



# Ards and North Down Borough Council

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Equality Action Plan

2025 - 2029

This Equality Action Plan can be obtained from the Council in alternative formats and languages where a need is identified. It may also be downloaded from the Council's website at:  
Equality Action Plan 2025 - 2029

If you would like a copy in an alternative format, or have any queries, please contact:

**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

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## **Purpose**

The purpose of an Equality Action Plan is fundamentally rooted in the legal framework established by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. As part of their Equality Scheme, public authorities are expected to develop an Equality Action Plan. This plan details the specific actions the authority will take to address inequalities and promote equality of opportunity and good relations in relation to their functions. It is a commitment to fostering an inclusive society. This Equality Action Plan has been developed to align with the outcomes identified in the Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan.

## **Key aims and objectives:**

### **Promoting Equality of Opportunity:**

The core aim is to ensure that the Council actively work towards creating equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, or whether they have dependants.

### **Fulfilling Legal Obligations:**

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a statutory duty on public authorities to have "due regard" to the need to promote equality of opportunity. This Equality action plan serves as a practical tool to demonstrate how we are meeting these legal obligations.

### **Addressing Inequalities:**

This plan aim to identify and address existing inequalities within Councils services and policies. Council have conducted an audit of inequalities and have developed specific actions to mitigate them.

### **Promoting Good Relations:**

In addition to equality of opportunity, there's also a focus on promoting good relations between people of different religious beliefs, political opinions, and racial groups.

### **Providing a Framework for Action:**

This Equality Action Plan offers a structured framework for Ards and North Down Borough Council to implement equality initiatives, monitor their progress, and ensure that equality considerations are integrated into our day-to-day operations.

### **Improving Service Delivery:**

This Equality Action Plan strives to improve the delivery of public services to ensure they are accessible and equitable for all members of society and are effectively mainstreamed within Council

### **The Council – its role, functions and policies**

The roles and functions of Councils fall within three types:

- **Direct** - the direct provision of a number of services and facilities including the promotion of the arts, tourism, community and economic development and the regulation and licensing of certain activities relating to environmental health, consumer protection and public safety
- **Representative** - a representative role on a number of bodies and boards including Education and Health as well as an advocacy role for the Borough
- **Consultative** - a consultative role in relation to functions conducted by other Government bodies and agencies on issues such as water, roads and housing

the promotion of the arts, tourism, community and economic development, the regulation and licensing of certain activities relating to environmental health, consumer protection and public safety,

In the performance of the above roles the Council carries out functions in the following areas: (This is not an exhaustive list)

### **Service provision:**

The council is responsible for delivering essential local services, including:

- \* Refuse collection and waste management.
- \* Environmental services.
- \* Leisure and recreation facilities.
- \* Parks and Cemeteries.
- \* Planning and building control.

### **Community Development:**

The council works to promote community well-being and development, supporting local initiatives and addressing community needs.

### **Economic Development:**

It plays a role in fostering economic growth within the borough, attracting investment, and supporting local businesses.

### **Tourism:**

Ards and North Down boasts a beautiful coastline and rich heritage, and the council actively promotes tourism in the area.

### **Governance:**

It is responsible for local governance, making decisions on local policies and managing council resources.

To enable the Council to provide the above services and perform its other functions it must levy an annual rate and has the power to: -

- acquire and dispose of land;
- borrow money;
- employ staff;
- procure goods and services.

Council provides its services through the employment of approximately 1000 employees who are full time, part time, permanent and casual employees.

To support and implement the above statutory functions and provision of services and facilities, the Council has adopted a number of policies. All policies are screened for impacts of S75 categories, Rural needs, Sustainability and Data Protection.

### **Council responsibility**

Ards and North Down Borough Council has 40 councillors representing seven district electoral areas. These members provide leadership for Ards and North Down Borough Council. They represent the interests of their constituents and ensure the views of people across Ards and North Down are reflected in the council's decisions and how services are delivered.

### **Effective implementation of the Equality Action Plan**

The Mayor and Chief Executive of the Council are dedicated to effectively implementing this plan and ensuring equality throughout the organisation.

They will allocate all available resources—people, time, and finances—to achieve these goals.

As part of its corporate planning process, the Council will integrate objectives, target setting, and monitoring into relevant business plans. These will be reflected at all levels of the Council's strategic planning, including individual staff objectives and annual plans. Progress towards meeting these objectives will be monitored and reported to the relevant managers and elected members every year. Individual performance in these areas will be reviewed through internal performance review processes.

A formal progress report on meeting objectives related to equality and disability duties will be included in the Council's Annual Report to the Equality Commission.

### **Internal arrangements**

The Council consists of 40 elected representatives, each elected for a four-year period. A full list of the Council's standing and sub-committees are available on the council's website and are also available on request.

The Chief Executive oversees the work of the departments through the Corporate Leadership Team which, together with the Elected Members, create the corporate body of the Council.

The Chief Executive is the principal advisor to the Council and responsible for the strategic management of the organisation, for the day to day management of services and the longer-term planning and allocation of resources.

The departmental structure of Ards and North Down Borough Council is available on request and is subject to change.

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of this plan, with the support of the Corporate Leadership Team.

Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this Equality Action Plan, and the point of contact within the Council is the Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability)— contact details can be found on page 2.

The Council offers public documents in various accessible formats, including large print, easy read, and audio, with options for translation into minority languages. Equality and disability documents are created in clear Arial Font size 14. Information is accessible through the ReachDeck facility, and translators or sign language interpreters are provided at meetings as needed. Loop systems are available in Bangor City Hall and some other facilities, while a British Sign Language interpreting service provides instant access to online interpreters for Deaf or hearing-impaired customers.

Every council employee and member of a Council Body or Panel, including the Policing and Community Safety Partnership, Community Planning Partnership, and PEACEPLUS, has a responsibility to uphold equality duties. All employees and elected members receive training on relevant legislation and are accountable for ensuring that the Council meets its obligations. It is essential that they avoid any inappropriate actions that could lead to a failure in these duties.

### **Effective engagement**

The Council is committed to engaging with stakeholders and representative groups in drafting, implementing, monitoring, and reviewing this Plan.

### **Annual report**

The Council will prepare an annual report outlining its progress in implementing the equality scheme using the Equality Action Plan and the Disability Action Plan. This report will be submitted to the Equality Commission.

A copy of the annual report will also be available on the Council's website.

### **Review of the Equality Action Plan**

The Council will conduct a four-year review of its plan. After it is ratified by Council, the review will be submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

This Equality Action Plan has been created to align with the outcomes identified in the Corporate Plan and to further our equality duties.



## **Consultation**

The Council is dedicated to meaningful consultations in developing its Equality Action Plan over 12 weeks, engaging key stakeholders and service users. Comments and suggestions will be incorporated into the Plan. To ensure public involvement, the Council will work with representative groups and meet with individuals upon request.

The Equality Action Plan will be advertised on the Council's website and social media. The Council will collaborate with groups to ensure clear communication and accessibility, acknowledging that individuals may face different barriers. The Plan will be promoted through various channels, and requests for minority language versions will be addressed as needed. Employees will also be informed about the Plan and their roles in fulfilling the Council's obligations.

## **Performance Indicators and actionable measures**

The Council is committed to monitoring and reviewing policies and practices to ensure the disability duties to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, and encourage participation by disabled people in public life are met. This process is undertaken through the policy making and screening processes.

The Council will undertake a review of this plan on an annual basis. This review process assists in the drafting of appropriate actions and performance targets for the next period, as well as highlighting the achievements from the period of the annual review.

The table in Appendix 1 outlines the measures and performance indicators which the Council proposes to undertake between 2025 and 2029 in order to fulfil its statutory obligations.

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Mayor of Ards and North Down Borough Council

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Chief Executive Ards and North Down Borough Council

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 1

### 1. We have an engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

We will commit to:	We will do	Responsibility	Timescale	Section 75 Category Affected	We will know we have been successful by:
1.1 Addressing digital exclusion and engage with those who experience difficulty in accessing our services and facilities	Identify and continue to engage with underrepresented categories. Though Disability forum, over 50s Council, consultative panel, age friendly alliance.	Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability)	Ongoing throughout the period of this plan with an annual review.	Age Dependants Disability	Achieve and maintain Website compliance with accessibility standards. Availability of information in multiple formats (e.g., text, audio, large print). Ensure mobile device compatibility. Ensure paper versions available if requested.
	Monitor the Councils Digital by Default Policy to ensure this will not exclude those without digital access and those that require support to enable them to benefit from the	Communications Performance and improvement		Age Dependant Disability	Ensuring traditional channels (phone, in person) remain available for those who cannot or prefer not to use digital services.

## Appendix 1

We will commit to:	We will do	Responsibility	Timescale	Section 75 Category Affected	We will know we have been successful by:
	information available.				
1.2 Some may not have access to Council information and services in a suitable format/ language	Provide accessible channels of Communication to reflect the diverse needs of stakeholders.	Communications		Age Dependants Disability Political Opinion Racial group	Increase in those using ReachDeck, service monitor and assessing accessibility to the Councils websites based on good practice guidelines.
	Identify target languages through analysing service usage	Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability)			Monitor the usage per identified locations for BSL SignVideo service and increase SignVideo where required.
					Review translation software and translation services.
1.3 Increase younger demographic (16-34) engaging with Council consultations.	Create engaging campaigns to encourage participation utilising resident survey, consultative panel and social media platforms for consultation and information sharing.	Corporate Communications Section  Performance Improvement	Ongoing	Age Dependants	Improve the perception of service inclusivity among young adults by 20% through the resident survey.

## Appendix 1

We will commit to:	We will do	Responsibility	Timescale	Section 75 Category Affected	We will know we have been successful by:
	Maintain an all-Council Consultation list, to include all section S75 categories	Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) and Good Relations		All	Continue to recruit and retain youth representatives on Consultative panel.
1.4 Promote services to empower customers and employees with disabilities who need reasonable adjustments to fulfil their needs.	Continue to ensure employees undertake mandatory training that addresses the concerns of individuals with disabilities and their caregivers, as well as the effects on access to Council services.	Human Resources Section Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) Community and Wellbeing and Place directorates Customer Services Manager	Ongoing	All	Provide mandatory awareness training in a range of identified disabilities for all Customer Service employees, and employees dealing with the public and those with line management responsibility.
	Identify and take action to remove barriers that prevent individuals from fully participating in Council activities, services, and public life.	All Directorates that provide frontline services		Age Disability	Undertake an Audit of Walkability events to include Disability and Age awareness.

## Appendix 1

We will commit to:	We will do	Responsibility	Timescale	Section 75 Category Affected	We will know we have been successful by:
	Make necessary adjustments to ensure that the workplace and services are accessible to all users based on their needs, while considering any potential restrictions or changes in operations.			All	Raise awareness of hidden disabilities and the initiatives that help, such as the Jam Card and Sunflower lanyards
	Record and monitor customer comments and complaints in relation to access to Council services and information and put in place corrective action where appropriate.			All	100% of Complaints resolved at stage 1

## Appendix 1

2. We have a thriving and sustainable economy					
We will commit to:	We will do	Responsibility	Timescale	Section 75 Category Affected	We will know we have been successful by:
2.1 Working with specific groups of residents and local employers to encourage work placements leading to sustainable employment opportunities.	Work collaboratively with statutory, voluntary and community organisations to assess need and improve local labour market conditions.	Labour Market Partnership (LMP)		Age Dependants Disability Men and Women generally Racial group	Successfully navigate and adapt to the evolving landscape of employability provision, enhancing support for job seekers while also meeting the needs and expectations of employers.
2.2 Economic development programmes will be accessible to	Support businesses owned by individuals from	Economic Development		All	Reduce disparities by targeting resources and support to those areas of need.

## Appendix 1

<b>We will commit to:</b>	<b>We will do</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Section 75 Category Affected</b>	<b>We will know we have been successful by:</b>
everyone regardless of background.	underrepresented groups and addressing potential disparities.				Implementing funding opportunities for local business.

### 3. We have a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

<b>We will commit to:</b>	<b>We will do</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Section 75 Category Affected</b>	<b>We will know we have been successful by:</b>
3.1 Collaborating with diverse stakeholders to enhance the well-being of our residents and visitors, fostering the ongoing growth and	Ensure regeneration efforts are aligned with local needs and are designed to be sustainable in the long term.	Regeneration Team	Ongoing	All	Successfully securing funding and implementing capital and revenue projects that contribute to the development and enhancement of vibrant and thriving areas within the Borough.

## Appendix 1

We will commit to:	We will do	Responsibility	Timescale	Section 75 Category Affected	We will know we have been successful by:
success of our rural, urban and city communities.					
3.2 Ensuring family friendly toilets are available to ensure Families can enjoy and make use of Councils Green/Blue spaces	Complete a desktop study and consultation to identify possible sites and implement family friendly toilets. Ensuring family friendly toilets are incorporated into all new Flagship projects.	Assets and property	Ongoing	Age Dependants Disability Men and Women generally Marital Status	Increase number of Family friendly toilets in blue/greenspaces.
3.3 Increased engagement and usage with green and blue spaces.	Encourage participation in outdoor experiences,	Parks Services		All	Hold at least 20 Events and activities that promote participation in outdoor areas, ensuring accessibility is considered



## Appendix 1

<b>We will commit to:</b>	<b>We will do</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Section 75 Category Affected</b>	<b>We will know we have been successful by:</b>
	ensuring that sustainability makes a positive contribution to all communities.				Addressing barriers to inclusion by working with our stakeholders including groups.

### 4 We have socially sustainable communities that are safe and welcoming

<b>We will commit to:</b>	<b>We will do</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Section 75 Category Affected</b>	<b>We will know we have been successful by:</b>
4.1 Increased engagement between communities in relation to minority communities.	Discuss and address issues related to racism and sectarianism.	Good Relations		Political Opinion Racial group Religious Belief	Meeting the aims of the Community Development and Good Relations Strategies as well as meeting the needs identified through the PeacePLUS partnership and PCSP.

## Appendix 1

We will commit to:	We will do	Responsibility	Timescale	Section 75 Category Affected	We will know we have been successful by:
	Engage with service users and non-service users to identify programmes that will meet their specific needs	Community development, PeacePLUS and good relations.	Ongoing		
4.2 Implement the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Strategic Framework	Comprehensively tackle all forms of gender-based violence, abuse, and harm that disproportionately affect women and girls, addressing the underlying issue of gender inequality	PSCP	Ongoing	Age Dependants Disability Men and Women generally Marital Status	Successful implementation of the 'Change Fund' to help to mobilise grassroots action, support innovative delivery, and maximise the impact of community-led initiatives that contribute to the prevention outcomes of the EVAWG Strategic Framework.

## Appendix 1

We will commit to:	We will do	Responsibility	Timescale	Section 75 Category Affected	We will know we have been successful by:
	Partner with local organisations and to deliver the Momentum Programme, a transformative initiative aimed at equipping local organisations to participate in the Change Fund				
4.2 To continue to work on being a Dementia Friendly Borough	Work in partnership to implement the South Eastern area Dementia Friendly Action Plan to provide information and support to people living with	Community Planning (with Environmental Health and PCSP)	Initial pilot in 2025 then ongoing	Age Dependants Disability	Successful distribution of wristbands and hangtags alongside monitoring and evaluation of their impact. Delivery of a Dementia Safeguarding scheme and launch of a dementia friendly garden in Ward Park.

## Appendix 1

<b>We will commit to:</b>	<b>We will do</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Section 75 Category Affected</b>	<b>We will know we have been successful by:</b>
	dementia and their carers.				

### 5. We have active and healthy people

<b>What we will commit to:</b>	<b>We will do</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Section 75 Category Affected</b>	<b>We will know we have been successful by:</b>
5.1 Maintain and promote accessible beach facility at Groomsport and continue to encourage translink to extend routes to	Work in partnership with Mae Murray Foundation to promote use of beach and toilet facilities at Groom sport.	Community and Wellbeing	Ongoing Beach activities available through Easter - September	Age Dependants Disability Men and Women generally	Increase participation of beach amenities to enable families and groups to have a shared experience on the sand.

## Appendix 1

What we will commit to:	We will do	Responsibility	Timescale	Section 75 Category Affected	We will know we have been successful by:
make more accessible to wider residents and visitors to the borough					
5.2 Establishing Friends' Groups across the Borough .	Support friends groups to enhancing local parks and green spaces.	Parks and Cemeteries	Annually	All	Enhanced community engagement and environmental advocacy.  Local perspectives are represented, fostering a stronger sense of community involvement.
5.3 Ensuring that all groups have the opportunity to participate in various leisure activity programs, removing any barriers that may prevent their involvement.	Take a proactive approach to promote, engage and target underrepresented groups, ensuring that their specific needs are met and that they have access to meaningful recreational opportunities.	Leisure Services	Annually	All	Successful identification of individuals in need, leading to the development of tailored inclusive leisure programs.

## Appendix 1

What we will commit to:	We will do	Responsibility	Timescale	Section 75 Category Affected	We will know we have been successful by:
5.4 Maintaining an Age Friendly Borough A place where people of all ages can live healthy, active lives, treated with respect. A community where they can remain in their homes, engage in valued activities, and contribute for as long as possible.	Continue to deliver the Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan specifically aimed at Enhanced Community Engagement, Improved Accessibility, Support Services Expansion, Health and Wellbeing Initiatives, Intergenerational Programs, Community Awareness and Advocacy, Collaboration with Stakeholders	Community Planning and Environmental Health	Ongoing	All	Information will be collected from lead partners to measure the impact of the actions have and an annual report published on the findings.

## Appendix 1

### 6. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

We will commit to:	We will do	Responsibility	Timescale	Section 75 category Affected	We will know we have been successful by:
6.1 Equality of opportunity and Good relations is be promoted at strategic levels within Council.	Continue to S75 screen 100% of policies, to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are considered	CLT, HOST and SUM	Ongoing	All	Equality and Good relation screening of all new and revised policies/initiatives at draft and final stage of policy development process
					Continue to host Internal Screening Panel and external Consultative Panel meetings. Elected members invited to Consultative panel annually.
					Review Policy Development Process to include monitoring, review and recording of all live policies on SharePoint.

## Appendix 1

We will commit to:	We will do	Responsibility	Timescale	Section 75 category Affected	We will know we have been successful by:
6.2 Raise the profile of underrepresented Section 75 Groups (and other protected groups) within the district	Implement targeted events and initiatives effectively addresses the specific needs and challenges faced by Section 75 Groups, fostering greater awareness and support for these individuals and communities.	Corporate Communication s, Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability), Good Relations	Annually	All	Host or promote 3 annual events celebrating the diversity of the area Eg. Shared Voices, Holocaust Memorial Day, No hate here
6.3 Circulation and workplace areas to be shared spaces for all users.	Conduct a cataloguing exercise of all display assets in Council buildings as part of the broader asset cataloguing exercise connected with	Head of Administration.	Ongoing	All	By having a catalogue of all display assets.



## Appendix 1

We will commit to:	We will do	Responsibility	Timescale	Section 75 category Affected	We will know we have been successful by:
	the Civic building move project.				
	Agree a plan for retention of assets as part of process to move to new civic building in conjunction with Elected Members.	Elected members	At least one year before completion of new Civic Building move project	All	