



CONNECTED

A COMMUNITY PLAN

for Armagh, City Banbridge & Craigavon Borough

2017-2030

UPDATED 2025

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FOREWORD

Connected, A Community Plan for Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough 2017-2030 was published in 2017. It sets out the long-term vision and is the overarching plan for the Borough. Its purpose is to make life better by improving social, economic and environmental wellbeing and it creates a two-way link between community plans at a local government level and any Programme for Government.

As a partnership we are proud of the plan and how we have worked together to realise its aspirations. Since the plan was published, we have formed a broad and inclusive partnership to oversee community planning in the Borough and to support local collaboration. Every two years we have reported on progress towards outcomes at a population level and on delivery of our action plans through our Statements of Progress. As community planning partners we have also brought the plan back into our own organisations where it has influenced our wider work in the Borough.

Our community planning partnership understands that there are ways of working that underpin the delivery of shared outcomes and a collective approach to improving wellbeing. We have focused on developing these ways of working that include practising shared leadership, involving the public in our decisions and actions and using evidence to inform our decisions. We believe that, through these ways of working we can make a real difference in the Borough.

In the past we have reviewed our actions and our partnership structures but had not amended our long-term outcomes or population indicators. However, the Borough has experienced the Covid-19 pandemic and continues to respond to increased demand for crisis support as a result of the current cost of living crisis. In addition, the legislative and policy context around environmental sustainability has changed. During the pandemic the partnership's priorities for collaboration also changed. Although much of the ambition and measurements in Connected remain relevant, we decided that, given these events, the time was right to revisit the plan as some changes were likely to be necessary.

This mid-point review of Connected is the result of a series of workshops and conversations across our statutory community, voluntary and business partners. Followed by a 13 week public consultation period involving proactive engagement with the general public, partners, the community and voluntary sector, business partners and numerous section 75 groups. In all over 200 people from 63 organisations have taken part to inform the review of Connected. The review has also benefitted from a review of statistics relating to poverty, mental health, environmental sustainability and equality. I would like to thank all partners, members of the public and organisations who have enthusiastically taken part in this mid-point review and the Community Planning Team in the Council who have supported the process.

It is important that the plan fulfils the needs and ambitions of the people who live in the Borough and through the extensive public engagement process we are confident we have a plan that will benefit all of our residents. Our long-term aspirations will enable us to deliver collectively upon the community plan over the next five years. In a challenging financial climate now more than ever, it is important that we are maximising the use of our collective resources. With this in mind, we will consider the regional initiatives that are relevant to the community plan, and we will welcome the opportunity to play our part in the programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'

Colette Rogers

Head of Health and Social Wellbeing Improvement (South), Public Health Agency
Chair of ABC Community Planning Strategic Partnership

OUR 2030 VISION

We have a happy, healthy and connected community, a vibrant and sustainable economy and appealing places for living, working and learning.

REVIEW PROCESS

As partners we are all committed to our vision for the Borough which did not change as a result of this review process. It is our aspiration to deliver on this vision through ongoing collaboration, review, development and delivery of more integrated people-centred public services. To help us achieve this we have nine joint long-term outcomes. We hope our revised outcomes will continue to help us streamline the complexity of aligning a wide range of local priorities with those existing and emerging regionally.

We recognise that managing the relationship between national and local priorities is important. Delivering better outcomes for our Borough relies on the interaction between and across these priorities. While an individual partner may lead on a particular outcome or action, success will depend on collective commitment and responsibility.

Our vision and outcomes have been developed through an ongoing period of data gathering, engagement and consultation. In this first review of Connected, we are proposing changes that would result in two new outcomes relating to an inclusive economy and environmental sustainability.

Further information on the review process is available to view armaghibanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/resident/connectedreview

With the continued commitment of all partners, the support and engagement of local people and key stakeholders across the public, business and community and voluntary sectors we can make our 2030 vision a reality.

OUR PLAN



CROSS CUTTING THEMES

AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO ARE OUR THREE CROSS CUTTING THEMES:

CONNECTIVITY

We believe connectivity is integral to improving quality of life. Through our plan we will work to transform and connect all areas of our Borough physically, digitally and socially through shared collaborative approaches.

EQUALITY

We are committed to promoting equality, good relations and inclusion and believe them to be central to improving quality of life for everyone. A peaceful and inclusive society is vital to ensuring that we have a welcoming, confident and safe community. As part of the review process, we have updated our Equality Impact Assessment on our plan, considering the needs of section 75 categories¹. The updated Equality Impact Assessment is available on our website.

SUSTAINABILITY

We will work to improve everyone's quality of life economically, environmentally and socially, without compromising our future generation's ability to develop, grow and flourish. As part of the review of the plan we are also proposing the inclusion of an outcome on environmental sustainability under the Place theme.

Our cross-cutting themes have been central to the review of the community plan and through the review we have considered how they can be strengthened. We have done this by suggesting changes to our outcomes and population indicators and will continue to ensure that they are central to our actions.

¹Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities to comply with two statutory duties. The first duty is the Equality of Opportunity duty, which requires public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the nine equality categories of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without.

The second duty, the Good Relations duty, requires that public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group.

OUR NINE OUTCOMES

Our nine outcomes are the core of our plan. They set out what we hope to achieve, why we believe it is important and how we will know if we are succeeding. They do not sit in isolation; they are closely linked and in places overlap with one another. Our nine outcomes are presented in the following pages. Each section details the following:

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

Our outcomes are about the wellbeing of people in our Borough. The long-term outcome is our aspiration for the conditions all people in our Borough will live in by 2030.

INDICATORS

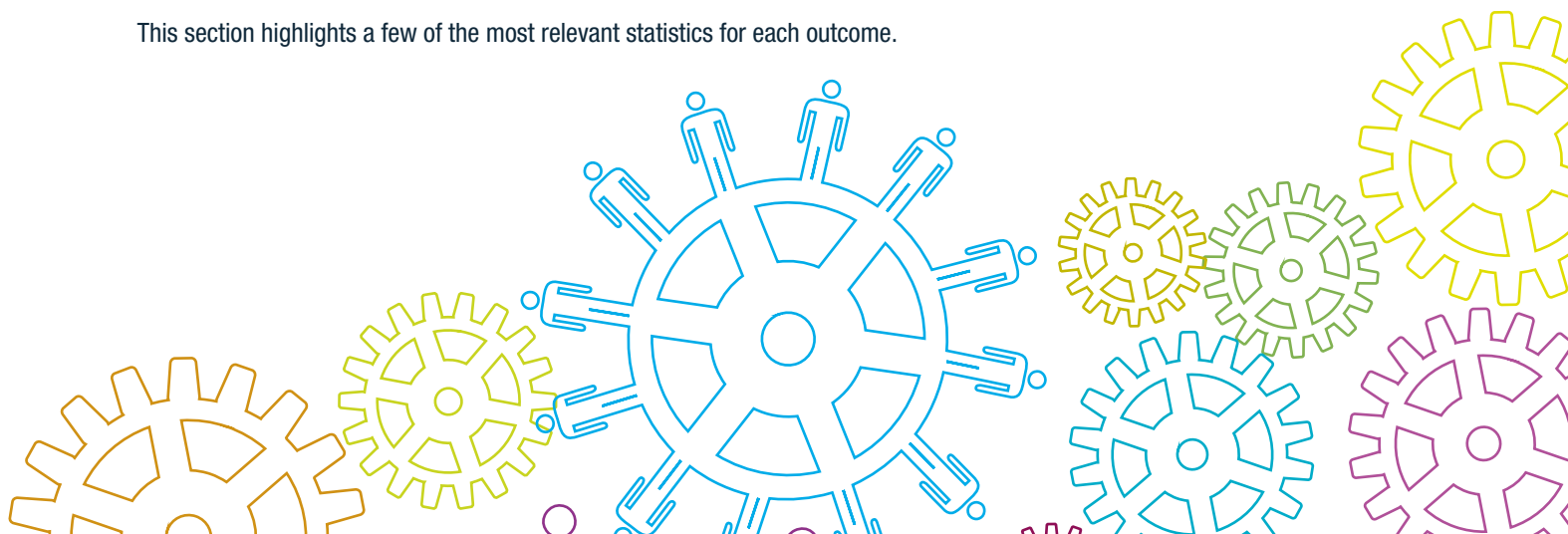
Our indicators will help us quantify our success. They will be used as a measure of whether or not we are achieving our outcomes. Our indicators, like our outcomes, are about the whole population. Our action plan contains performance measures, and these will be updated as part of the review.

THE STORY BEHIND THE OUTCOME

For each outcome we have included some information about why we believe this outcome is important, the current situation, what has been delivered to date and the types of actions that might be taken forward as we review our action plan.

KEY STATISTICS

This section highlights a few of the most relevant statistics for each outcome.





1

COMMUNITY

We live in a caring and safe Borough, where people lead healthy, fulfilling lives and take pride in shaping, nurturing and enriching community life.

Portadown People's Park

CONNECTED COMMUNITY

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

Everyone has opportunities to contribute to community life and shape decisions - we have a strong sense of community belonging and take pride in our area.

INDICATORS

- **Percentage of people who feel that they have an influence when it comes to any of the local decisions made in their neighbourhood²**
- **Percentage of people who feel a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood³**
- **Percentage of people who feel lonely at least some of the time⁴**

THE STORY BEHIND THE OUTCOME

Strong, active and connected communities are an integral part of a happy and inclusive Borough. They provide the foundations on which a thriving economy can be built and provide an environment within which people can lead fulfilling lives. An engaged and participative community is both innovative and resilient. It builds and supports networks, ventures and connections that help bring people together. There is a rich and vibrant Community, Voluntary and Social [CVS] Enterprise Sector across our Borough and we are hearing that this is one of our biggest strengths. The organisations in this sector often fill gaps in service provision that may not be addressed by statutory agencies and play a key role in helping to address disadvantage and isolation in strong and dynamic communities by providing links to services and support. The sector's response to Covid-19 was phenomenal responding to the crisis whilst strengthening communities. Unfortunately, after the pandemic many groups lost volunteers who haven't returned. Lack of funding and short-term budget cycles have compounded groups struggles so there is a greater need to support our CVS sectors in succession planning and capacity building.

Involving communities in decisions is important and for this reason the partnership has embedded public participation in decision making into its plans, strategies and governance structures. We believe that increasing the opportunities that our residents and other stakeholders have to co-design and provide feedback is essential to delivering the services that the public need and want. Take £500+ the partnerships Participatory Budgeting programme is an example of this and has directed spend in local community led projects to address public health.

We are hearing that loneliness and social isolation is on the increase and our partners have told us that it is not just older people who may be lonely, making it important to look across all age profiles when considering how services can be developed to be inclusive for everyone. At present there is no regional loneliness strategy and with rising levels and a need for funding, a strategy is long overdue.

The Borough benefits from a well-established Community and Voluntary Sector Panel (CVSP) bringing together over 60 groups and providing a voice for the sector locally and supporting many smaller community and voluntary groups

² and ³ Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK)

⁴ Continuous Household Survey (CHS), NISRA

to deliver much needed and valued community activities and services.

The partnership remains committed to creating opportunities for young people to take part in local decisions that are meaningful to them and recently, the ABC Youth Voice forum has been developed and were involved during the public consultation. The Youth Voice aims to bring together distinct ideas, opinions and knowledge from diverse young people across our Borough.

Through the CVSP and other networks including ABC Age Friendly Alliance and the Loneliness Network there are opportunities for organisations to share best practice and learning across the sector, both within the Borough and beyond. Many people aspire to improve their own quality of life, and that of their neighbours. Therefore, we want to encourage civic mindedness across the Borough and increase strong feelings of community spirit and belonging.

We recognise how issues such as clean, litter free streets, reduced pollution, adequate parking etc. can impact on people's quality of life and are important in building pride in our area. It is important that people feel they have influence regarding decisions affecting their area and lives. We have a responsibility to nurture this, to understand our community's needs, to provide opportunities to engage and to support self-reliance and resilience. Valuing, encouraging and supporting volunteering is also key to making people feel connected within their community.

The Partnership through its place shaping agenda will continue to involve local people in planning their local area. To date 2069 people have been involved in the development of Place Plans for Armagh, Banbridge and Dromore. Further Place Plans for Craigavon, Lurgan and Portadown will be developed with local people.

KEY STATISTICS

Belonging & Influence
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon



79.5%

Feel a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood compared to 81.7% in NI (2021-23)

19.6%

Feel have an influence on local decisions made in their neighbourhood compared to 18.9% in NI (2021-23)

22.3%

of people aged 16+ reporting feeling lonely at least some of the time compared to 17.8% in NI overall (2023/24)

46%⁵

of individuals have volunteered within the last 12 months in Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon, similar to NI overall (2023-24)



Since 2020, through Participatory Budgeting, 12,660 people aged 8 and over have voted to direct spend for 254 community projects.

2,578 people⁶



engaged in placeshaping process

The percentage of people aged 16+ feeling lonely at least some of the time is available by age group for Northern Ireland overall (2023/24):

Age Group	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
% of people	18.7%	15%	17.0%	17.5%	18%	17.5%	23.3%

⁵ In 2023/24 questions relating to volunteering were reviewed to improve collection of data relating to informal volunteering. As a result of changes to methodology and content, figures for 2023/24 are not directly comparable to previous years.

⁶ To date 2,578 people have been involved in the development of Place Plans for Armagh (591), Banbridge (909) and Dromore (1,078).

HEALTHY COMMUNITY

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

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

INDICATORS

- **Number of preventable deaths per 100,000 population (age standardised preventable mortality rate)⁷**
- **Gap in life expectancy between most deprived areas and the Borough overall⁸**
- **Percentage of people who participate in sport or physical activity on at least one day per week⁹**
- **Number of people prescribed medication for mood and anxiety disorders per 1,000 population¹⁰**

THE STORY BEHIND THE OUTCOME

It is our aspiration that everyone is able to achieve the longest, healthiest and most fulfilling life possible. There are several factors that determine our health. Our lifestyles and health behaviours play an important role and there is growing recognition of the impact of the places and communities we live in on our health¹¹. However, there is consensus that the wider determinants of health, such as having a good job, a good standard of housing and education make the biggest difference to our health outcomes¹².

The fact that we have an increasing and ageing population is well documented and not specific to this Borough. However, we have seen a higher than average overall population increase in recent years (9.5% in the Borough compared to 5.1% in NI 2011- 2021). While a growing population is positive for our social and economic wellbeing, it will impact upon local projected health and social care needs.

Covid-19 has impacted our health and our health system. Across Northern Ireland we saw a heroic effort by our health and social care services to respond to the pandemic as it unfolded and many services are still recovering, while facing yet more challenges such as a difficult financial climate for our public sector and meeting the needs of our ageing population.

Our health population indicators show no improvement in health inequalities or preventable deaths since our Community Plan was published. This is not surprising given the last few years. We know that poverty has a negative impact on our health¹³. Inequality gaps remain within the Borough, as evidenced by different rates for life expectancy, hospital admissions for self-harm, drugs and alcohol and deaths due to drug and alcohol related causes.

We know that our Bough has similar rates of suicide (10.6 per 100,000 for the period 2018-22) to Northern Ireland overall (11.6 per 100,000), as well as comparable levels of drug and alcohol problems. However, these figures may mask more localised issues in certain parts of the Borough. Partners are reporting a strong link between addiction and poor mental wellbeing. During and after the pandemic, mental health has consistently been the priority issue identified by partners and communities. We are hearing about increased levels of anxiety and loneliness, including among children and young people. Currently just over one in five people locally are prescribed medication for mood and anxiety disorders and this rate rises to more than one in four people in the most deprived areas in the Borough.

However, we are seeing improvements in some of our health behaviours in the Borough. We are seeing an increase in

^{7 & 8} NI Health and Social Care Inequalities Monitoring System, Department of Health

⁹ Continuous Household Survey, Department for Communities

¹⁰ Northern Ireland Health Inequalities Annual Report, Department of Health

¹¹ King's Fund, 2018, A Vision for Population Health: Towards a Healthier Future

¹² Ibid

¹³ King's Fund, 2024, Illustrating the relationship between poverty and NHS services

levels of physical activity, and the percentage of people in the Borough who take part in sport at least one day a week is now 54% (2023/24), which is above the Northern Ireland average of 48%. We know that regular exercise improves our physical and mental health and can lower the risk of developing long-term conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and stroke. These statistics are encouraging for our partnership as we have worked hard through our Get Moving Framework to increase levels of physical activity locally and to educate those in our Borough that healthy lifestyle choices don't have to be expensive.

We want our Borough to be one where people of all ages can live healthy and active lives and where everyone is treated with respect, regardless of their age. Our Age Friendly Strategy will help us to manage the challenges and unlock the potential of our ageing population. We will continue to deliver this strategy to ensure that an age friendly ethos is built into all our actions.

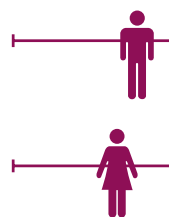
We will continue to act as a focal point for a range of health-related actions that will benefit everyone. Our hope is that the momentum we have generated around the Take 5 public health message through initiatives to address loneliness,

support volunteering, promote physical activity and support communities to embed the practice of Take 5 will empower more people to improve and maintain their individual wellbeing. Self-care of those in the CVSE sector and volunteers in our community needs to be a high priority, especially during the cost of living crisis and in the aftermath of Covid-19 so that we can support and grow this sector. We also recognise that our actions on the themes of anti-poverty, place and community engagement will contribute to this outcome through their impact on the wider determinants of health. The roll out of a new Integrated Care System for Northern Ireland will present additional opportunities to join up our efforts to improve health and wellbeing, including to address health inequalities. This will be enabled through ongoing engagement and involvement with the Southern AIPB (Area Integrated Partnership Board). We also recognise the importance of existing multi-sectoral partnerships in addressing some of the challenges in local health and wellbeing, such as Southern Protect Life Implementation Group and the Southern Area Outcomes Group of the Children And Young People's Strategic Partnership and we will continue to work alongside these partnerships to encourage resilience and improve wellbeing for our residents.

KEY STATISTICS

163 Preventable Deaths

per 100,000 population in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough for the combined years 2018-22 (263 per 100,000 in deprived areas in the Borough and 179 per 100,000 in NI overall)



The gap in Life Expectancy

MALE 2.9 years

between males living in the most deprived areas and the Borough overall has fallen slightly from 3.3 years in 2012-2014 to 2.9 years in 2020-2022. (Male Life Expectancy: ABC 78.8; ABC Deprived 75.9 and NI 78.4)

FEMALE 1.2 years

between females living in the most deprived areas and the Borough overall increased from 1 year in 2012-2014 to 1.2 years in 2020-2022. (Female Life Expectancy: ABC 82.8; ABC Deprived 81.6 and NI 82.3)



216 people
per 1,000 population

in the Borough are prescribed medication for mood and anxiety disorders (2022) (263 per 1,000 in deprived areas of the Borough and 225 in NI overall)



54% of people

participate in sport on at least one day per week compared to 48% in NI overall (2023/24)

Healthy Lifestyles

Diet & Nutrition
(2023/24)
Meeting '5 a day' guideline



49%

41%

Smoking
(2023/24)
Current smoker



14%

13%

Adult Obesity
(2019/20)
Obese ¹⁴



29%

27%

Physical Activity
(2023/24)
Meeting recommended levels ¹⁵



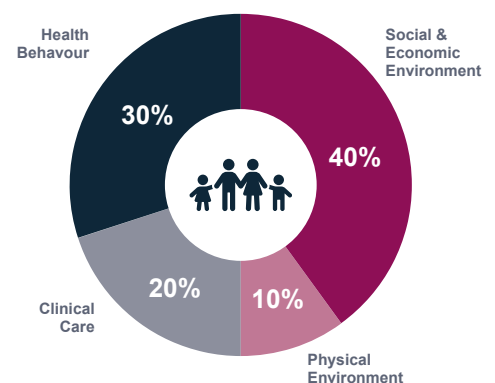
56%

55%

Southern Health & Social Care Trust

Northern Ireland

The Drivers of Health



www.sycamoreinstitute.org/tn-health-well-being-index

¹⁴ Question not asked in 2020/21, 2021/22 or 2022/23 and sample too small for estimate in 2023/24

¹⁵ Question asked in 2023/24 for first time since 2016/17

WELCOMING COMMUNITY

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

Our Borough is a safe, inclusive, respectful and peaceful place.

INDICATORS

- **Percentage of people reporting that fear of crime has a minimal impact on their quality of life¹⁶**
- **Number of accidental dwelling fires¹⁷**
- **Number of hate motivated incidents¹⁸**

THE STORY BEHIND THE OUTCOME

Creating a safe, respectful, inclusive and peaceful Borough which welcomes people from all backgrounds involves a collaborative approach. Working together to ensure that our residents feel part of their community, enabling them to feel happy, healthy and connected.

Our partnership believes that inclusivity should be at the core of this outcome. Our society has become more diverse, with increasing positive interaction between people from different racial, religious and cultural backgrounds. We want our Borough to be one that values the differences in people and recognises that people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experiences bring fresh ideas and perceptions and that this should be celebrated across the Borough. To further work in this area our partnership want to work with and build understanding with our LGBTQ+ communities.

Since 2015/16 we have seen a 4% increase in people who felt fear of crime has a minimal effect on their quality of life which is testament to the work of the Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP). Accidental dwelling fires in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough have decreased, and this could be attributed to several factors such as increased installation of smoke alarms, public safety campaigns, increasing numbers of home safety checks, community outreach programmes and information sessions.

Anti-social behaviour and in particular drug and alcohol abuse continue to feature as an issue of concern in our community. PCSP has continued to provide rapid bins to dispose of unwanted medication and the PHA's needle and syringe exchange service and drug and alcohol awareness programmes have been well attended and will continue to be delivered through schools and youth groups.

In our society we want to see all our population indicators showing a positive change. We hope that this shift will happen through the existing work taking place and through new initiatives such as the PEACEPLUS programme, DfC's People and Place Strategy and will be strengthened by the new Programme for Government. Collaborative work is already ongoing to address integration through Community Partnerships, Community Development and the PCSP through enhanced community policing and engagement that will offer education, engagement and integration programmes.

Hate motivated incidents in the Borough have increased from 149 in 2010/11 to 254 in 2023/24. Targeted programmes aimed at lowering the number of hate motivated incidents will come through a multi-agency approach. We want our residents to have the opportunity to promote and encourage mutual respect and understanding between all communities.

We need to ensure that people feel safe both within their own homes and within their community. Rising numbers of cases of

¹⁶ Northern Ireland Crime Survey, Department of Justice

¹⁷ Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

¹⁸ Police Service of Northern Ireland Statistics

violence against women and girls has led to a Northern Ireland Executive Strategy to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) We hope that by working together, we can bring about the change that is needed to end violence against women and girls. The lack of a women's refuge in the Borough is of concern as women have to travel outside of the Borough to avail of this service and we will work collectively to campaign for this.

Creating a welcoming community for all in our Borough

involves fostering an environment where everyone feels valued, respected and feels that they belong to and are proud of their community. Through all the Cross-cutting themes in our community plan and in particular through connectivity and equality we will strive to promote inclusivity, celebrate and appreciate diversity, encourage participation and volunteering opportunities, meaningfully engage and educate, support integration, connect people and communities and strive to make our Borough a safe, respectful, inclusive and peaceful place to live and visit.

KEY STATISTICS

73% of people in

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough reported that fear of crime has a minimal impact on their quality of life, this was the same in NI overall (2021/22)



64 Accidental dwelling Fires (2024)

in Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough, which equates to 10.1% of the 634 recorded in NI overall.



Total of 254 hate motivated incidents¹⁹

in the Borough in 2023/24 which accounted for 8.3% of the 3,070 recorded in NI overall.



Domestic Abuse (2023/24)

in Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough

2,271 domestic abuse crimes which accounts for 11.4% of the 19,954 recorded in NI.

3,664 incidents with a domestic abuse motivation (11.2% of NI (32,763))

¹⁹ Includes incidents with the following motivations: faith/religion; disability; transgender; sectarian; sexual orientation; and race.



2

ECONOMY

We are an internationally renowned destination - our competitive industries, productivity and outward facing economy provides the global platform to attract, develop and maintain talent, investment and high growth opportunities.

Armagh Stone

ENTERPRISING ECONOMY

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

Our Borough is a productive centre of excellence for entrepreneurship, innovation and investment.

INDICATORS

- **Survival rates of newly born businesses²⁰**
- **Business birth rates²¹**
- **Productivity - Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour worked²²**

THE STORY BEHIND THE OUTCOME

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough is a thriving entrepreneurial area with more than 9,300 VAT and /or PAYE registered businesses. The Borough has a business birth rate of 8.2%, which was just below the Northern Ireland average of 8.3%²³. For businesses born in 2018, more than 93% of businesses survived their first year in business with just over half of these businesses (50.4%) surviving 5 years in business. Generating GVA of £5.3bn in 2023, the Borough accounts for 9.4% of Northern Ireland's total GVA²⁴.

With significant strengths identified in sectors such as life sciences and manufacturing, construction and transport and logistics, the Borough is also recognised as the food producing heartland²⁵ of Northern Ireland which now spans from 'field to fork' with farmers, producers, suppliers and restaurateurs.

All this has been highlighted in the Department for Economy's Sub-Regional Economic Plan. Our Borough is home to some of Northern Ireland's most successful companies and largest employers including Moy Park, Almac Group, Tayto Group, Kingspan Water & Energy, Clearway Disposals, James E McCabe and Gordons Chemist (N&R Gordon).

Part of the appeal for these businesses will be our geographic position along the Dublin - Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) which is Ireland's most sought-after investment destination. As one of eight Council areas that make up the DBEC, the Borough is strategically positioned in a centralised location where it enjoys a unique natural co-dependency with the Republic of Ireland in trade and investment, tourism and labour²⁶.

In collaboration with Fermanagh and Omagh and Mid Ulster, the three areas form the Mid South West (MSW) Region which continues to be a major driver of the Northern Ireland economy with increasing shares of Northern Ireland's working population and increasing GVA. The strategy behind the Mid South West Growth Deal aims to transform the MSW region's economy and boost productivity. The MSW growth deal will bring opportunities with business cases being developed for investment including reinvigoration in Armagh Gaol, Green Energy District in Carn - Seagoe and an Agri Bio Innovation Centre.

While we are fortunate to have many strengths, there are a number of challenges that need to be addressed to ensure our Borough is able to continue to thrive. Productivity levels are lower than the Northern Ireland region and among the lowest in

²⁰ Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR), NISRA

²¹ Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR), NISRA

²² Subregional productivity in the UK, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

²³ IDBR, 2023

²⁴ Regional gross domestic product: all ITL regions - Office for National Statistics

²⁵ Invest | Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council | Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (dbec.info)

²⁶ Our Region - Mid South West Economic Engine (midsouthwestregion.org)

the UK. Productivity and Inclusive Growth was a key challenge identified throughout our consultation exercises as this is not only a means of boosting economic growth but is key to improving and sustaining peoples living standards over time which is particularly important given the current cost of living crisis. A recent report by the Productivity Institute, reported that “if growth is not inclusive, with the ultimate goals of well-being and sustainability, the UK’s ambition of raising productivity will fail.”²⁷ Improving productivity is also a key ambition of the Department’s sub-regional economic plan²⁸.

Another identified challenge is a need to provide more and better-paid jobs. In 2023, the Borough had an unemployment rate of 3.3%, the second highest of the eleven LGDs and above the Northern Ireland average of 2.3%. The partnership is working with local educational institutions to ensure training programmes and vocational courses are available in growth areas that would enhance the employability of residents while promoting and encouraging entrepreneurship would help stimulate job creation and increase and sustain economic growth. With average earnings²⁹ in Northern Ireland 8.6% below the UK average and the Borough still below the Northern Ireland average, a more competitive wage will also help to attract and retain employees in the Borough.

The business sector in the Borough is supported by the Business Partnership Alliance (BPA). This is a business led partnership providing a business support network for local businesses in both rural and urban locations across the Borough, giving them a strong voice to ensure local businesses are heard at all levels of government. A Labour Market Partnership also supports local people to have the skills, information, support and opportunities to succeed. In addition, a Local Economic Partnership will also be established which will bring together central government, the business community, universities and colleges, local enterprise agencies, and civil society.

With green innovation, sustainability, productivity and connectivity identified as the cornerstone of economic growth we will continue to seek investment in these areas through opportunities including MSW, DBEC and others such as the Digital Transformation Fund. We will also continue to lobby for much-needed connectivity improvements in road and rail infrastructure across the Borough where it remains somewhat underdeveloped, especially in rural areas.

KEY STATISTICS

Business birth rates currently

8.2%

in Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough
compared to 8.3% in NI overall (2023).



5 year survival rate

of new businesses born in 2018 was **50.4% in 2023** which was above the NI average of **47.7%**

Gross Value Added (GVA)

per hour worked (2022)
estimated at



£30.50

£34.70

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon

Northern Ireland

²⁷ TPI-Agenda-for-Productivity-2023-FINAL.pdf

²⁸ The Department for the Economy now has a sub-regional economic plan. This document is the new strategic approach to economic policy which will deliver improved regional balance Northern Ireland.

²⁹ Median gross weekly earnings, 2024

INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

Everyone has a decent minimum living standard

INDICATORS

- **Percentage of children (aged under 16) living in relative low-income families³⁰**
- **Gap in the employment rate for people with disabilities³¹**
- **Gross disposable household income (GDHI) per head³²**

THE STORY BEHIND THE OUTCOME

We believe that everyone who lives in the Borough should have a decent minimum living standard. This means having enough money to pay for housing, food, household bills and other necessities, and equal opportunity for access to education.

However, we are deeply concerned about the levels of poverty in the Borough. Over the past few years our partner crisis charities and advice services have been seeing increasing numbers of people who are unable to cover basic costs and are having to make difficult choices for their families of whether to 'heat or eat'. In 2023-2024 almost 14,000 people received food support and over 6,000 people benefited from support with fuel bills through the partnership.

Having a job is not always a protective factor. Food banks and other charities are seeing a significant number of people who are in employment, as low wages and insufficient working hours fuelled by zero hours contracts mean that they are unable to afford life's basics. Since 2021 the cost of living crisis has exacerbated poverty in our Borough as prices have been increasing much faster than incomes. More people are renting their home from private landlords. Rents are becoming less affordable, some rental properties are in very poor condition and the supply of private rental accommodation is not keeping pace with the demand for housing. More people are presenting as homeless, and partners are telling us how financial hardship

is having a detrimental effect on people's physical and mental health and wellbeing.

There are groups who also face additional barriers to employment and who are disproportionately affected by the current economic situation. During our engagement we have heard that the prohibitive cost of childcare is impacting on families, and especially women, preventing them from working or increasing their hours. There is an employment gap for people with a disability in the Borough. Currently 40% of people with a disability are employed, and although this has been increasing over the past few years, there is still a significant gap between the percentage of people without a disability who have access to the labour market. Community and voluntary organisations are seeing increasing numbers of people coming to live in the Borough from other countries, some of whom are facing additional barriers to accessing good work and education because of issues such as language barriers.

There is a rich and vibrant Community, Voluntary and Social Enterprise Sector in the Borough. These organisations operate through a combination of funding and income generation to fulfil their social purpose. They attract government, philanthropic and private investment into the Borough, employ a significant number of people, and provide volunteering and training. However, there have been growing pressures on these services due to insecurity of funding and a lack of volunteers.

³⁰ Children in low income families: local area statistics, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

³¹ Local Labour Market Insight Dashboard, Department for Communities, Northern Ireland.

³² Regional gross disposable household income, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Our partnership prioritised tackling poverty and social exclusion in its Covid-19 Response & Recovery Plan. Building on the response to the pandemic, partners have achieved a high level of integration in the provision of food, fuel and wrap around support to people experiencing financial hardship. Local businesses have made an important contribution through donations of food and drink, and this is expected to grow even more in the coming years. This response has been highly effective in maximising the use of available resources, but we believe that the hardship we are seeing should be prevented. Using the learning from our joined-up approach to crisis support, we will focus our future efforts on a more strategic course of action. This may involve seeking to influence the decisions of other layers of government.

Partners are already moving towards a more preventative approach to poverty. There are already four social

supermarkets in the Borough, and we will explore how we can work together to maximise the impact of social value procurement and the jobs we provide locally. We need to understand poverty in the Borough through lived experience.

Our Labour Market Partnership will continue to target its interventions to those groups with the most barriers to support them to fulfil their potential and achieve their goals in collaboration with local employers in the Borough.

We will continue to work together to increase the supply of mixed tenure affordable and sustainable housing and on a coordinated approach to addressing homelessness. As a partnership we will work to ensure that externally funded programmes such as PEACE PLUS, the revised People & Place Strategy and others contribute to the realisation of this outcome for an inclusive economy.

KEY STATISTICS



19.4% of children
living in relative low-income households
which is just slightly lower than the average
of 19.5% for NI (2023)

Gross Disposable Household Income

per head of population is estimated
at £18,389 compared to £18,685 in NI (2022)



The disability employment gap in 2023



**was estimated at
40.5 percentage points**
(NI gap (41.3 percentage points))

SKILLED ECONOMY

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

People are better equipped to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the dynamic economy.

INDICATORS

- **Percentage of the workforce in employment qualified to below level 2 and above, level 2 and above, level 3 and above, and level 4 and above** ³³
- **Employment rate (age 16-64)** ³⁴
- **GCSE attainment levels for students entitled to free school meals (FSME)** ³⁵

THE STORY BEHIND THE OUTCOME

It is our ambition to have a thriving and prosperous economy underpinned by the skills base of local people. The Borough benefits from a diverse range of quality and accessible educational and training provision, dedicated staff and excellent relationships with a range of voluntary and community based groups, services and facilities that promote and support lifelong learning and advancement. Continuing investment in further education campuses across the Borough will serve schools, students, employers and the community and will significantly transform the further education infrastructure as it provides the southern region with modern first class facilities.

However, statistics illustrate that employee wages are slightly lower in the Borough, than in Northern Ireland as a whole, both for those employees who work in the area and those who live in the area. Furthermore, the proportion of our young people leaving school with 5 or more GCSEs at grade C and above (including English and Maths) is almost 4 percentage points lower than the Northern Ireland average, while the attainment rate for free school meals entitled to free school meals (FSME) students in the Borough is 7 percentage points below the Northern Ireland average. Just 49.5% of students in the Borough achieved 5+ GCSEs grades A*-C including English and Maths in 2022/23, a fall of almost 9 percentage points since 2021/22.

The proportion of the workforce in employment and qualified to all levels has improved since 2013 however, the proportion of the workforce achieving level 4 and above qualifications has been falling in both the Borough and NI since 2020 and the proportion of the workforce with level 4 qualifications and above in the Borough is now 4 percentage points below the NI average (2023). The employment rate in the Borough in 2023 was 76.6% which is an increase of 1.4 percentage points in 2022 and 3 percentage points above the Northern Ireland average of 73.6%.

Engagement sessions have revealed skills shortages and mismatches within specific sectors and the economically inactive are facing barriers to work including lack of childcare, low wages, skills gaps or having a disability. Those migrating into our communities are contributing to the economy in many ways, though some are working in poorly paid jobs and less skilled jobs despite being over skilled and they need support to progress. The ABC Labour Market Partnership (LMP) has continued to run interventions supporting women from economically inactive to employment and worked to upskill those in lower paid jobs. The LMP also worked with businesses to encourage flexible working arrangements to encourage more females back into the workplace.

A vibrant economy is characterized by innovation and high levels of employment and productivity and this needs to be

³³ Labour Force Survey, NISRA.

³⁴ Labour Force Survey, NISRA.

³⁵ School Leavers Survey - Attainment, Department of Education, NISRA.

supported. It is important that everyone, and in particular young people, are encouraged to reach their full potential. Education is very important for life chances and early years education is of the utmost importance for children for their future development and employment opportunities and investment in this area is paramount.

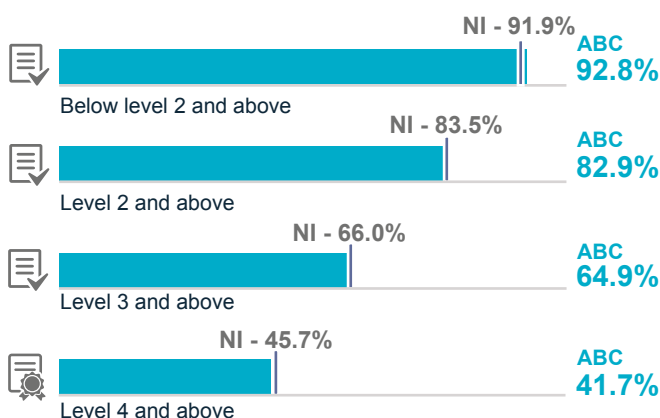
We must ensure that our potential workforce has access to clear and relevant pathways to employment, including apprenticeship opportunities, to bolster economic recovery and quality of life within the area. Disadvantaged individuals need supported to secure meaningful employment that is commensurate with their level of skill and ability, whilst

meeting the needs of the local economy.

To ensure a thriving economy we will also need to promote the benefits of lifelong learning and the upgrading of skills to ensure suitable transfer of skills from newcomers in our society to keep up with ever changing job market demands. In order to have a dynamic economy, we need to support closer collaboration between local businesses, education and training providers and the voluntary and community sector. We need to identify, understand and address skills gaps, work with employers to understand the options for skilled-based recruitment and better promote higher level apprenticeships and vocational pathways.

KEY STATISTICS

Qualifications of the workforce in employment (2022)



Employment Rate (Age 16-64)



76.6% ABC
73.6% NI

FSME Students Achieving 5+ GCSEs (A*- C) including GCSE Maths & English (2022/23)

49.5% ABC **56.5%** NI





3

PLACE

The Borough is a place of discovery, where unique cultural and natural assets are cherished and people are inspired to be creative, to grow and to flourish.

Navan Centre & Fort

CREATIVE PLACE

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

Our Borough is an inspirational and creative place offering quality, inclusive arts and cultural and heritage experiences.

INDICATORS

- **Percentage of people (aged 16+) engaging with arts/cultural activities in the past year** ³⁶
- **Number of heritage at risk assets saved** ³⁷

STORY BEHIND THE OUTCOME

Arts, culture and heritage play an important role in everyday life, enhancing our sense of place and improving well-being and quality of life. In our Borough, there is a wealth of art and culture, coupled with numerous archaeological and built heritage assets locally.

After remaining relatively stable for several years, the figures for 2021/22 showed that participation in Arts and Culture had fallen by more than 20 percentage points to 64% since 2019/20 (86%) highlighting the affect the pandemic has also had on this sector. However, recent estimates for 2023/24 show that engagement in culture and arts has increased again to 86% in the Borough. We are committed to providing memorable and unique arts, culture and heritage visitor experiences for those that live and visit our Borough. Our Borough already boasts a range of first class facilities as well as a range of community arts venues such as Millenium Court Arts Centre. The Marketplace Theatre and Arts Centre attracts audiences from far and wide and despite the pandemic has had a steady increase in visitor numbers year on year. The F.E McWilliam's Gallery and Studio attracts a wide range of visitors welcoming approximately 48,607 in 2024. The Gallery and

Studio are set to benefit from Levelling Up Funds with major investment planned, increasing the Boroughs offering.

The Borough is enriched by a thriving arts scene, populated with professional artists, creative industries, a host of localised arts-based interest groups and vibrant community festivals and celebrations. However, while the engagement process for the Place Plans reveals a strong arts community in the Borough, many individuals and groups feel disconnected from each other. Young people, those with a disability, and those dwelling in rural areas need to be targeted in terms of community arts and a collective effort also made to engage newcomers in the art scene.

A City of Culture bid was made in 2022 and Council as the lead partner was successful in making the longlist of cities for UK City of Culture 2025. The process of developing the bid generated a wave of support and excitement and created a renewed interest in and appreciation of the arts, culture and heritage of our Borough. Although the Borough was not chosen as the City of Culture; Council and its partners are leveraging the momentum and recognition to continue to grow as a thriving creative hub.

³⁶ Continuous Household Survey (CHS), Department for Communities, NI.

³⁷ Ulster Architectural Heritage, Heritage at Risk Register Northern Ireland, Department for Communities, NI.

Archaeological and built heritage forms an integral part of our environment. They are important sources of information about our past and represent significant landmarks in the present townscape and countryside. Balancing modern creative pursuits with the preservation of the area's rich heritage can be a delicate task.

Our Borough is also home to a rich heritage of archaeological sites, monuments and buildings, representing the aspiration and achievements of past societies and providing evidence of settlements from 9,000 years ago to the present day. We have one Area of Significant Archaeological Interest (ASAI) at Navan and our attractions are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. We will work in partnership with the other Royal Sites of Ireland and partners in progressing World Heritage for Navan and support Armagh Observatory and Planetarium in their bid for World Heritage status.

Further showing our commitment to being a Creative Borough the Townscape Heritage Scheme is one action from the Armagh Place plan, with an initial investment of £6.3million 15 buildings have been identified for restoration over the next 5 years. One example of this scheme in action is the famous terraced No.1 Seven House dating back to the 1770's.

We will continue to seek investment to preserve and where possible enhance our heritage and places. ABC Heritage Places

is a project aimed at preserving, celebrating and investing in the area's rich cultural legacy. Through collaboration and investment, this project will transform the Borough's historic fabric whilst protecting it for generations to come.

All of these combine to create an attractive and animated environment which enhances quality of life.

Through conversations with partners, and during our consultation phase, we have heard that it is important that people should be exposed to arts and culture at a young age, and this should be encouraged through schools as a way to connect the community to its roots. Considerations need to be given to how we can overcome barriers to engagement and increase recognition of the benefits of arts participation to individuals' quality of life.

We are committed to working with local partners to continue to develop creative talent, to innovate and grow the creative industries sector and to ensure that we deliver a vibrant, authentic, dynamic and inclusive arts and cultural offering that is accessible to everyone. Although it is historically difficult to quantify and qualify the positive impact of arts and cultural engagement, we will look at ways to help demonstrate the wide ranging nature of arts activities and their positive contribution to life-long learning, wellbeing, prosperity and sense of place.

KEY STATISTICS

86%

of people (aged 16+) engaged in arts/cultural activities³⁸ in the past year compared to 83% in NI (2023/24)

VISITORS TO FE
MCWILLIAM GALLERY

10,934 (2024)³⁹



40

heritage



at risk assets saved since 2006
(19 since the baseline 2016) which accounts for almost 11% of the total of 366 saves in NI

Engagement in Arts & Culture (2023/24)

86% engaged in culture/arts activities in past 12 months in ABC (83% NI)



	Attendance at Arts Events	Participation in Arts Activities	Used the public library service	Visited a museum or science centre
ABC	78%	35%	30%	36%
NI	76%	30%	23%	39%

³⁸ Have done at least one of the following in the 12 months prior to the CHS - engaged in the arts; used the public library service; visited a museum or science centre; and used PRONI services.

³⁹ Figures based on manual count as automatic counter at gallery currently not working.

REVITALISED PLACE

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

Our distinctive, inclusive and vibrant urban and rural places are at the heart of community and economic life.

INDICATORS

- **Level of social housing need** ⁴⁰
- **City and town centre vacancy rates** ⁴¹
- **Percentage of people who see town centres as safe welcoming places for people of all walks of life** ⁴²
- **Number of overnight trips made by visitors from outside Northern Ireland** ⁴³

STORY BEHIND THE OUTCOME

Our Borough has a rich offering of settlements including our city, towns, villages and rural areas. It is our aspiration that each urban and rural area values and protects its distinct identity and assets so that the Borough's full potential as a vibrant place for living, working, visiting and investing can be achieved.

A revitalised place is important as it contributes to a sense of community, improving quality of life, attracting visitors, businesses and creating economic opportunities.

We recognise that placeshaping improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the place, ensuring aspirations of the community are being realised and included in the process⁴⁴. Through the Partnership we developed the Armagh Place Plan, the first place plan in Northern Ireland followed by the Banbridge Place Plan and subsequently Dromore. We are committed to developing further place plans across the Borough, for Craigavon, Lurgan and Portadown which will be a catalyst for future projects related to investment, high streets, active travel, open spaces, tackling dereliction and connectivity, which will enhance spaces and

places for everyone. During place plan engagement some of the issues raised were challenges faced by independent businesses, accessibility of the town centres, attractiveness of the places, housing availability, community activities on offer, and improvements to our built and natural environments. Through working with groups such as the Age Friendly Alliance and the newly established Youth Voice Forum we will continue to ensure the voices of older and younger people are heard and that our city towns and villages are accessible for those who live and visit our Borough.

The number of people in our Borough who view town and city centres as safe and welcoming places for people of all walks of life has declined steadily over the years and is now 47.4% which is the lowest it has been. Similarly, the evening economy offering across the Borough has declined due to a range of factors and people now rate this offering as poor to fair. Engagement has also highlighted that the cleanliness of town and city centres factors highly in the attractiveness of these areas for residents. As a partnership, it is important that we continue to work together to deliver suggested actions across the place plans to improve the places for people to live here.

The rural character of the Orchard County, the upper Bann,

⁴⁰ Northern Ireland Housing Executive

⁴¹ Town Centre Database, Department for Communities, NI.

⁴² Northern Ireland Life & Times Survey (ARK)

⁴³ Tourism Statistics, NISRA.

⁴⁴ Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Corporate Plan 2023-2027

Lagan valley and Lough Neagh southern shoreline must be maintained and enhanced for everyone to enjoy by taking a sustainable approach to new development. Tourism as a sector has been hugely affected by external factors not just across our Borough but across the region. It is our aspiration that we capitalise on the Borough's unique assets and our signature events and continue to provide high quality, memorable visitor experiences. Our links to St Patrick, the Game of Thrones and the Food Heartland offering are all strengths that we can build on to attract people to our beautiful Borough.

Housing remains a huge challenge for the Borough despite sustained levels of investment in new social housing in Northern Ireland the gap between housing demand and supply continues to widen⁴⁵. This is evident in the Borough where the five year assessment for the period 2024-2029 shows a need for an additional 1,622 units. This forecast need is almost five times more than the need forecast for the period 2015-20 in our Borough. Further to this, the South Eastern Area Strategic Housing Market Analysis commissioned by the Housing Executive sets out that the demand for new intermediate housing aimed at low-income households across the Borough is estimated at 2,680 units between 2020 and 2035. This equates to an annual requirement of 180 intermediate homes per year.

Engagement has told us that there is a requirement for an increased supply of affordable homes which offer a mix of sizes, types and tenures to address the housing needs of a diverse population and contribute to vibrant and cohesive communities. The increase in our ageing population demands more accessible, adaptable homes that are future proofed. The current ageing housing stock poses challenges in terms of energy efficiency and accessibility and we need to work with our partners to ensure that everyone has access to a home that is suitable for their current and future needs.

However, all residents, to include those living in rural areas, should benefit from good services, transport links and digital accessibility to ensure they fully participate in all aspects of civic life and future economic growth.

Our Borough must be accessible, multifunctional and balanced - enabling business growth within a mutually supportive and sustainable setting. Sustainable development and regeneration will be a catalyst for further social, cultural and environmental renewal.

KEY STATISTICS

Estimated Social Housing Need (2024-29)

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough



1,622 units

which accounts for 6% of the total need in NI (26,009)

47.4% of people

in the Borough see town centres as safe welcoming places for people of all walks of life compared to 45.6% in NI overall (2021-23)

112,883 overnight trips

made by visitors from outside Northern Ireland (2023) which accounts for just 3.4% of NI's total of 3,303,348



City & Town Centre Vacancy Rates (31 Oct 2024)



ARMAGH

17.4%



BANBRIDGE

14.7%



CRAIGAVON

6.9%



DROMORE

25.2%



LURGAN

19.6%



PORTADOWN

20.9%



NI

22.8%

⁴⁵ Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Housing Investment Plan Annual update for 2022-2023

SUSTAINABLE PLACE

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

We value and protect our climate, biodiversity and natural assets. People understand the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change and our Borough is on track to become net zero by 2050.

INDICATORS

- **Household concern for the environment⁴⁶**
- **River Quality - Soluble Reactive Phosphorus (SRP) in rivers⁴⁷**
- **Per Capita Greenhouse Gas Emissions⁴⁸**

STORY BEHIND THE OUTCOME

Climate change is affecting everyone, and the effects have been felt locally in recent years when extreme weather events caused homes and businesses in the Borough to be destroyed by flooding and more recently when storm Éoywn brought 90 mph winds which left many households without electricity for up to five days. The release of greenhouse gases through the burning of fossil fuels is the leading cause of climate change and efforts to limit the effects are focused on two areas: mitigating and adapting to climate change. Education around climate change needs to start in the early years and continue as we all have a responsibility towards our environment.

Mitigation means reducing emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere while adaption is about adjusting to the realities of a changing climate. Both involve the need to take action, and this is reflected in global, national and local policy and targets. The 2015 Paris Climate Agreement is a commitment by almost 200 countries including the UK and Northern Ireland, to achieve 'net zero' CO₂ emissions by 2050 and try to keep global warming to 1.5C. Locally, the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 has introduced new duties on public bodies to report on their progress on both mitigation and adaptation.

Despite a gradual fall over time, per capita greenhouse gas emissions in the Borough have been consistently higher than the Northern Ireland levels. Agriculture, transport and domestic accounted for almost 80% of total greenhouse gas emissions⁴⁹ in the Borough in 2022.

In Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough, the habitats, wildlife, landscapes and natural features are important assets that provide a range of opportunities for both enjoyment and economic activity, as well as environmental benefits. There are a number of nature reserves in the Borough, with many flora and fauna species that cannot be found elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

Recently, water quality in Lough Neagh and in our rivers has attracted international attention due to the high levels of toxic algal blooms⁵⁰. Long-term pollution from agriculture, wastewater, septic tanks and industrial processes have all contributed to the problem and the effects of this pollution have been exacerbated by warmer water temperatures caused by climate change as well as the presence of the invasive zebra mussel. Together, these factors have resulted in significant blooms in Lough Neagh and rivers and coastlines in Northern Ireland⁵¹.

⁴⁶ Continuous Household Survey, 2023/24

⁴⁷ Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics 2024 Annual Report

⁴⁸ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Local Authority territorial greenhouse gas emissions estimates 2005-2022 (kt CO₂e).

⁴⁹ UK Local Authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics, 2005 to 2022

⁵⁰ BBC News, 2024, Lough Neagh: The year the UK's largest lake turned green.

^{50&51} DAERA, 2024, The Lough Neagh Report, Blue Green Algae and Water Quality in Northern Ireland.

The algal blooms have prompted public anger and community campaigns to 'save the lough'⁵². Public attitudes to environmental sustainability will be important for realising this Sustainable Place outcome. As new norms are established, people will change their own behaviour and expect more action from all levels of government in relation to mitigating and adapting to climate change.

As partners we all share a responsibility to act locally on climate change to protect future generations. Recent legislation has introduced new duties for public bodies to report on their progress on mitigating and adapting to climate change and Community Planning Statutory Partners have developed their own strategies to enable them to fulfil these duties. We believe that we can achieve more as a partnership and have begun to discuss how we can explore new technologies together, create economies of scale and develop mutually beneficial arrangements to contribute to environmental sustainability. It is

hoped that the Mid Southwest Growth Deal will offer partners opportunities to be involved in innovative decarbonisation work which will also contribute to realising this outcome

There is a strong desire from our Community, Voluntary & Social Enterprise Sectors to contribute to progress and to ensure a just transition to 'net zero' as set out in current NI government policy⁵³. Our Place Plans also include several actions that will contribute to the realisation of this outcome including, promoting active travel, enhancing our blue and green infrastructure, the development of allotments to increase sustainability, restoring and reusing our built heritage, protecting biodiversity and generating green jobs. In addition, DAERA's Lough Neagh Report and Action Plan will provide a focus for actions to improve local water quality, through education, investment, regulation and enforcement⁵⁴.

KEY STATISTICS

Estimated Households concerned with the environment (2023/24)

75% ABC **78%** NI



Soluble Reactive Phosphorus (SRP)

in rivers in Northern Ireland was measured at 0.062 mg/l in 2023⁵⁵



Per capita greenhouse gas emissions

in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough was 10.2tCO₂e in 2022 compared to 9.8 tCO₂e in NI



⁵² Belfast Telegraph, 2024, 'Save Lough Neagh': Environmental campaigners stage protest outside Stormont.

⁵³ NI Executive, 2021, Draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland.

⁵⁴ DAERA, 2024, The Lough Neagh Report, Blue Green Algae and Water Quality in Northern Ireland.

⁵⁵ Important to note there was reduced sampling in summer 2023 due to staffing resource pressures.

DELIVERY OF CONNECTED OUR COMMUNITY PLAN

Delivery of our community plan is through thematic Borough-wide actions and through our locality place plans.

THEMATIC

Our current thematic action plan has four themes.



LOCALITY

Place is one of three themes in our community plan and we started the development of our first Place Plan in 2020. Place Plans are a way for local people to set a vision for their places and foster a collaborative approach to place making. To date 2578 people have been involved in the development of Place Plans for Armagh, Banbridge and Dromore.

Launched
May 2022

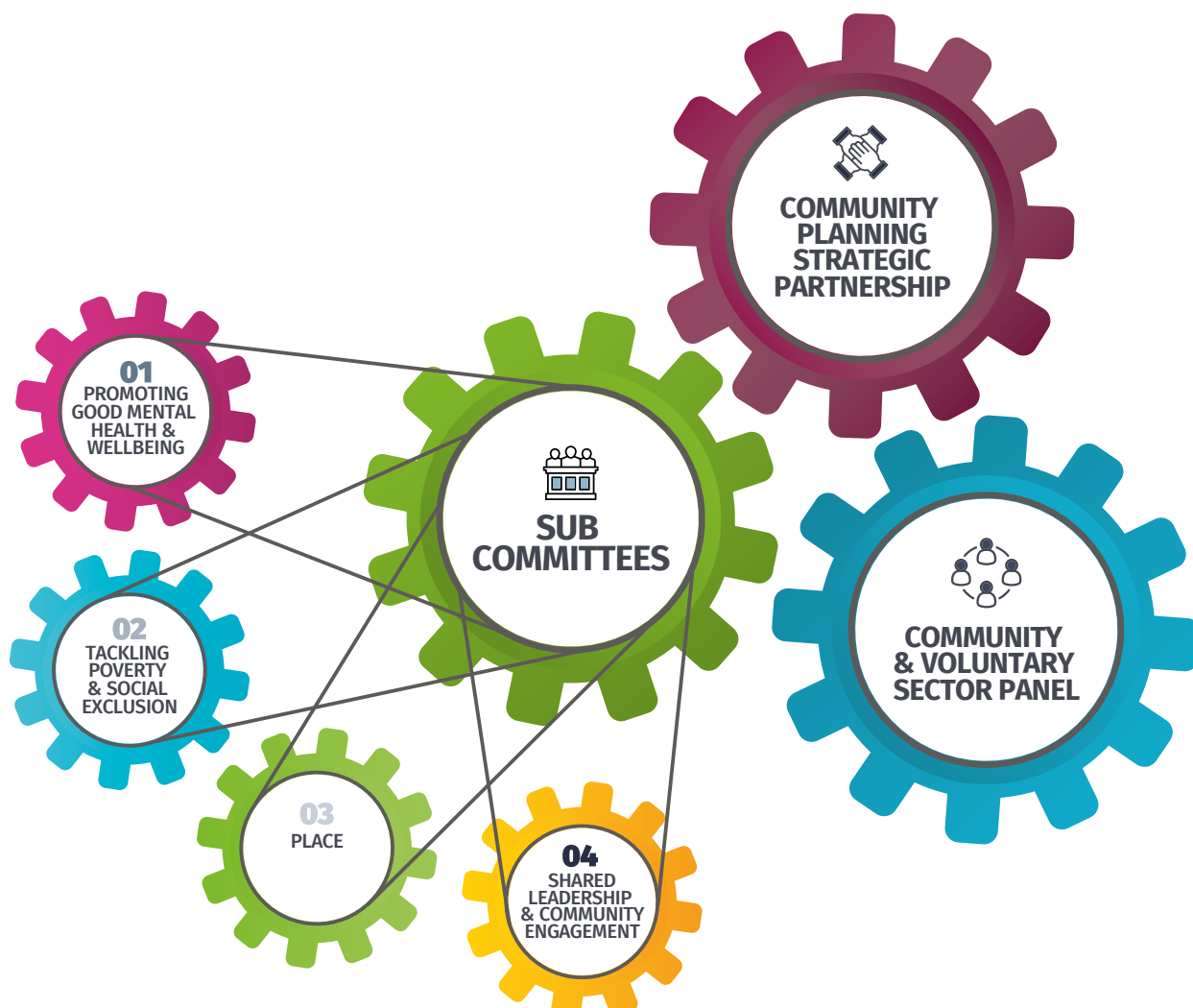


Launched
March 2024



Launching
May 2025





ABC COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

We have formed a multisectoral partnership to oversee community planning in the Borough. The partnership is a broad and inclusive network made up of over 150 people from more than 80 organisations.

The structures are designed to support delivery of the partnership's thematic action plan and locality place plans. We will keep our partnership under review to ensure it supports the delivery of our actions.



COMMUNITY PLANNING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (CPSP)

The CPSP has overall responsibility for community planning in Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon. Membership includes the 12 Community Planning Partners⁵⁶ named in the legislation with duties to participate and four additional Support Partners⁵⁷ who are central to our local process.

CPSP SUB-COMMITTEES

There are four CPSP Sub-Committees. Their role is to drive the delivery of the community planning partnership's actions under each of the four themes:

- Promoting Good Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion
- Place (includes locality Place Plans)
- Shared Leadership and Community Engagement

Membership includes CPSP and CVSP representatives, action leads and other partners who have an interest in the theme.

COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SECTOR PANEL (CVSP)

The CVS organisations play a key role in improving the quality of life in the Borough. CVSE organisations deliver services, are often the first to respond to crises and have a role in strengthening local communities. The Community & Voluntary Sector Panel was established in 2018 to ensure the involvement of these sectors as partners in community planning. The panel also has a role in connecting CVSE organisations from across the Borough. A steering group of up to ten members has responsibility for planning and taking forward actions on behalf of the panel. CVSP members are represented on all partnership structures and have leadership roles.

OTHER PARTNERSHIPS

We see our role as one of building connections and links between regional, sub-regional and other local partnerships. This is an evolving process to ensure that our efforts align, we avoid duplication, and we make the best use of the resources available to our Borough. There are a series of partnerships that already form part of the wider community planning structures. These include but are not limited to the Loneliness Network, the Age Friendly Alliance, the Labour Market Partnership, the Get Moving Partnership, the PEACE PLUS Partnership and the Participatory Budgeting (PB) Working Group. We will continue to create these links where we see the potential for added value for the people who live in the Borough.

⁵⁶ Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, Education Authority, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Invest Northern Ireland, Libraries NI, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service, Police Service of Northern Ireland, Public Health Agency, Southern Health & Social Care Trust, Sport NI

⁵⁷ Business Partnership Alliance, Community & Voluntary Sector Panel & Department for Communities, Southern Regional College

WAYS OF WORKING

Our partnership has worked hard on developing the ways of working required to deliver shared outcomes and collective wellbeing.



SHARED LEADERSHIP

Community planning is about organisations working together for the benefit of citizens. Our community planning partnership is a broad multi-sectoral network operating across a range of policy areas. We are committed to building an ethos of shared leadership across our partnership to promote collaboration. Several of our partners have stepped into leadership roles and are chairing our structures and leading actions. We believe that it is important to support partners to take on those leadership roles and therefore we provide mentoring and peer support. We regularly measure the impact of the operation of our partnership and respond to any issues as they arise.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community planning is about bringing decisions about local services and plans closer to communities. We believe that better community engagement leads to better decisions and increased levels of trust. As a partnership we are committed to delivering good quality engagement. Together we have developed our own Community Engagement Strategy, and we want our engagement activities to be inclusive and bring together a diverse range of views and perspectives. We aim to create spaces for dialogue and deliberation, where people can look at evidence together to promote evidence informed decision making. It is important to us that those who take part feel that their contributions are valued and that they can see the difference their input has made. This is why our Participatory Budgeting (PB) work is a priority for our partnership. We want to grow PB in our area so that it is incorporated into our decision making.

USING EVIDENCE

An outcomes based approach provides a useful framework for us to develop a set of long-term outcomes against which our progress can be monitored and evaluated. It encourages us to focus on the end goals of what we want our area to be like in 2030, whether anyone would be better off as a result of our plan and ensuring that we were using robust data to underpin our process.

Our community planning partnership brings together a wide range of evidence and knowledge. Local wisdom, practitioner knowledge and lived experience enhance research, population statistics and performance data, providing a sound base for decision making. We are committed to using our collective knowledge about local assets and needs to inform our decisions. We have demonstrated our commitment to accountability through the publication of our Statements of Progress. We are outwards looking and will continue to seek out opportunities to share learning with others.







SUMMARY TABLE OF NINE OUTCOMES

Our 2030 Vision: We have a happy, healthy and connected community, a vibrant and sustainable economy and appealing places for living, working and learning.

COMMUNITY

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

INDICATORS

Confident Community	Everyone has opportunities to contribute to community life and shape decisions - we have a strong sense of community belonging and take pride in our area.	Percentage of people who feel they have an influence when it comes to any of the local decisions made in their neighbourhood
		Percentage of people who feel a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood
		Percentage of people who feel lonely at least some of the time
Healthy Community	People are making positive lifestyle choices. They are more resilient and better equipped to cope with life's changes.	Number of preventable deaths per 100,000 population (age standardised preventable mortality rate)
		Gap in life expectancy between the most deprived areas and the Borough overall
		Percentage of people who participate in sport or physical activity on at least one day a week
		Number of people prescribed medication for mood and anxiety disorders per 1,000 population
Welcoming Community	Our Borough is a safe, inclusive, respectful and peaceful place.	Percentage of people reporting that fear of crime has a minimal impact on their quality of life
		Number of accidental dwelling fires
		Number of hate motivated incidents

CONNECTIVITY, SUSTA

ECONOMY

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

INDICATORS

Enterprising Economy	Our Borough is a centre of excellence for entrepreneurship, innovation and investment.	Business birth rates
		Survival rate of newly born businesses
		Productivity - Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour worked
Inclusive Economy	Everyone has a decent minimum living standard.	Percentage of children (aged under 16) living in relative low-income families
		Gap in the employment rate for people with disabilities
		Gross disposable household income (GDHI) per head
Skilled Economy	People are better equipped to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the dynamic economy.	Percentage of the workforce in employment qualified to below level 2 and above, level 2 and above, level 3 and above, and level 4 and above
		Employment rate (age 16-64)
		GCSE attainment levels for students entitled to free school meals (FSME)

PLACE

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

INDICATORS

Creative Place	Our Borough is an inspirational and creative place offering quality, inclusive arts, cultural and heritage experiences.	Percentage of people (aged 16+) engaging with arts/ cultural activities in the past year
		Number of heritage at risk assets saved
Revitalised Place	Our distinctive, inclusive and vibrant urban and rural areas are at the heart of community and economic life.	City and town centre vacancy rates
		Level of social housing need
		Percentage of people who see town centres as safe welcoming places for people of all walks of life
		Number of overnight trips made by visitors from outside Northern Ireland
Sustainable Place	We value and protect our climate, biodiversity and natural assets. People understand the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change and our Borough is on track to become net zero by 2050.	Household concern for the environment
		River Quality - Soluble Reactive Phosphorus (SRP) in rivers
		Per Capita Greenhouse Gas Emissions

LINKS TO REGIONAL STRATEGIES



Kinnego Marina

The Statutory Guidance for the Operation of Community Planning states that community planning partnerships can act as a bridge to link regional, local and neighbourhood priorities and resources more effectively. It is important that, as far as possible, we align with regional direction to ensure the best outcomes for individuals. While community plans must be driven by local people putting local needs at the heart of the plan, aligning these within the broader regional context will help many partners to better integrate community planning actions into their daily business which will be driven by

regional strategies through the Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'

There is strong alignment between the outcomes in our community plan, the Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing what Matters Most', regional strategies and those that are currently in development. Delivery of the regional strategies in the table below, and others, will all contribute to the realisation of the outcomes in our community plan.

COMMUNITY

LONG-TERM OUTCOME	MOST RELEVANT REGIONAL STRATEGIES
Connected Community: Everyone has opportunities to contribute to community life and shape decisions - we have a strong sense of community belonging and take pride in our area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join In, Get Involved: Build a Better Future A Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan for Northern Ireland 2012, Department for Social Development • Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'
Healthy Community: People are making positive lifestyle choices. They are more resilient and better equipped to cope with life's challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031, Department of Health • Protect Life 2 Suicide Prevention Strategy, Department of Health • Making Life Better 2012-2023, Department of Health • Active Living- Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland 2020 - 2030, Department for Communities • Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'
Welcoming Community: Our Borough is a safe, inclusive, respectful and peaceful place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Safety Framework, Department of Justice • Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: A Strategic Framework (Draft), 2023, The Executive Office • Ending Homelessness Together - Homelessness Strategy 2022-27, NI Housing Executive • Children and Young People's Strategy, 2019, Department of Education • Refugee Integration Strategy 2022-2027, (Draft) The Executive Office • Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025, The Executive Office • Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'

ECONOMY

LONG-TERM OUTCOME	MOST RELEVANT REGIONAL STRATEGIES
Enterprising Economy: Our Borough is a centre for entrepreneurship, innovation and investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dept for the Economy- Minister's Economic Vision • Sub Regional Economic Plan-October 2024 • Invest NI- Our Future in Focus 2024-2027
Inclusive Economy: Everyone has a decent minimum living standard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Poverty Strategy, Department for Communities (in development) • Child Poverty Strategy 2016-2019 Department for Communities (extended to May 2022) • Executive Early Learning and Childcare Strategy (in development) • Good Jobs Employment Rights Bill Consultation, 2024, Department for Economy • Independent Report to Advance Community Wealth Building in Northern Ireland, 2022, Department for Communities • Draft Housing Supply Strategy 2022-2037, DfC • Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'
Skilled Economy: People are better equipped to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the dynamic economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dept for the Economy- Minister's Economic Vision • Sub Regional Economic Plan-October 2024 • Invest NI- Our Future in Focus 2024-2027 • Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'



PLACE

LONG-TERM OUTCOME	MOST RELEVANT REGIONAL STRATEGIES
Creative Place: Our Borough is an inspirational and creative place offering quality, inclusive arts, cultural and heritage experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'
Revitalised Place: Our distinctive, inclusive and vibrant urban and rural places are at the heart of community and economic life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Ireland Strategic Rail Review, 2024, Department for Infrastructure & Department for Transport • Regional Development Strategy 2035, Department for Infrastructure • People and Place Strategy (review ongoing), Department for Communities
Sustainable Place: We value and protect our climate, biodiversity and natural assets. People understand the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change and our Borough is on track to become net zero by 2050	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2021, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs • The Lough Neagh Report, Blue Green Algae and Water Quality in Northern Ireland. 2024, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs • Regional Development Strategy 2035, Department for Infrastructure • Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'





DEVELOPED BY



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