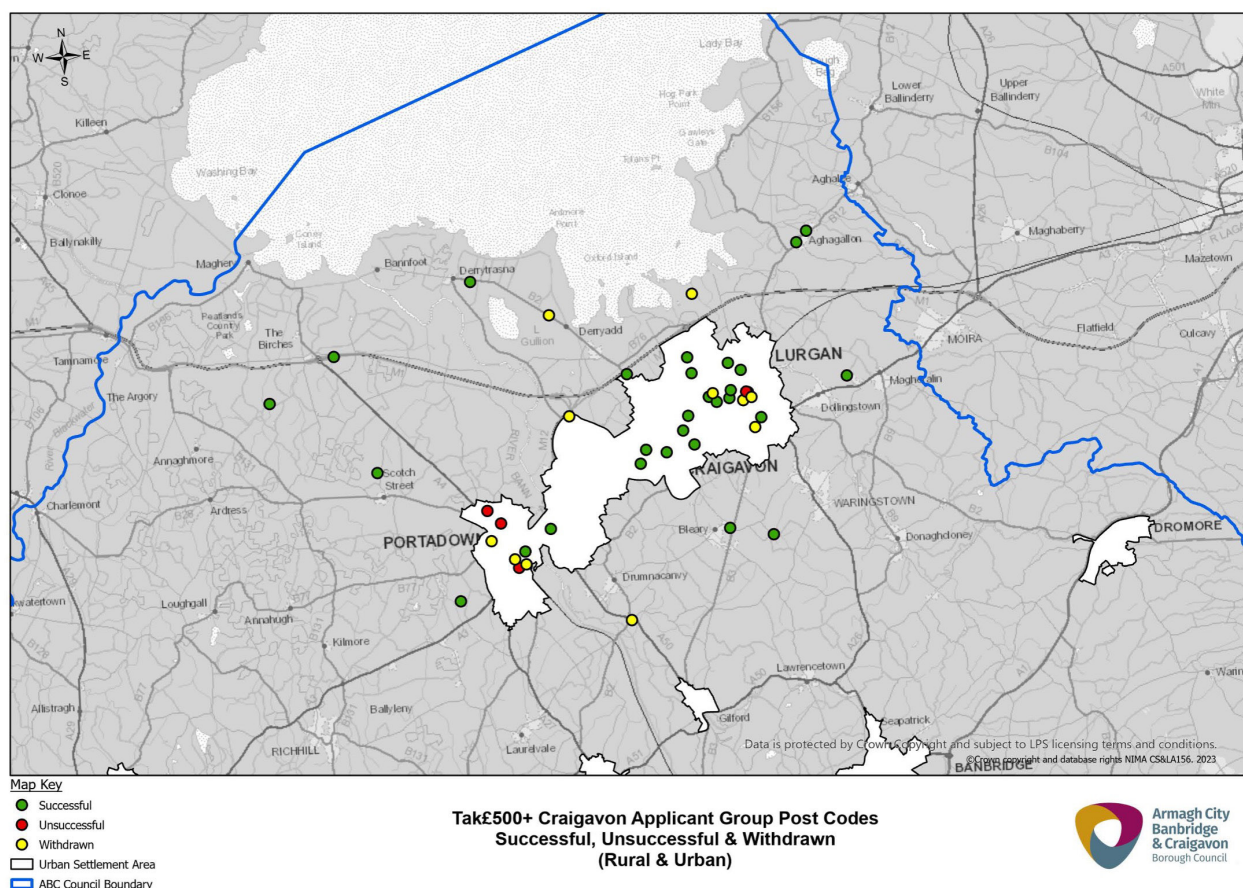
Tak£500+ Armagh Applicant Group Post Codes
Successful, Unsuccessful & Withdrawn
(Rural & Urban)



3.5: Tak£500+ Banbridge Decision-making Event, distribution of successful, unsuccessful and withdrawn project groups by post-code



3.6: Tak£500+ Craigavon Decision-making Event, distribution of successful, unsuccessful and withdrawn project groups by post-code





**Interested in participatory budgeting or community planning in the
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council area?**

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

☎ 0300 0300 900

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