

June 8th, 2023

**Notice Of Meeting**

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Monday, 12th June 2023 at 7:00 pm** in **Hybrid - City Hall, Bangor & via Zoom.**

# Agenda

## Agenda

 *C 12.06.2023 Agenda.pdf*

Page 1

1. **Prayer**
2. **Apologies**
3. **Declarations of Interest**
- 4 **Mayor's Business**
- 5 **Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month of June  
(Copy to follow)**
- 6 **Minutes of Council Meeting held on 26 April 2023**

Copy attached

 *C.26.04.2023 Minutes.pdf*

*Not included*

 *C.26.04.2023 Minutes PM.pdf*

Page 4

## 7. **Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants (Copy attached)**

(Attached)

 *Item 7 - Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants (WG April & May 2023).pdf*

Page 57

 *Item 7 - Appendix 1 Successful Coaching Report for Noting.pdf*

Page 60

 *Item 7 - Appendix 2 Successful Coaching Report for Approval.pdf*

Page 61

 *Item 7 - Appendix 3 Successful Event Report for Approval.pdf*

Page 62

 *Item 7 - Appendix 4 Successful Goldcard Report for Noting.pdf*

Page 63

 *Item 7 - Appendix 5 Successful Travel Accommodation Report for Noting.pdf*

Page 65

 *Item 7 - Appendix 6 Successful Schools Sports Club Pathway Report for Noting.pdf*

Page 77

 *Item 7 - Appendix 7 Unsuccessful Report.pdf*

Page 79

## 8. NILGA Request for Funds for Member Regional Induction 2023

(Attached)

<a href="#"> <i>Item 8 - NILGA Request for Funds for Member Regional Induction.pdf</i></a>	<i>Page 80</i>
<a href="#"> <i>Item 8 - Appendix 1 - NILGA Regional Induction Programme 2023.pdf</i></a>	<i>Page 81</i>
<a href="#"> <i>Item 8 - Appendix 2 - NILGA Regional Induction Programme 2023.pdf</i></a>	<i>Page 82</i>

## 9. Response to Departmental EQIA Consultations

(Attached)

<a href="#"> <i>Item 9 - EqIA Consultation on Departmental Spending Plans 2023-24.pdf</i></a>	<i>Page 83</i>
<a href="#"> <i>Item 9a - DfC EQiA Consultation on Spending Plans.pdf</i></a>	<i>Page 85</i>
<a href="#"> <i>Item 9b - Draft Response to DfC EqIA Consultation.pdf</i></a>	<i>Page 119</i>
<a href="#"> <i>Item 9c - DfI EQiA Consultation on Spending Plans.pdf</i></a>	<i>Page 139</i>
<a href="#"> <i>Item 9d - Draft Response to DfI EqIA Consultation.pdf</i></a>	<i>Page 168</i>
<a href="#"> <i>Item 9e - TEO EQiA Consultation on Spending Plans.pdf</i></a>	<i>Page 176</i>
<a href="#"> <i>Item 9f - Draft Response to TEO Consultation GB.pdf</i></a>	<i>Page 207</i>

## 10. Retrospective Approval Community Development Grant Funding

(Attached)

<a href="#"> <i>Item 10 - Retrospective Approval Community Development Grant funding.pdf</i></a>	<i>Page 210</i>
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## 11. Charter on Columban Way

(Attached)

<a href="#"> <i>Item 11 - Charter of the Columban Way Additional Information.pdf</i></a>	<i>Page 212</i>
<a href="#"> <i>item 11.1 Charter of Columban Way - App1.pdf</i></a>	<i>Page 215</i>
<a href="#"> <i>item 11.2 - Charter of the Columban Way - App2.pdf</i></a>	<i>Page 217</i>

## 12. AND Events and Festivals Fund 23/24 Scoring Recommendation Update Report

Report attached

 *Item 12 - Ards and North Down Events and Festivals Fund 2324 - Scoring Recommendation Update.pdf* **Page 218**

 *Item 12 - Appendix 1 - Blank Application Form Tranche 1.pdf* **Page 222**

 *Item 12- Appendix 2 - Guidance Notes for Tranche 1 Applicants.pdf* **Page 234**

## 13. Delegated Authority Request for Environment Committee

(Attached)

 *Item 13 - Delegated Authority Request for Environment Committee.pdf* **Page 247**

## 14. Consultation Documents

### 14.1 Engagement Survey June 2023 on Live Links Extensions September 2023 Onwards

(Attached)

 *Item 14 - June 2023 letter for engagement exercise re proposed six month extensions of live links provisions within Schedule 27 CVA 2020.pdf* **Page 249**

 *Item 14.1 - Engagement Survey June 2023 on Live Links extensions September 2023 onwards- Q A.pdf* **Page 256**

## 15. Sealing Documents

Sealing of ANDBC and McAdam Design contract for the Peninsula 3G Pitch Project.

## 16. Transfer of Rights of Burial

## 17. Notice of Motion Status Report

(Attached)

 *Item 17 - NOM Status Report.pdf* **Page 258**

 *Item 17 - NOM Status Report Attachment.xlsx* **Page 259**

## Circulated for Information

- a) Northern Ireland Audit Office - Pre-School Vaccinations in Northern Ireland (Correspondence attached)
- b) National Association of Councillors - information Sheet (Correspondence attached)
- c) SE HSC Trust - Waiting Times (Correspondence attached)
- d) DOJ - Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility - Consultation Summary Responses Report (Correspondence attached)

 <i>CFI (a) - NI Audit Office Media Release - Pre-School Vaccinations in Northern Ireland.pdf</i>	<i>Page 264</i>
 <i>CFI (a) - NI Audit Office Report - Pre-School Vaccinations in Northern Ireland.pdf</i>	<i>Page 266</i>
 <i>CFI (b) - NAC NI Information Sheet 2023.pdf</i>	<i>Page 310</i>
 <i>CFI (c) - SE HSC Trust - Waiting Times.pdf</i>	<i>Page 312</i>
 <i>CFI (d) - Minimum Age of Responsibility.pdf</i>	<i>Page 314</i>

**\*\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\*\***

### 18. Cemetery Diggers and Utility Vehicles Tender

(Attached)

 <i>Item 18 - Cemetery Plant Tender Report - 31 05 2023.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
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### 19. Tender for the Appointment of an Integrated Design Team for the Ward Park Project

(Attached)

 <i>Item 19 - Tender for the Appointment of an Integrated Design Team for the Ward Park Project.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
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### 20. Tender Award for the Provision of Speciality Consultancy Services for Pickie Fun Park Operator

(Attached)

 <i>Item 20 - Tender Award for provision for Specialist Consultancy Services for Pickie</i>	<i>Not included</i>
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## ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

6 June 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid Meeting (in person and via Zoom) of Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on **Monday, 12 June 2023 at 7.00pm.**

Yours faithfully

Stephen Reid  
Chief Executive  
Ards and North Down Borough Council

### **A G E N D A**

1. Prayer
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Mayor's Business
5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month of June (Copy to follow)
6. Minutes of Council meeting dated 26 April 2023 (Copy to follow)
7. Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants (Report attached)
8. NILGA Request for Funds for Member Regional Induction 2023 (Report attached)
9. Response to Departmental EQIA Consultations (Report attached)
10. Retrospective Approval Community Development Grant Funding (Report attached)
11. Charter on Columban Way (Report attached)
12. AND Events and Festivals Fund 23/24 Scoring Recommendation Update Report (Report attached)

13. Delegated Authority Request for Environment Committee (Report to follow)
14. Consultation Documents
- 14.1 Engagement Survey June 2023 on Live Links Extensions September 2023 Onwards
15. Sealing Documents
16. Transfer of Rights of Burial
17. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)

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**\*\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\*\***

18. Cemetery Diggers & Utility Vehicles Tender (Report attached)
19. Tender for the Appointment of an Integrated Design Team for the Ward Park Project (Report attached)
20. Tender Award for the provision of specialist consultancy services for Pickie Fun Park Operator (Report attached)

**MEMBERSHIP OF ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Councillor Armstrong-Cotter	Councillor Kennedy
Councillor Adair	Councillor Kerr
Councillor Ashe	Councillor MacArthur
Councillor Blaney	Councillor Martin
Councillor Boyle	Councillor McAlpine
Councillor Brooks	Councillor McCollum
Councillor Cathcart	Councillor McCracken
Councillor Chambers	Councillor McDowell
Councillor Creighton	Councillor McIlveen
Councillor Cochrane	Councillor McKee
Councillor Cummings	Councillor McKimm

Councillor K Douglas	Councillor McLaren
Councillor L Douglas	Councillor McRandal
Councillor Edmund	Councillor Moore
Councillor Gilmour	Councillor Morgan
Councillor Graham	Councillor Rossiter
Councillor Hollywood	Councillor Smart
Councillor S Irvine	Councillor Smith
Councillor W Irvine	Councillor Woods
Councillor Irwin	Councillor Wray

## ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council was held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor and via Zoom, on Wednesday, 26 April 2023 commencing at 7.00pm.

**In the Chair:** The Mayor (Councillor Douglas)

**Aldermen:**

Armstrong-Cotter	McDowell
Carson (zoom)	McIlveen
Gibson	Smith
Irvine	Wilson
Keery	Kennedy

**Councillors:**

Adair	MacArthur
Blaney	McAlpine
Brooks	McClellan
Cathcart	McKee
Chambers (zoom)	McKimm
Cummings	McRandal
Dunlop	Moore
Cummings	Morgan
Dunlop	Smart
Edmund	Smith, P
Gilmour	Smith, T
Irvine	Thompson
Irwin	Walker
Johnson	Woods

**Officers:** Chief Executive (S Reid), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Director of Place (S McCullough), Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Director of Community and Wellbeing (G Bannister), Head of Communications and Marketing (C Jackson), Democratic Services Manager (J Wilson) and Democratic Services Officer (J Glasgow)

### 1. PRAYER

The Mayor (Councillor Douglas) welcomed everyone to the meeting and commenced with the Chief Executive reading the Council prayer.

### 2. APOLOGIES

The Mayor sought apologies at this stage. Apologies were received from Councillor Boyle and Councillor Cooper.

**NOTED.**

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Mayor asked for any Declarations of Interest and the following were made:

Councillor McRandal declared an interest in Item 8 - Charter of the Columban Way and Item 11 - Heritage Project Grants 2023-2024.

Councillor Irwin declared an interest in Item 20.1 - EA Plan of Arrangements for Special Educational Provision Consultation

The Mayor declared an interest in Item 8 - Charter of the Columban Way and Item 12 - Ards and North Down Events and Festivals Fund 2023/24 - Tranche Two and Tranche One update

Councillor P Smith declared an interest at a later stage in Item 12 - Ards and North Down Events and Festivals Fund 2023/24 - Tranche Two and Tranche One update.

**NOTED.**

### **4. MAYOR'S BUSINESS**

The Mayor welcomed Members to the final Council meeting of the term before the Local Government Elections which were due to take place on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2023. The list of candidates had been published on the Council website and could be viewed in the City Hall.

The Mayor took the opportunity to extend very best wishes to the serving Councillors who would not be standing in the election and thanked those Members for all their hard work over the last number of years. Those Members were Alderman Carson, Alderman Gibson, Councillor Johnson, Alderman Smith, Councillor Walker and Alderman Wilson. She also wished those Members who were standing for re-election every best wish.

On another matter, the Mayor extended congratulations to local gymnast Rhys McClenaghan, who recently won Gold at the European Championships, making this Rhys' second Gold medal at the European Championships, previously taking home the medal in 2018. She was sure all Members would want to put on record the Council's sincere congratulations on the fantastic win.

Alderman McIlveen paid tribute to the work of Alderman Gibson who had served on Council for 38 years which was an amazing amount of time to have been a public servant. He remarked that Alderman Gibson was a well respected and successful public servant. He had served two terms as Mayor in the legacy Ards Borough Council and had many happy memories during his time. Alderman McIlveen wished Alderman Gibson well for the future and his retirement.

Councillor McKimm wished to thank Alderman Mrs Smith. He stated that from the day of the count when he had been elected Alderman Mrs Smith had offered her wisdom, kindness and great experience to him. On numerous instances since, her great wisdom had guided Councillor McKimm and he was thankful for her support and mentoring.

Alderman McDowell wished to thank Alderman Wilson and Councillor Walker who had both served two Council terms and had been a great asset to the Council and the Alliance Party. He also highlighted Councillor Greer and Alderman Girvan who had stepped down recently. Alderman McDowell wished all those Members well who were standing down this year and thanked them for the work they had done.

Councillor Adair concurred with the comments made and wished to remark on Alderman Gibson who had been a great public servant and had provided him with help and advice. Councillor Adair did not feel he would be the Councillor he was today without Alderman Gibson's help and support for which he was thankful. Alderman Gibson was conscientious about being a Councillor, he was in politics to help people and make a difference. Councillor Adair wished Alderman Gibson and his wife, Mary, God's richest blessings.

Councillor Gilmour paid tribute to the work of Alderman Gibson and his length of service highlighting the record of delivery and his service to the community. She wished to also pay tribute to the work of Alderman Mrs Smith who had been encouraging and supportive to her and she had learnt from her wisdom and knowledge which had been very beneficial. When she visited Bangor West the one consistent message from constituents was that Alderman Mrs Smith was a lovely lady who was determined to work and had a heart for the community, she felt that was what Members needed to aspire to be. Councillor Gilmour wished Alderman Mrs Smith and her husband well as she enjoyed retirement.

Councillor Blaney echoed the sentiments expressed and thanked those Members leaving for their service. He highlighted Alderman Mrs Smith had been a great friend of his providing advice on politics when he first joined the UUP. He described her as a fantastic person, a lovely lady who would go out of her way to help anyone.

On another matter, Alderman Irvine congratulated Bangor Football Club who had won the Premier Intermediate League. That was a fantastic achievement and the Club had come a long way from the stability brought to the Club by the Chairman, Graham Bailie, and the current board members. Alderman Irvine hoped the Council would be able to recognise that achievement.

Alderman Gibson thanked Members for their comments. He remarked that he had enjoyed his time in Council and it had been a privilege to try and help people. He had tried to be friends with everyone in the Chamber and he wished all Members the best whether they were standing down or standing for re-election.

Councillor P Smith added his best wishes and paid tribute to Alderman Carson and Alderman Smith who were both long serving Members. The length of service was unique and should be celebrated. He passed on his thanks to those Members for the tremendous work they had done on behalf of their constituents and the UUP and wished them well.

Alderman Mrs Smith spoke of her 28 years and thanked Members and constituents for their friendship. She had many happy moments, some sad moments and had tried her best to fight for the people.

**NOTED.**

**5. MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL 2023**

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the month of April 2023.

**AGREED**, on the proposal of Alderman Gibson, seconded by Alderman McDowell, that the information be noted.

**6. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING DATED 29 MARCH 2023**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

**RESOLVED**, on the proposal of Alderman Irvine, seconded by Alderman Keery, that the minutes be adopted.

**7. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

**7.1 Minutes of Planning Committee dated 4 April 2023**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

**RESOLVED**, on the proposal of Alderman Gibson, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the minutes be adopted.

**7.2 Minutes of Special Planning Committee dated 5 April 2023**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

**RESOLVED**, on the proposal of Councillor McRandal, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the minutes be adopted.

**8. CHARTER OF THE COLUMBAN WAY (FILE TO/TD/11)**

(Appendix II)

Having previously declared an interest in the item, The Mayor and Councillor McRandal withdrew from the meeting. The Deputy Mayor took the Chair.

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Prosperity attaching the Columban Charter of Partnership. The report detailed that a request had been received from the Friends of Columbanus Bangor, for Ards and North Down Borough Council and individual Members, to sign a new "Columban Charter of Partnership".

The Charter was a declaration of intent to help support and promote pilgrimage, cultural and scientific activities relating to Saint Columbanus and those of his

followers, including Gall, in all the regions and countries where their memory remained alive.

In particular, the Charter would support the development of the Columban Way, a pilgrim route that traces the footsteps of Columbanus from Mount Leinster in County Carlow, where he was born in 543, through eight European countries to Bobbio in Italy where he died in 615.

The Charter had been produced by the European Columban Way Partnership Group which comprised representation from the countries that the route passes through, including United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Liechtenstein, Germany, France, Switzerland, Austria, and Italy.

Friends of Columbanus groups across Europe were obtaining signatures from local authorities, cultural, leisure, music, education, businesses, tourism and hospitality and community groups, historical and heritage societies and churches. In Northern Ireland, the group hope to collect over 1000 signatures and present those at the official launch of the Columban Charter of Partnership on 7 July 2023 in St Gallen, Switzerland.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves this request for the Mayor of Ards and North Down to sign the Charter of the Columban Way on behalf of Ards and North Down Borough Council, with individual Members considering signing the Charter themselves.

Proposed by Alderman Wilson, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted.

Alderman Wilson wished to pay tribute to the work of Officers and also Alderman Girvan for her work with Friends of St Columbanus over the years.

Alderman McIlveen referred to the Charter and asked if the works referred to were religious. The Chief Executive was not aware if reference had been made to that in the articles provided.

Alderman McIlveen noted the reference to supporting and promoting pilgrimage, cultural, scientific activities, heritage and spirituality and sought further clarity in respect of the religious aspect. The Chief Executive was unable to provide clarity.

Proposed by Alderman Keery, seconded by Councillor T Smith, as an amendment, that the report be brought back to Council in June.

Alderman Keery felt clarity was needed in respect of the matter for the unanswered questions.

Councillor T Smith was in agreement and felt it be more appropriate for the new Council to decide if they wished to sign up the Charter.

Alderman McDowell was of the understanding that there was a non-denominational aspect. He felt a delay was not necessary and it was important that the Council

supported and recognised the tourism aspect. There was an element of Christian heritage included but that was a joint heritage for all Christian traditions.

Alderman Wilson highlighted the cultural and historical organisation relating to a significant person in history. The Charter sought to support and promote cultural and scientific activities relating to St Columbanus. There were no obligations contained for funding and the recommendation was simply the Council showing their support to the Friends of St Columbanus.

Alderman McIlveen appreciated the clarity from Alderman Wilson and was content for the matter to be deferred to get definitive answers to the questions.

The amendment was put the meeting and declared CARRIED with 22 voting FOR and 9 AGAINST.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Keery, seconded by Councillor T Smith, that the report be brought back to Council in June.**

The Mayor and Councillor McRandal re-entered the meeting. The Mayor resumed the Chair.

## **9. LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN UP TO 2032 (FILE PCA1)** (Appendices III, IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing attaching Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Report and LBAP Actions. The purpose of the report was to provide council with an update on the outcome of the Draft Local Biodiversity Action Plan up to 2032 online public consultation and to seek approval for its adoption and publication.

Biodiversity was the variety of plant and animal life in the world, or in a particular place or habitat, and included all species of plants and animals, and the habitats in which they live. Humans were a part of biodiversity, and the way we make use of the land and manage various habitats could have a knock-on effect for many other species.

The biodiversity of Northern Ireland was of international importance and around 20,000 species were found here in a wide variety of habitats. In the Ards and North Down Borough Council area a vast range of habitats could be found including saltmarsh, rivers & lakes, fens, sand dunes, woodland, and grassland. Urban habitats within parks, cemeteries and gardens were also important for biodiversity. Notable habitats within this Borough and the species they support were outlined in this plan.

The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) placed a statutory duty on all public bodies to "further the conservation of biodiversity in exercising any function." The production of this Local Biodiversity Action Plan would assist in demonstrating Council's compliance with the statutory duty. Under the WANE Act, the Council was responsible for considering five key aspects of biodiversity. Those were:

- Protection of Biodiversity
- Maintenance of Biodiversity
- Enhancing Biodiversity
- Restoring Biodiversity
- Promoting Biodiversity

The development of this Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) was an important step in recognising the importance of our local biodiversity. It aimed to ensure that international, national, regional and local biodiversity objectives were achieved through a range of partnerships.

Public consultation on the draft LBAP commenced on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2023 with residents, businesses, the community / voluntary sector and NGO's encouraged to respond. The consultation was published on the online digital platform Citizen Space which recorded responses through an online questionnaire. The consultation was publicised across a variety of channels including:

- Council social media platforms
- Council website
- Council's News & Info
- Advertisements in two local newspapers i.e. Spectator and Chronicle
- An electronic copy of the report, associated actions and link to the consultation was forwarded to 20 LBAP consultee's & the Northern Ireland Environment Link to distribute with their member organisations for comment.

The draft report and accompanying action plan were made available to read publicly on the website and a link to the report was also provided in the citizen space survey.

The initial closing date for public consultation was 26<sup>th</sup> February. A request to extend public consultation was made through the council social media platform as well as a request by e-mail on the 20<sup>th</sup> February from local group Greenspaces. An extension for public consultation was granted until the 16<sup>th</sup> March. To publicise the extension adverts were placed in the Chronicle and Spectator on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March with updated posts placed across council social media platforms and the website. In its entirety the LBAP public consultation ran for total 8 weeks and 1 day.

The online survey had a total of 17 questions divided across 4 parts, listed below:

- Part 1: About you
- Part 2: Biodiversity in Ards and North Down
- Part 3: LBAP Themes and Actions
- Part 4: Further Comments

As all the questions in the survey were not mandatory, not every respondent answered every question.

Part 1 Results:

A total of 77 participants including 68 individuals and 9 organisations took part in the online survey with 3 additional organisations submitting a response by e-mail. The number of participants included a total of 8 key wildlife including the National Trust (NT), Woodland Trust (WT), Ulster Wildlife Trust (UWT), Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), NI Badger Group, NI Swift Group and the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group (NIRSG). All responses were reviewed individually.

A total of 56 respondents wished to be 'added to a database to be informed of future biodiversity opportunities within the Borough'. The desire to be 'informed' was a familiar term used by respondents throughout the consultation and mentioned frequently in Part 3 of the survey.

Out of the total number respondents the greatest response came from those within the 55-64 age group, 31%, and the Over 65 age group, 31%. The lowest number of respondents fell within the 18-24 age group, 3%.

#### Part 2 Results:

99% of the respondents believe 'Action for our natural environment is important', 83% stated that 'Biodiversity is extremely important to them' whilst 96% also believe that 'Biodiversity action is important for climate change'. The results indicated a notable level of connection between the respondents and their natural environment, understanding in relation to the importance of biodiversity the link between biodiversity and climate change.

Biodiversity was affected by climate change, with negative consequences for human well-being however through the ecosystem services it supports, biodiversity can make an important contribution to both climate-change mitigation and adaptation. Consequently, conserving and sustainably managing biodiversity was critical to addressing climate change.

#### Part 3 Results:

A total of 77 Actions were proposed across four Themes in the draft LBAP, the actions were drafted to help protect, conserve, and enhance those priority habitats and species within the Council area identified through the audit process. LBAP Actions were listed under one of the following four broad themes:

Theme 1: Education and Awareness

Theme 2: Research and Monitoring

Theme 3: Land Management

Theme 4: Building Partnerships

In this part of the survey, questions were asked to gauge level of support for each Theme and the actions contained within them. A question, with an open text field for further comment and recommendations for action, was also included. The results are summarised below:

Theme 1: Do you agree with Theme 1 and the actions contained within it - 87% responding 'agree' with 13% responding 'do not agree'. A total of 15 respondents expanded in the open text field with further comment and

recommendations for action. As the responses were written comments it was not possible to replicate them all here however during analysis of responses the following are some of the main issues raised. Concerns in relation to fly tipping and littering, pollution, use of herbicides, the impact of local development on biodiversity, the local development plan, biodiversity education, reporting and informing the public on actions taken for biodiversity.

Theme 2: Do you agree with Theme 2 and the actions contained within it – 88% responding 'agree' with 10% responding 'do not agree'. A total of 12 respondents expanded in the open text field with further comments and recommendations for action. As the responses were written comments it was not possible to replicate them all here however during analysis of responses the following are some of the main issues raised. Concerns in relation to litter, use of herbicides, the impact of local development on biodiversity, the local development plan, recently revised NI priority species list, reporting, monitoring of ongoing success of actions and mapping of habitats on council owned land.

Theme 3: Do you agree with Theme 3 and the actions contained within it – 86% responding 'agree' with 13% responding 'do not agree'. A total of 14 respondents expanded in the open text field with further comments and recommendations for action. As the responses were written comments it was not possible to replicate them all here however during analysis of responses the following are some of the main issues raised. Concerns in relation to littering, pollution, use of pesticides and herbicides, the impact of local development on biodiversity, the local development plan, the impact of fencing on wildlife, the impact of public access on biodiversity, greater protection for trees and retention of deadwood, woodland management for biodiversity, timescales for action, the reporting, informing, and mapping of actions taken for biodiversity.

Theme 4: Do you agree with Theme 4 and the actions contained within it – 91% responding 'agree' with 8% responding 'do not agree'. A total of 10 respondents expanded in the open text field with further comments and recommendations for action. As the responses were written comments it was not possible to replicate them all here however during analysis of responses the following are some of the main issues raised. Concerns in relation to littering, the impact of local development on biodiversity, the local development plan, ensuring open and clear engagement and communication across all stakeholders and local community, expanding the list of delivery partners, establishment of steering group, adequate management of 'Friends of Groups', reporting and informing the public of on actions taken for biodiversity.

#### Part 4 Results:

This part of the survey offered an open platform for the respondents to comment without being limited to specific elements of the draft plan. A total of 45 respondents provided further views to the plan. As the responses were written comments it was not possible to replicate them all here however during analysis of responses the following are some of the main issues raised. Concerns in relation to fly tipping and littering, pollution, use of herbicides, the impact of local development on biodiversity, building biodiversity into new planning applications, the local development plan,

biodiversity education, ensuring engagement and communication across all stakeholders and local community, timescales for action, expanding the list of delivery partners within the action plan, reporting, and informing the public of on actions taken for biodiversity.

Following the consultation process a total of 7 additional actions were included in the plan, increasing the number of actions from 77 to 84. These additional actions were as follows. (Number refers to its location in the action plan overall list)

**14** Raise awareness on danger of rodenticides to non-target wildlife and the importance of using rodenticides correctly. (in association with NIRSG, RSPB, BTO, Ulster Wildlife).

**15** Engage with the PSNI Wildlife Officer to promote the Partnership Against Wildlife Crime (PAWS) and raise public awareness of the threats and persecutions that face some of our most vulnerable and iconic species. (ANDBC, PSNI, DAERA, Conservation and Wildlife Organisations).

**28** Raise awareness of the Borough's oldest and most important trees through the promotion of the Ancient Tree Inventory. (in association with Woodland Trust).

**29** Facilitate and support survey work to understand current distribution and condition of priority habitats and priority species populations within the Borough. (in association with stakeholders including DAERA, UWT, Conservation and Wildlife Organisations).

**67** Ensure all council owned sites are adequately scoped for the presence of badgers and/or setts prior to the commencement of any works, including maintenance works such as the removal of vegetation or scrub (in association with NI Badger Group).

**83** Engage with stakeholders to facilitate the reduction in ammonia and nutrient run-off across landscapes. (in association with multiple stakeholders).

**84** Identify potential peatland restoration sites and engage with stakeholders to identify opportunities for restoring of sites into a semi natural state. (in association with multiple stakeholders including Private Landowners).

Other actions in the draft plan were reworded and/or expanded to allow for broader scope, several delivery partners were also added. At the request of some of the wildlife organisations information on specific species was added to the main body of the draft LBAP. No further significant changes were made following the consultation. Officers made every attempt to adjust and include as many actions and edits as possible to address both individual and organisational requests.

Feedback from the consultation indicated some level of concern in relation to engagement, communication and input from local stakeholders into the delivery of the proposed actions and the reporting of these actions. Although there was overwhelming support for the current Themes and actions in the draft plan, there was formidable support for other actions to be included. It should be highlighted

within the main body of the attached LBAP it stated this document would be dynamic and subject to constant review. This review would involve council officers and the LBAP Partnership, which would consist of stakeholders, conservation and wildlife organisations and local environment champions which would be established within the first year of the LBAP. Considering the plan was due to have a life span of ten years it was not intended to be static. The intention was for the plan to be flexible to allow actions to be added or removed once targets have been met, to allow for the inclusion of new concepts once they develop such as Nature Recovery Networks or new land management approaches such as Biodiversity Net Gain. Progress on proposed actions would be assessed and reported annually by the Partnership and the LBAP would be reviewed in its entirety after five years.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the respondents for taking the time to complete the survey and provide feedback on the draft plan. We look forward to working with the Partnership to deliver biodiversity actions for the benefit of our local environment and the people of Ards and North Down.

To conserve our habitats and the species they support; we must take ownership and get involved now in protecting them.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Ards and North Down up to 2032 (Appendix 1) and associated Actions (Appendix 2) for adoption and publication. And that reporting on progress of this document will be undertaken annually through the Community and Wellbeing Committee.

Proposed by Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor McKimm, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McKee welcomed the report and the support achieved. He referred to the associated actions and the need for that list not to be actions that were not progressed and aspirations that were not realised. It was important for the future of the natural world and was dependent on people and organisations such as the Council to take action to stem the decline in biodiversity. Councillor McKee referred to Stricklands Glen which was under threat due to the choking effect of invasive species. He hoped resources could be provided to enable the important work which could not be afforded to be ignored.

Councillor McKimm was delighted to see the results of the survey and the input from the community. He felt it could be seen as easy to push aside the environment during a cost of living crisis highlighting the need to look after and sustain the environment. He shared his thoughts in respect of NI Water who had a view of creating a great infrastructure but at times at the neglect to the environment. He concurred with Councillor McKee that the Council needed to find a way to be accountable to the actions.

Alderman McIlveen referred to appendix 1 and noted there was reference to North Down and Ards throughout. He referred to a Notice of Motion that he had previously brought forward in respect of the planting of urban trees and he could not see any reference to that within the report and asked if that could be looked at again to include that element.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing referred to action 27 within the action plan which referred to the stand for trees, that was high level action and more detail could be incorporated within that action at a later date. Alderman McIlveen noted that there was no reference to that within the action plan itself. The Director stated that the Notice of Motion stood as it was and would be progressed. The list of actions provided an overview of the work that was to occur.

Councillor McRandal spoke in support of the document and welcomed the level of response for improving and sustaining the environment. The action plan was dynamic and it was critical that the document was reviewed and built upon year on year.

Councillor P Smith noted the significant piece of work and commended Officers. It was important that biodiversity did start at home and the document was a step in the right direction. He looked forward to the actions being pursued.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor McKimm, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **10. ARTS PROJECT GRANTS 2023-2024 (FILE ART 05/23 R1)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Arts Projects Grants for 2023-2024 opened for application on Monday 27 February 2023, with a closing date of 23 March 2023. The grants were advertised in the press, on the Councils web site and groups were notified by email.

The total budget ringfenced for the Arts Grants was £11,000 and applicants could apply for up to £1,000 for each project.

An assessment panel met on Wednesday 5 April 2023 to consider nine applications received by the closing date. The total value of the applications received was £8,960 and the panel agreed a pass mark of 60%.

Table 1 below provided a summary of the applications and the recommended awards.

**Table 1. Assessment Panel Recommendations**

<b>Name of Organisation</b>	<b>Requested Amount</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Amount Recommended</b>
Portico	£1,000	Halloween Scream	89	£1,000
Bangor & North Down Camera Club	£1,000	Discovering & Creating the Refined Photo Book by Keron Psillas Oliveira	80	£1,000
Rotary Club of North Down	£1,000	Primary School Musician of the Year Competition	90	£1,000

AMH New Horizons	£1,000	Glass Fusing & Beyond	83	£1,000
AMH Promote	£1,000	Christmas Pantomime	88	£1,000
Hollywood Shared Town	£1,000	Poetry Workshop and Readings	58	£0
Portaferry Community Services	£1,000	Storyteller – Seanachai – wee yarns	84	£1,000
Kilmood Art Club	£960	Art Workshops	82	£960
Lisbarnett & Lisbane Community Association Ltd	£1,000	Lisbane Art Group Autumn Project 2023	55	£0

Two applications were unsuccessful:

- Holywood Shared Town's application did not provide sufficient information about its core aim of school engagement and did not represent good value for money.
- Lisbarnett and Lisbane Community Association's application due to the quality of the facilitation and was insufficient information regarding participation.

The unsuccessful applicants would receive feedback from the panel and a second round of Arts Grants funding would be released in August 2023 for the remaining budget of £4,040. The unsuccessful applicants could then reapply under round two of the grant scheme.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council approves the seven successful applications and awards detailed in table 1, totalling £6,960.

Proposed by Alderman Irvine, seconded by Alderman Gibson, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor P Smith noted that Lisbarnett and Lisbane Community Association's application was unsuccessful and he hoped they would get another opportunity in the next round of funding. The Director of Community and Wellbeing confirmed they would have another opportunity and would also receive feedback on their scoring.

Councillor Woods questioned how the threshold of 60% was arrived at. The Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that was a decision of the scoring panel and he did not have the details available.

Referring to the scoring, Councillor MacArthur noted that in other such grants the funding was proportionate to scoring and she asked why that was not the case with this fund. The Director of Community and Wellbeing undertook to check the detail.

**RESOLVED**, on the proposal of Alderman Irvine, seconded by Alderman Gibson, that the recommendation be adopted.

## 11. HERITAGE PROJECT GRANTS 2023-2024 (FILE HER 01/23)

(Having previously declared an interest in the item, Councillor McRandal withdrew from the meeting)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that applications to the Heritage Grant 2023-24 opened in February 2023 and closed on 23 March 2023. Thirteen applications were received. Three members of the Arts and Heritage Panel assessed the applications on 31 March, along with the Heritage Development Officer.

There was a total of £5,000 available with a maximum of £500 per application awarded. Each application was scored out of 100. Recommendation for award of grant was based on a minimum score of 50.

**Table 1. Assessment Panel Recommendations**

<b>Name of Organisation</b>	<b>Requested Amount</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Amount Recommended</b>
Portaferry and Strangford Trust	£500	Maritime Heritage past and future	80	£500
Ards Historical Society	£500	Domain renewal and printer consumables	60	£500
Discover Groomsport	£500	Groomsport history tour and self-guided tour	80	£500
Auld Bangor Historical and Cultural Society	£500	Shared History from the Somme and beyond	54	£250
Portavogie Cultural and Heritage Society	£500	Booklet publication	55	£250
Friends of Columbanus	£500	Pilgrim Badges	56	£250
Kilcooley Women's Centre	£500	Market House Memories	40	£0
Inspiring Yarns	£500	Learn to spin sessions	55	£250
Boom Studios	£500	Bangor seafront heritage sketch walks	60	£500
Donaghadee Historical Society	£500	Reminiscences of growing up or visiting Donaghadee	70	£500
Upper Ards Historical Society	£500	Journal 47 of UAHS	70	£500
Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company	£500	History and use of Donaghadee Harbour	75	£500

Portaferry Sailing Club	£500	Maritime and Gilpin Memoirs	60	£500
	£6,500			£5,000

Kilcooley Women's Centre were not awarded a grant as the project did not demonstrate good value for money nor quality of expertise involved.

The remaining twelve projects, scored above the minimum required. Those scoring between 60 or above had been awarded the requested £500. Those scoring 40-59 had been awarded £250.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the twelve successful applications and awards detailed in table 1, totalling £5,000.

Proposed by Councillor Thompson, seconded by Alderman Gibson, that the recommendation be adopted.

In relation to the unsuccessful applicants, Councillor Gilmour referred to Kilcooley Women's Centre and asked how the scoring was assessed. The Director of Community and Wellbeing stated the Scoring Panel, set the criteria and undertook to provide more detail to the Member.

Councillor Woods noted this grants process did not have a minimum threshold though those applicants scoring 40% - 59% had been awarded half the amount. She wished to ensure consistency across the grants. The Director of Community and Wellbeing undertook to contact the Member with an answer.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Thompson, seconded by Alderman Gibson, that the recommendation be adopted.**

(Councillor McRandal re-entered the meeting)

**12. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN EVENTS AND FESTIVALS FUND 23/24 - TRANCHE TWO AND TRANCHE ONE UPDATE (FILE CD27)**

(Having previously declared an interest in the item, the Mayor withdrew from the meeting and the Deputy Mayor took the Chair.

(Councillor P Smith declared an interest in the item and withdrew from the meeting)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing detailing that the Council approved the Borough Events Strategic Direction 2012-2026 (BESD) in November 2020. Within the BESD, it acknowledged that local festivals and events played a key part in delivering social, cultural and economic outcomes. Various Council services provided grants to support festivals and events, including Community Development and Tourism.

A recommendation of the BESD was that Council should continue to support the development of the local events sector through strategic funding, training and development and advice. The Strategy recommended that this support should be better structured for event organisers and progression routes are made available for event organisers to help run their events safely or for those who want their events to grow. In addition, the Strategy recommended combining the two Council grant budgets that supported events and festivals i.e. The Tourism Events Fund and the Community Festivals Fund.

In October 2022 Council agreed this new fund as the "Ards and North Down Events and Festivals Fund". Through the estimates process £175,000 had been secured for 2023/24 and this amount included match funding from DfC which had been estimated at £31,400.

In line with the Strategy recommendations, Council agreed that the fund would follow a 4-tier model, detailed in Table 1 below to include the festival type, criteria, budget and the minimum and maximum grants for each tier.

**Table 1: Four Tier Model**

Tranche	Festival/Event	Criteria	Budget	Min-Max Grant
1	Large	Min 2,000 attending	98,437.50	£10,001 - £20,000
1	Medium	Min 1001 attending	38,281.25	£4001 - £10,000
2	Neighbourhood	Up to 1000 attending	£16,406.25	£1001-£4000
2	Local	Up to 500 attending	£21,875	Up to £1,000

### The Application Process

Following information workshops for potential applicants, Tranche 2 of the Events and Festivals Fund opened for applications on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023 and closed on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023. All applications were received and assessed by a panel comprised of the Community Development Manager, Community Development Officer, and Events Officer against an agreed scoring matrix.

The scoring matrix included:

- Eligibility checks
- How does the event/festival achieve its aim (Economic or Social benefit)
- How it can be developed (including audience development)
- The project description
- Safety and Welfare measures
- Opportunities and supporting volunteers
- Environmental management
- Financial Breakdown including income and financial sustainability
- Participant numbers and roles and supporting local spend

- Marketing and promotion to attract attendees

The panel agreed to apply a pass mark of 50%.

Applicants were required to indicate the primary purpose of their festival or events i.e., was it primarily for economic benefit or social benefit. Whilst this question in the application was not scored, it assisted the Tourism and Community Development Teams to provide the appropriate support for event organisers, when organising and delivering their events/festivals.

### Recommendations of the Assessment Panel

Twenty-six applications were received by the closing date. The total value of the applications received was £39,234 and the total budget available for both the Neighbourhood and Local festivals was £38,281.25.

Five applications did not meet the pass mark of 50% and were therefore not recommended for award.

In line with the criteria of the fund, four applications were deemed ineligible and as a result were not scored, for the reasons given below.

### Tranche 2 Events and Festivals Grants

Local Festivals Recommended for Award					
	Group / Organisation	Name of Festival	Amount Requested	% Score	Eligible Amount at 100%
1	Breezemount Community Association	Breezemount Summer Festival	£1,000.00	50.91%	£700.00
2	Cloughey & District Community Association	Cloughey's Old fashioned day at the beach	£770.00	52.73%	£670.00
3	Conlig Community Regeneration Group	Family Day	£1,000.00	50.91%	£1,000.00
4	Kilcooley Women's Centre	International Women's day	£1,000.00	58.18%	£700.00
5	Love Ballyholme	Christmas at Holme	£1,000.00	65.45%	£850.00
6	St Marys Support PS Kircubbin Parent support group	Summer Fun for Families	£1,000.00	60.00%	£1,000.00
7	St Marys Support Group	Bank Holiday Tractor run & family fun day	£1,000.00	61.82%	£875.00
8	ND & Ards U3A	U3A Songfest	£1,000.00	52.73%	£1,000.00
9	Whitehill Community Association	Whitehill Community Festival	£1,000.00	50.91%	£750.00
					<b>£7,545</b>
Tranche 2 Neighbourhood Festivals – Recommended for award					

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	Group / Organisation	Name of Festival	Amount Requested	% Score	Eligible Amount at 100%
10	Ards Cycling Club	Ards Town Centre Criterium Races	£3,910	54.55%	£3,910.00
11	Ballygowan Community Voices	An evening of Summer / Winter Song	£4,000	56.36%	£2,310.00
12	Ballygowan Presbyterian Church	Community Fun day	£4,000	60.00%	£4,000.00
13	Friends of Coloumbanus Bangor (FoCB)	Columbanus Festival	£4,000	63.64%	£3,200.00
14	Friends of St Patricks Ballygalget	Summer Fete Day	£2,554	58.18%	£2,054.00
15	Hollywood Shared Town	The Creative Hollywood festival	£4,000	50.91%	£4,000.00
16	Polish Association	International Children's Day, Polish Independence Day, Cultural Christmas Celebration	£4,000	58.18%	£2,000.00
17	St Patricks Community Centre	Spooktacular Monster mash Halloween Fest	£4,000	60.00%	£3,700.00
					<b>£ 25,174.00</b>

<b>Total</b>	<b>£32,719.00</b>
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#### Unsuccessful - failed to reach pass mark and not recommended for Award

	Group / Organisation	Name of Festival	Amount Requested	%
18	Cloughey Heritage Group	Cloughey Heritage Fun day	£1,000	43.63%
19	Glencraig IPS PTA	Community Summer Fair	£1,000	49.09%
20	Mae Murray Foundation	Inclusive Beach Events	£1,000	47.27%
21	Millisle & District Community Association	Burns night, Holocaust memorial day, St Patricks day	£1,000	49.09%
22	Hollywood District Community Council	Hollywood May Day Fair	£4,000	45.45%
			<b>£8,000</b>	

#### Ineligible Applications – not recommended for Award

	Group / Organisation	Name of Festival	Amount Requested
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23	Bangor & ND Samaritans	Samaritans All-Ireland conference - not eligible as is a conference not event/festival	£1,000
24	Friends of Abbey PTA	Spring Festival - was a fundraising event	£1,000
25	Killinchy & District DCA	Killinchy Community Christmas Carols & Santa visit - refer to Christmas grants	£1,000
26	Lisbarnett & Lisbane	Lisbane Summer Fair - application received after the 12 noon deadline	£1,000
			£4,000

Unsuccessful applicants would be provided with the reason for rejection and offered feedback on their application and the Council's Appeals Procedure would apply, where appropriate. Also, where possible, officers would assist unsuccessful applicants to source other sources of funding for their events/festivals.

#### **Award process and Possible Budget Reductions**

In the report entitled the NI Executive Budget Uncertainties 2023-2024, Members had been informed that the Permanent Secretary had written to the Council advising of possible budget reductions in grant income in the current financial year.

At the time of writing this report the Council's Letter of Offer from the Department of Communities (DfC), which provided £31,400 of matched funding for the Events and Festivals Fund, remained outstanding and therefore it was recommended that in line with the principles applied to other matched funded grants, only Council's contribution to grant schemes was released to successful applicants. The reduction applied to all successful applicants to the Events and Festivals Fund i.e., Tranche 1 Large and Medium (agreed by Council in March 2023) and Tranche 2 Neighbourhood and Local.

In the absence of DfC's matched funding Council's Letters of Offer to Tranche 1 successful groups had not been issued; instead the applicants had been notified that they could choose to run their events/festivals "at risk" in the absence of a formal offer of funding from the Council. It was now recommended that letters of offer for 82.06% of all approved awards under both Tranche 1 and 2 of the grants scheme was issued until such time as the Department confirmed the Council's matched grant contribution.

#### **Tranche 1 Events and Festivals**

In March 2023, Council requested that Officers review two applications submitted under Tranche 1, which had been deemed by the panel ineligible for scoring, namely:

- Comber District LOL 15 - Celebration of Orange Culture
- Bangor District LOL 18 - Boyne Anniversary

The Events and Festivals fund was co-funded by DfC. DfC's Letter of Offer to Council states that Council must:

*"Ensure that all events funded promote the principles of inclusion and comply with equality requirements".*

Therefore, the Events and Festivals criteria includes similar specific criteria which states:

*"Applications will not be accepted for the following activity:*

*Any event/festival that is perceived to support or promote any religious or political dimension".*

The panel met again to specifically review the two ineligible applications for a "Celebration of Orange Culture" and the "Boyne Anniversary". The decision that both applications from Bangor and Comber Loyal Orange Lodges were ineligible was upheld. The panel agreed that the applications were ineligible due to the highlighted section taken from page 4 of the Guidance Notes:

### **Ineligible Applications**

Applications would **not** be accepted from the following:

- Individuals or sole traders;
- Trade or professional conferences/conventions;
- Organisations not legally established in the UK;
- Events and festivals run on the same date as a Council run event and require the use of Council equipment/assets, are not eligible.

And for the following activity:

- Ongoing operational costs
- Retrospective activity (events/festivals which have already taken place or where expenditure was incurred before a grant award was confirmed);
- *Any event/festival that is perceived to support or promote any religious or political dimension;*
- Events/festivals that are substantially fundraising vehicles, whether for the event organisation itself or to raise funds for transmission to a third party.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees:

1. The recommendations set out in this report in relation to all Tranche 2 applications;
2. That the Tranche 1 applications received from Bangor and Comber Loyal Orange Lodges are ineligible for assessment; and
3. That Council's Letters of Offer for all successful applications under Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 are released for 82.06% of approved awards (i.e., the Council's agreed contribution), until such time as the Department for

Communities confirms the Council's grant contribution which match funds the Events and Festivals scheme.

Proposed by Alderman Irvine, seconded by Councillor T Smith, that recommendation 1 and 3 be adopted and in regard to recommendation 2 that Council recognises the cultural significance of the Twelfth of July celebrations and awards Bangor District Loyal Orange Lodge and Comber District Loyal Orange Lodge tranche 1 funding at the level requested in their applications.

Speaking to his proposal, Alderman Irvine firstly declared that he was a member of the Orange Order. He outlined the cultural and historic significance of the Twelfth of July celebrations and how much those celebrations meant to the people of the Borough. The Twelfth of July celebration in the Borough was a large cultural event and one of the biggest events held in the Borough in 2023. When the event was last held in Bangor an estimated 30,000 people attended with an increase in international visitors. He believed that the Twelfth of July celebration was the exactly the type of event that the scheme was set up to fund. The Council wished to see volunteer and community led events held to take the pressure of the Council and he believed that the Twelfth of July celebrations did that. In respect of the DfC element, their criteria made mention of inclusivity and Alderman Irvine stated that the organisers of the Twelfth of July celebrations did welcome everyone to the event.

(Councillor MacArthur withdrew from the meeting)

The Director of Community and Wellbeing sought clarity from Alderman Irvine if the proposal was asking for Council to make an award without scoring the applications.

Alderman Irvine remained content with his proposal.

(Councillor Wood re-entered the meeting – 7.56 pm)

Alderman McIlveen questioned if the Council would be acting appropriately or would the applications need to be scored.

(Councillor MacArthur re-entered the meeting – 7.57 pm)

The Director of Community and Wellbeing explained that as with other grant schemes the fund was a two stage process. The applicants within the proposal did not get through the first stage of the process of eligibility. The second stage was to score the application, if the first stage was successful and therefore with regard to these applicants that had not occurred.

(Councillor McClean re-entered the meeting – 7.57 pm)

Alderman McIlveen referred to the criteria of promoting religious and/or political dimensions. Referring back to an earlier report in the meeting in respect of St Columbanus Charter where there was a rich cultural and rich history. Therefore similarly the Twelfth of July celebrations were a huge cultural and historical event along with being massive tourism events bringing thousands of people into the Borough. Alderman McIlveen could not see how Officers could judge one event as

complying while others were not compliant with some perceived political and/or historic dimension. He further referred to the Christmas festivals fund with Christmas being a religious festival highlighting the need for consistency across the grant funding with applications being treated equally and scored appropriately.

Alderman Wilson disagreed with the remarks of Alderman McIlveen. St Columbanus was a figure of huge significance with his legacy being seen across Europe. The St Columbanus Festival was not supporting or promoting a political or religious dimension. The Orange Order was a member organisation comprised of Protestants who were committed to the protection of the principals of the Protestant Reformation and the revolution in 1688. Alderman Wilson therefore argued that the Orange Order was political and/or religious. He asked where the Council would stand if the proposal was to proceed with the organisations that had been unsuccessful.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing outlined there was a perceived risk that other organisations might challenge. There could be organisations that did not apply as they did not feel they met the criteria. The Director strongly advised that the applications should be scored.

Alderman Wilson asked if there could be any potential come back from the Department. The Director explained that the Council funded 80% and the Council could award that element if that was the decision. DfC set a principal for the funding awards in respect of inclusion and they may make an argument in that regard.

Councillor T Smith highlighted that the Battle of the Boyne had great historical significance. He outlined the need for consistency and was surprised as to why Council would not embrace the event. Thousands of people would come to Bangor for the day and he questioned if the Council was working with the organisers of the event to maximise tourism opportunities.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that the Orange Order had been invited to workshops in respect of the funding stream.

Councillor T Smith was of the view that the celebrations would be an inclusive day highlighting the need to support Northern Ireland's culture. Councillor T Smith fully supported the proposal and was of the view that the Council should be embracing the celebration and working with the organisers to maximise the tourism offering.

Councillor Gilmour rose in support of the view that the applications from Bangor District Loyal Orange Lodge and Comber District Loyal Orange Lodge be scored. She found the arguments bizarre as to why those organisations could not be considered and noted that Ballygowan Presbyterian Church had been awarded funding for their fun day and that was a religious and Protestant Church. The event/festival was the important factor and she felt that some Members were becoming lost in the objection with the organisation that was planning the event. The host schedule had been changed to Bangor this year in celebration of the fact that Bangor was a new City and she viewed that it would be crying shame if the prejudices of some could not be set aside. She expressed her disappointment with some of the comments and attitudes. Councillor Gilmour wondered if Alderman Irvine would consider amending his proposal to allow the applications to be scored.

Councillor Adair supported the proposal. He referred to the explanation of the Orange Order from Alderman Wilson and noted that the revolution brought the parliamentary and democracy system. The Orange Order stood for civil and religious liberty for all and because an organisation was religious that should not exclude them from funding opportunities. The Twelfth of July celebrations were good for business and attracting visitors in from a large area.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter did not wish to reiterate the points that she had made at the Committee meeting however noted that no difference had been made to the scoring matrix. She expressed her disappointment that no engagement had been made with the Orange Order to ascertain further. The event brought thousands of pounds into the local economy and was one which could be enjoyed by anyone within the Borough. It was not up for the Council to decide who could enjoy such events but rather should be facilitating a massive festival.

Councillor McKimm supported the re-scoring of the applications. He stated at that the time when the report was first considered he had asked for some understanding of the operational definitions that were being used either by the Council or the Department. He felt there was a need for a clear operational definition how Council defined religious or political groups and expressed his disappointment that had not been provided.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing stated that the DfC did state in their letter of offer what the funding was contingent on. The Council set the criteria on how the grants were scored which was informed by the DfC.

Looking forward into creating a shared future, Councillor McKimm described it as unreal that the Council did not have definition how it defined a religious or political group.

Councillor Edmund outlined that the Battle of the Boyne changed the face of European history forever providing democracy, parliaments, providing Members with the right to stand in the Chamber and speak for their constituents. From a tourism point of view, the Twelfth of Celebrations were alternated around the towns and villages bringing great business to those local economies.

Councillor Irvine supported the proposal and stated that the funding would ease the financial burden for the Orange Orders and allow them to provide entertainment.

Councillor Walker felt some context needed to be brought to the matter. The Council was not speaking against the event and did recognise the value it had not only to Bangor but the whole of the Borough. He viewed it as unfair and incorrect that the Council was not supporting the event. The issue was if the applications for funding met the criteria and the Judging Panel had concluded that the applications did not meet the eligibility criteria due to the constitutions put forward. He felt it was dangerous at this stage that Members were dictating to the independent judging panel on the distribution of the funding.

(Alderman Keery withdrew from the meeting – 8.22 pm)

Councillor Walker asked if the funding was to be agreed where the monies would come from.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing stated that if the panel were to agree eligibility and the applicants were then scored successfully the money would be the Council's contribution.

Councillor Walker called for a recorded vote.

Councillor Woods stated that she could not support a proposal for organisations to get funding when others detailed in the report did not with the correct process not having been followed.

(Alderman Keery re-entered the meeting – 8.24 pm)

Continuing, Councillor Woods stated that such a proposal could set a precedent and open the Council up to action from those applicants that were unsuccessful along with those organisations who did not apply due to the criteria. She questioned how the fund could be audited without due process having been followed. She asked the Director of Community and Wellbeing if the Council could decide on a change of eligibility at this stage. In response the Director stated that the issue was the definition of what was eligible rather than change eligibility criteria. His understanding was that the point was being made of the cultural and historical significance of the event and some Members were minded that the organisations were eligible on that basis.

On the process and procedural grounds, Councillor Woods stated she could support Alderman Irvine's proposal. Councillor Woods wished to speak on the report, referring to the application from Holywood District Community Council who had been unsuccessful in their application for their May Day Celebrations on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023.

Councillor Woods highlighted the length of time that the May Day Celebrations had been running. She would continue to support the group of volunteers to navigate the appeals process.

(Councillor Irwin withdrew from the meeting – 8.28 pm)

The May Day event was at risk due to the absence of funding with the event being the only tourism event planned for Holywood. The event was partly organised by the Council and Councillor Woods could understand how and why the funding application had been unsuccessful.

Councillor Kennedy asked if Alderman Irvine was minded to amend his proposal to include reference to Council scoring the applications rather than awarding to them. Alderman Irvine confirmed he was content to make that amendment.

In respect of May Day, Councillor McClean advised that the event was massive and had been running for decades previously by the community until the Council became involved. He felt funding discussions for such events needed to occur much earlier in the process with May Day occurring on Monday. Irrespective of size or importance

of any event that was an untenable position. Even small events took hours of planning and dedication. The previous year the May Day organisers had been told two weeks after the event that they had been unsuccessful in their funding application with the appeals process having taken six months.

(Councillor Irwin re-entered the meeting – 8.32 pm)

Councillor McClean asked if Officers would agree that it was unacceptable that such groups were learning of being unsuccessful in their funding application after their event had taken place and in this instance asked if the appeal could be considered in a timelier manner. The Director agreed that the situation was not ideal. The festival fund was generally for festivals in the summer months and later in the year and it was an anomaly with May Day occurring so early in the financial year. The Director explained that the organisers had informally been advised that the decision was coming before Council and an appeals panel had been arranged for that Friday. Therefore, if an appeal was received the application could be reviewed by a different group of Officers. The Director took on board the comment in respect of reviewing the timelines and noted there were many grant tranches throughout the year.

Councillor McRandal stated that May Day was a large event which cost relatively little as the committee of volunteers organised most of the event. He did not want to see a position that aspects of the event had to be cancelled due to the funding and hoped the event could go ahead as planned unhindered. He hoped the matter could be resolved for future years. Councillor McRandal highlighted the need to support volunteers rather than making life difficult for them.

As the Disability Champion for the Council, Councillor Thompson expressed his disappointment that the Mae Murray Foundation had been unsuccessful in their funding application with their scheme working out of Groomsport Beach. The disability forum had recently visited the beach where the Mae Murray Foundation had advised of their plans during the summer. Councillor Thompson urged Officers to look at the application and support the group. The Director advised that any organisations who were refused funding could submit an appeal and a panel could relook at the application.

Alderman Irvine read out his revised proposal. He made reference to the Borough's event strategic direction 2012-2026 which acknowledged that festivals played a key part in delivering social, cultural and economic outcomes and a recommendation of that was that the Council should continue to support events and provide development and advice.

On the proposal being put to the meeting with 25 voting For, 10 voting Against and 0 Abstained and 4 Absent it was declared CARRIED.

<b>FOR (25)</b>	<b>AGAINST (10)</b>	<b>ABSTAINING (0)</b>	<b>ABSENT (4)</b>
<b>Aldermen</b>	<b>Aldermen</b>		<b>Councillors</b>
Armstrong-Cotter	McDowell		Boyle
Carson	Wilson		Cooper
Gibson	<b>Councillors</b>		Douglas
Irvine	Dunlop		P Smith

Keery	Irwin
McIlveen	McAlpine
M Smith	McKimm
<b>Councillors</b>	McRandal
Adair	Moore
Blaney	Morgan
Brooks	Walker
Cathcart	
Chambers	
Cummings	
Edmund	
Gilmour	
Irvine	
Johnson	
Kennedy	
MacArthur	
McClellan	
McKee	
Smart	
T Smith	
Thompson	
Woods	

**RESOLVED**, on the proposal of Alderman Irvine, seconded by Councillor P Smith, that the Council agrees to recommendations 1 and 3 as per the report. In relation to recommendation 2 that the Council recognises the cultural significance of the Twelfth of July celebrations and scores both applications from Bangor District Loyal Orange Lodge and Comber District Loyal Orange Lodge for tranche 1 funding, bringing back the decision at the earliest opportunity.

The Mayor re-entered the meeting and resumed the Chair.  
Councillor P Smith re-entered the meeting.

### **13. UPDATE ON MODEL FOR SOCCER DEVELOPMENT (FILE SD148)**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing recalling that a report on the future of soccer development was presented to Community and Wellbeing Committee in March 2023 with a number of recommendations. However, at Marchs Council meeting, an amendment to the recommendations was approved by Members as follows:

"That this Council allocates appropriate funding to deliver our soccer development programmes and throughout the incoming year it consults with all local clubs, the Irish Football Association, and the Education Authority to ease the transaction from the Council's responsibility over to them for the following fiscal year and explores all revenue streams including funding to alleviate running costs going forward for all."

Considering above approved recommendation, Council Officers sought clarification from Elected Members on approved recommendation and requirements of Officers to implement recommendation. Following consultation with the proposer and seconder, it was advised that the expectation was full delivery of the programme for 2023/24 to allow Officers more time to consult with local clubs and the IFA to ease the transition period.

### Funding of Programme

Full direct delivery of the Sports Development Programme (2023/24 only) would be a net cost of approximately £68,000 to Council (Based on 2022/23 financial year expenditure of £90,000 and income generation of £22,000 approximately). Officers had considered Programme financing and identified the following potential opportunities to raise the shortfall:

- Officers would further consider programme costs to ensure any programme savings were made where possible. Costs of each activity stream would be carefully monitored to minimise overspends that occurred in past years.
- Officers would continue to actively seek any available external funding opportunities to fund the Programme during 2023/24.
- It was not possible to run a Leisure Centre Summer Scheme in 2023/24 due to recruitment issues therefore that would generate an identified saving of £25,000 to £30,000 (Community Development run summer schemes will continue as normal).
- Available budget in Sports Development staffing £5,000.
- Ards Half Marathon normal contribution not required (only £3,000 required) - £2,000
- Some Black Light Zone lease income £4,000
- Price Increases/charges were implemented across some of the Soccer Development Programmes £6,000. The following table detailed prices previously approved by Council and proposed changes for approval:-

<b>Ards and North Down Borough Council Soccer Development – Price Increases 1 April 2023</b>			
Activity	2022-23	2023-24 (Previously Approved)	2023-24 (Proposed to assist meet costs of delivery)
Easter Football Camp (3-days)	£30.00	£32.00	£34.00 March 2024
Easter Football Camp (3 days) Sibling Rate		£21.00	£27.50 10% discount
Summer Soccer course (weekly)	£45.00	£48.00	£50
Summer Soccer Course (weekly) Sibling Rate		£30.00	£45 10% discount
Football Development Centres 12 Weeks	£45.00	£48.00	£60

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Football Development Centres 12 Weeks Sibling Rate		£34.50	£54 10% discount
Adult Walking Football Programme	£3.00	£3.50	£5
Disability Football Programme	£3.00	£3.50	No change
Borough Cup Entry Fee	Free	£50.00	£75
Schools Football Per Hour	£17.50	£20.00	£40.00
Community Cup			£20.00 Already promoted at this rate
Primary School Boys League (Ards) 18-week Programme		50% of facility hire  Coaches used as Referees	100% facility hire met by school  School provides all officials/referees
Primary School Boys League (Peninsula) 4-week Programme		50% of facility hire  Coaches used as Referees	100% facility hire met by school  School provides all officials/referees
Primary School Boys Tournament - Ards (2 weeks)		50% of facility hire  Coaches used as Referees	100% facility hire met by school  School provides all officials/referees
Primary School 1 Day Tournament - Ards	Free	Free	No change
Girls Coaching Programme (Ards) 2 weeks	Free	Free	£40.00 per hour
Girls Coaching Programme (Peninsula) 2 weeks	Free	Free	£40.00 per hour
Primary School Girls Tournament	Free	Free	No change

If all of the above was approved it would leave a shortfall of c. £21-26k, which represented a quarter of the overall costs.

As detailed to Members in March 2023; Officers would continue to plan the transition period and would actively engage with the IFA, clubs and schools. Officers would seek to bring this transition date forward from 1 April 2024 in order to address the budget gap. If that was not determined to be possible, then further efficiencies would be looked for either within the soccer programme itself, or from within the wider Leisure Services budget. Officers would bring back an update report to Members in the Autumn of 2023/24 and prior to the rate setting process to ensure Members were fully informed of the future delivery proposal.

RECOMMENDED that Council:

1. Approves the delivery of the Soccer Development Programme for 2023/24 based on savings identified within the report.
2. Agrees that direct delivery of the Soccer Development Programme will be for one year only (2023/24) during which the Sports Development team will further develop and promote the transition period with an update being provided to Members in Autumn 2023/24.

(Councillor Adair withdrew from the meeting – 8.45 pm)

Proposed by Councillor Irvine, seconded by Alderman Irvine, that the recommendations be adopted.

Councillor Irvine expressed concerns that the monies would come from the wider leisure budget when he was of the impression that the monies would come from reserves. The Director of Community and Wellbeing noted the shortfall of £21k-£26k and explained that initially the view was to move the transition on further, look at further efficiencies within the soccer programme and if monies were not available then efficiencies would be looked at in the wider leisure service. As the financial year progressed underspends may materialise, if they did not then other sources would be looked at with reserves being an option at that stage.

Alderman Irvine welcomed the progress that had been made and the timely manner that the report had come back to Council. He agreed with the decision to look at how the programme progressed and assess it again the following year.

Alderman McIlveen expressed concern regarding the report and the potential impact on delivery. He wondered if the impact on individuals and schools participating had been looked at highlighting the change in cost by asking for parents and schools to fund it. He expressed concern with the current climate that would have a detrimental impact on people participating.

(Councillor Adair re-entered the meeting – 8.49 pm)

Councillor Thompson welcomed the report and improvements. He did share the concerns of Alderman McIlveen and hoped in the next rate setting process the scheme could be further improved for the children across the Borough.

Councillor Irvine shared the concerns of Alderman McIlveen although was pleased to see the scheme was not being lost completely. He hoped the money could be obtained from reserves or underspends and no other services were lost.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Irvine, seconded by Alderman Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.**

**14. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE PROVISION OF URGENT AND EMERGENCY CARE SERVICES (FILE CW 161)**

(Appendix V)

**PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:-** Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing and Director of Corporate Services attaching recommended response to the Consultation. The report highlighted that Members would be aware of the above consultation, launched in February 2023, and which closed on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, and the various consultation and engagement events that Members and the public have been involved in since the launch. In addition, there have been Committee and Council meetings that had considered the issue, including a deputation received from the Trust in March. The response attached to the report highlighted the decision made by Council as a result of a specific motion agreed through Corporate Services Committee and ratified by Council in March. That was presented as the Councils recommended corporate response to the Consultation.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council submits the response to the Consultation on the Future Provision of Urgent and Emergency Care Services in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust area.

Proposed by Councillor McKimm, seconded by Councillor T Smith, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor McKimm referred to the strong views and voice in respect of the matter and he welcomed the Chamber reflecting the views of the community. It had been valuable to have been invited by the Trust to the sites where Members saw in great detail the value of community based services.

Councillor T Smith advised that he had availed of minor injuries at the Ulster Hospital. He had tried to get an appointment at Ards Hospital which was very busy, it was evident that the MIU provision could not afford to be cut and there was a need to alleviate pressure from the Ulster Hospital. Councillor T Smith supported an urgent care centre however believed that should not occur at the expense of minor injury units. People wanted to see their local services retained and believed that the care would suffer if all services were moved to the Ulster Hospital as the staff from the MIUs would be used to take the pressure off a very busy A&E.

Councillor Irwin advised that the Alliance's position in relation to the consultation had been clear throughout. The proposed changes represented a vital step in the journey of much needed transformation for the Health Service. She was disappointed that other Members had signed up to the implementation of Bengoa however not when it came to local services. The reality was that in order to improve the struggling health service there was a need to proceed with changes that had been spoken about by countless experts or else what would be left would be increasing pressures, increasing waiting lists and increasing chaos in the Health Service. Councillor Irwin thanked the Clinicians and Trust staff who had been gracious in making themselves available and accessible throughout the consultation. There was a need for improved parking at the Ulster Hospital and improved public transport links. She found it reassuring that the MIUs would not close until the urgent care centre was open and therefore no loss of service. The changes proposed in the consultation represented a new and improved, GP led, 7 day a week service which would provide efficient care while taking pressure of GP services and the emergency departments. Councillor Irwin advised that the Alliance Party would not be supporting the consultation

response as put forward. If the Health Service was to survive transformation was essential and the Alliance Party would be voting for the sustainable future of health and social care in Northern Ireland. In finishing, Councillor Irwin read out a quote from the Bengoa report which detailed that the real value of health and social care was in its people not in its buildings. She thanked the staff who had worked at the MIUs and noted that the need for transformation was not a reflection of the efforts of the workforce it was a reflection of a crumbling system which only existed to this day due to the efforts of staff.

## **RECESS**

(Councillor MacArthur left the meeting at this stage)

The meeting went into recess at 8.59 pm and resumed at 9.10 pm.

Alderman McIlveen advised that following a recent visit by Members to view the services he had the opportunity to talk to some health service staff who were not enthusiastic about the proposals and had expressed the view to him quietly that they would greatly miss the minor injuries unit along with an expression of the usefulness of having a minor injuries unit to support the services which already existed. The Health Minister had set out his vision how urgent care services should not mean the removal of MIUs. The majority of Members would agree that unclear and unsatisfactory answers had been received in respect of the impact that was going to have on disabled people accessing the services in particular given the distance from the drop off point to the car park. Alderman McIlveen was unsure how the Council who represented the people of Ards and North Down could be supportive of the removal of vital services in the area.

Alderman Irvine highlighted the massive public engagement in respect of the minor injury unit's consultation with over 19,000 people indicating that they wished to see to the MIU's at Bangor and Newtownards kept open. As stated in the Council report he urged the Trust to listen to concerns from the public and hoped that the consultation exercise was a genuine one and would take on board the comments. Alderman Irvine expressed disappointment that all parties were not in agreement to provide the response. It had been many years since the Bengoa report had been published and a pandemic had occurred since that time.

Councillor Kennedy found it bizarre that some Members would try to dress up radical cuts to the health service as progress. He felt Councillor Irwin in her remarks was more interested in the management team within the Trust rather than the patients and its care. Councillor Kennedy spoke on the views that he had heard on his visit to the facility and the view from staff was that the Minor Injuries Unit worked very well for what it was. There was a misrepresentation voiced in respect of the MIUs and he detailed that the MIUs would not be kept open until such times the Urgent Care Centre was ready.

Alderman Smith thanked the nurses and staff at the Ulster Hospital and MIUs who all did a magnificent job in difficult circumstances. The Health Service had been in trouble financially and experienced staffing pressures for many years and it did not

seem to be getting resolved. The MIUs units were for minor injuries the Ulster Hospital was for acute injuries.

Alderman Wilson stated that the NHS was in crisis with the waiting lists in Northern Ireland being higher than anywhere else in the UK. There were around 8,000 staff vacancies with more than 16,000 people having waited over a year to have surgery – doing nothing was not the answer. The Bengoa report stated that having all the care on the same site improved the care and the clinical outcomes. The report also stated that the location and composition of resources should be based on meeting patients' needs and achieving the best outcomes. Patient outcomes were what was important and at the last Council meeting Members listened to the Trust and how the proposed changes would improve outcomes for those who needed care. The Clinicians had advised that the proposal would not only enhance the minor injuries unit but also alleviate the pressure on a struggling minor injuries unit. Alderman Wilson expressed concerns regarding access to the Ulster Hospital and it was essential improvements were seen to car parking and public transport links. The Clinicians from the Trust not only had clinical experience but also a general overview of service provision giving them the vital experience needed to make strategic decisions. Alderman Wilson viewed it as preposterous that the Council would claim to know more than the Clinicians about the kind of reforms that were needed to improve health care for residents. It was for the Council to do its best for the people that it represented and he therefore could not support the response as it was not reflective of the entire view of the Council.

Alderman Wilson called for a recorded vote.

Councillor Gilmour stated that it was clear that the majority of Members shared the view that the minor injuries unit should be maintained. She spoke of her recent experience of the Ulster Hospital with Councillor T Smith and how she was surprised with the capacity of the minor injuries waiting room. The staff were doing an excellent job however if the MIUs were to close that already pressured waiting room would not have any additional capacity to deal with the overflow.

Councillor Edmund stated that the problem was the total structure of the health care service and expressed concerns regarding the stress on those staff in the front line.

Having come from a clinical background, Councillor McKimm stated that he understood change and the need for reform. However not all change was for the better. The Bengoa report outlined high level principals and he was unsure how that could be used as a justification for a well used service. The MIUs provided a fantastic service. There was no money available to build the new urgent care centre and it would be inserted into the old building. Councillor McKimm knew that the community did not want to see the services removed.

On the proposal being put to the meeting with 27 voting For, 8 voting Against and 1 Abstained and 3 Absent it was declared CARRIED.

<b>FOR (27)</b>	<b>AGAINST (8)</b>	<b>ABSTAINING (1)</b>	<b>ABSENT (3)</b>
<b>Aldermen</b>	<b>Aldermen</b>	<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Councillors</b>
Armstrong-Cotter	McDowell	Douglas	Boyle

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Carson  
Gibson  
Irvine  
Keery  
McIlveen  
M Smith  
**Councillors**  
Adair  
Blaney  
Brooks  
Cathcart  
Chambers  
Cummings  
Dunlop  
Edmund  
Gilmour  
Irvine  
Johnson  
Kennedy  
McClellan  
McKee  
McKimm  
Smart  
PSmith  
T Smith  
Thompson  
Woods

Wilson  
**Councillors**  
Irwin  
McAlpine  
McRandal  
Moore  
Morgan  
Walker

Cooper  
MacArthur

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McKimm, seconded by Councillor T Smith, that the recommendation be adopted.**

**15. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SPORTS FORUM GRANTS (WG MARCH 2023) (FILE SD135)**  
(Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing attaching Successful Coaching Noting Report, Successful Goldcard Noting Report, Successful Travel & Accommodation Noting Report and Unsuccessful Report. The report detailed that Members would be aware that on the 26<sup>th</sup> August 2015 Council delegated authority to the Ards and North Down Sports Forum, in order to allow it to administer sports grants funding on behalf of the Council. £40,000 had been allocated within the 2022/2023 revenue budget for this purpose.

The Council further authorised the Forum under delegated powers to award grants of up to £250. Grants above £250 still required Council approval. In addition, the Council requested that regular updates were reported to members.

During February 2023, the Forum received a total of 26 grant applications: 7 Coaching, 3 Goldcard, 15 Individual Travel/Accommodation and 1 Club Travel/Accommodation. A summary of the **15** successful applications were detailed in the Successful Coaching, Successful Goldcard and Successful Travel & Accommodation Appendices.

For information, the annual budget and spend to date on grant categories was as follows:

	Annual Budget	Funding Awarded February 2023	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£1,000	£0	£250
Coaching	£3,000	*£665	-£642.50
Equipment	£11,000	£0	£3,535.14
Events	£6,000	£0	£1,200
Seeding	£500	£0	£250
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	*£1,350	*-£2,013.97
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£1,000
New category under development	£3,000	£0	£3,000
*Goldcards proposed during the period February 2023 is 1 (22 Goldcards in total during 2022/23).			

\* The proposed remaining budget for Coaching of - **£642.50** is based on a proposed award of **£665.00** – for Noting. \* The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of - **£2,013.97** was based on a proposed award of **£1,350.00** – for Noting.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the attached applications (no applications were received for over £250 this month), and that the applications approved by the Forum (valued at below £250) are noted.

Proposed by Councillor Thompson, seconded by Councillor Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Thompson stated that the report acknowledged that the Council supported the sporting achievements of the Borough. He thanked Members and Officers of the Sports Forum.

Councillor Armstrong-Cotter advised that Ards Second Ladies Hockey team had managed to top their league as well as winning the McConnell Shield and wished to put on record her congratulations to the tremendous achievement of those young women. She highlighted the benefit that the grants brought to the young people of the Borough.

**RESOLVED**, on the proposal of Councillor Thompson, seconded by Councillor Irvine, that the recommendation be adopted.

**16. COUNCIL REMOTE-HYBRID MEETINGS – EXTENSION OF LEGISLATION TO 24 SEPTEMBER 2023 - SEC 78 CORONAVIRUS ACT**  
(Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services attaching letter from the Department of Communities. The report detailed that the Council had received a letter from the Department of Communities in relation to Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020. That piece of legislation allowed for Councils to run remote or hybrid meetings. The legislation expired on 24 March 2023 but had been extended to 24 September 2023.

A copy of the letter advising of the update from the Department of Communities was attached to the report.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the letter.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Irvine, seconded by Alderman Keery, that the recommendation be adopted.**

**17. 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UDR CGC GREENFINCHES**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services detailing that Members would recall, at the Corporate Services Committee on 14 February 2023, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:-

**That this Council honours the 50th Anniversary of the UDR CGC Greenfinches following the introduction of the Ulster Defence Regiment Bill in July 1973, which permitted the recruitment of women into the regiment, recognising those who joined within the Borough, and brings back a report to outline how the Corporate Services Committee can work with Regimental Association of The Ulster Defence Regiment CGC along with other relevant bodies to support anniversary events in the Borough and explores a lasting tribute to the Greenfinches of The Ulster Defence Regiment CGC.**

A meeting had since taken place with representatives from the relevant local groups. Discussions took place around a civic event and a proposed lasting tribute. The plans had been developed in conjunction with the local groups and took into consideration the resources available.

**Civic Reception**

It was recommended that a Civic Reception be held in the City Hall, Bangor during the commemoration period July to September 2023. It was recommended that those who lived or served in the UDR CGC Greenfinches in the Borough between 1973 and 30 June 1992 be invited to attend.

Certificates would be designed for the occasion and presented to all those Greenfinches in attendance. The event would be held in the evening and a finger buffet would be served.

### **Lasting Tribute**

The issue of a lasting tribute was considered. It was recommended that a commemorative tree be planted with an explanatory plaque to mark the occasion. That would be in accordance with the Council's Memorial Tree Policy.

In addition, the UDR Rose bush, the Freedom Rose, could be planted. Discussions would take place between the group and parks team to ascertain the most appropriate location for the planting.

### **Commemorative Flower Bed**

The group had also requested that a Commemorative Flower Bed display be installed outside the Post Office in Bangor to mark the occasion. The request was in line with the Council's policy.

### **Parade**

A discussion had taken place around a parade. It was considered that, due to the poor mobility of a number of the members, they would not wish to see a parade included within the commemoration plans. As members were aware the Council holds a Veteran's Day parade annually in Newtownards. It was recommended that some members of the UDR CGC Greenfinches be asked to lead the parade (if able) this year, some space made available for seated guests and that special mention was made to the anniversary in the speeches.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council agrees the plans as set out above to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UDR CGC Greenfinches.

Proposed by Councillor Cummings, seconded by Alderman Keery, that the recommendation be adopted.

Councillor Cummings wished to place on record his appreciation to the Officers for the timely response to the Notice of Motion. The recommendation enabled the Officers to continue with organisation of the programme which would complement the events taking place across the Province.

Alderman Keery noted that a tree with a plaque had been talked about and that would be put in place in the Walled Garden.

**RESOLVED**, on the proposal of Councillor Cummings, seconded by Alderman Keery, that the recommendation be adopted.

## **18. LOAN OF BELFAST (GOOD FRIDAY) AGREEMENT**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Chief Executive detailing that the National Archives (TNA) held the UK Government copy of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and had agreed to loan the Agreement to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) to facilitate venues and organisations within Northern Ireland to display the document on a day display basis.

To mark the 25th Anniversary of the Agreement being signed, the Northern Ireland

Office would like to offer the chance for Councils to display the document in a venue of their choice, on a day display basis between 25 April and 17 May 2023, should there be a specific event that would benefit from having the Agreement present and thus enabling a unique opportunity for people to view a key piece of Northern Ireland's history.

### **Venue**

There were a number of standard safety and security requirements that any venue must meet in order to display a document of this nature. Those aware (but not limited to):

- It must be displayed in a room without food or drink.
- Preferably a room with one entrance/exit, but no more than two that is not directly accessible to any outside entrance.
- No open windows.
- An appropriately sized table that can safely and securely display the documents.
- A member of security staff on hand at all times who is able to check bags and manage access.
- A cloakroom for bags and coats.
- A system in place to manage the number of visitors who will have access to the document at any one time. For example this could be organising viewings for specific community groups, school trips or ticketed viewings.
- Constant invigilation by a member of conservation staff from PRONI who shall have responsibility to ensure these display conditions are met. This member of staff shall have discretion to make additional requests to ensure the safety and security of the document.

Staff from TNA Collection Care Department were available to work with the Council about those display conditions or to answer questions around the care of the document in order to help facilitate the display.

A member of PRONI staff would accompany the document to the nominated location, and would remain with the document at all times, however it was advised that an interpreter should be on hand to answer any questions from viewers.

The Council were asked to consider the offer to display the Agreement and if in favour, consider where and what date in May they would wish to hold it.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council consider the offer.

Proposed by Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor McKimm, that the Council accepts the offer.

Councillor Moore welcomed the offer with the Good Friday Agreement being of huge significance in Northern Ireland's history with the agreement having brought immeasurable benefits to Northern Ireland. She felt strongly that the offer was an important opportunity to bring the document to the Borough bringing residents the opportunity to explore the history.

Councillor McKimm viewed the Good Friday Agreement as a seminal document that shaped society. It showed a level of bravery and leadership and he felt it would be wonderful to have the document for a time in the Borough.

(Councillor Armstrong-Cotter withdrew from the meeting – 9.48 pm)

Alderman McIlveen noted the strict terms on how the document would be held highlighting the document would be accompanied by a member of staff from PRONI and an interpreter would be required. He asked where it would be envisaged that the document would be displayed. The Chief Executive advised that the document would be placed in the City Hall Building or the Museum in a more protected environment. The detail would be worked upon with PRONI.

Alderman McIlveen questioned the costs involved. The Chief Executive advised that the security of the document could be met within staff resources.

Alderman McIlveen advised that he had recently had a conversation with the man who had been in charge of printing the first documents within the NI Civil Service which was a service that had been given little recognition for their role. He asked if interpretative signage would be included in the display of the document. If that was the case he would like to see the signage recognising the role of the staff within the NI Civil Service for the printing and delivery of the document.

Councillor T Smith raised the issue of cost. He highlighted that there had been much recent coverage of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. The core of the agreement was meant to be cross community power sharing, Protestants, Catholics, Unionists and Nationalists. To those defenders of the Belfast Agreement, if Northern Ireland was to work, it could only work with Unionists involved.

Councillor Gilmour referred to the costs and staffing resources that were required to protect a book in a room. She referred to recent Council decisions that had been made with reasoning due to the lack of resourcing and she therefore could not support the proposal.

Councillor Moore took on board Alderman McIlveen's comments regarding the role of NI Civil Service and an interpretative sign. She understood the comments of Councillor Gilmour however there were a lot of difficult decisions that have been made and those could not be conflated.

The proposal was put to the meeting and declared CARRIED with 18 voting For and 15 Against.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor McKimm, that the Council accepts the offer.**

**19. NI EXECUTIVE BUDGET UNCERTAINTIES 2023-2024 (CW162)**  
(Appendices VIII, IX)

**PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:-** Report from the Director of Community and Wellbeing attaching Letter from the DfC Permanent Secretary and Letter from the Executive Office. The report detailed that Council received the attached correspondence from both the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Communities and The Executive Office, advising the Council of the budget uncertainties facing all Government Departments for the 2023/2024 financial year.

*Given the absence of a budget settlement for 2023/24, the position for all Northern Ireland Departments remains unclear, however, the financial outlook for 2023/24 is extremely challenging with pressures at a NI Block level, leading to the potential for reductions in the Departments final 2023/24 budget allocation.*

Potential budget cuts implied by Permanent Secretary's letter had implications for Council, primarily for both the Community Development Service (through the Community Support Programme) and the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme and the Externally Funded Programmes Service (through Good Relations and potentially the Policing and Community Safety Partnership).

### **The Community Support Programme (CSP)**

The Community Support Programme provided matched funding from both the Department of Communities and Council and was allocated across almost all of the services provided by the Councils Community Development team including the following;

1. Essential funding awarded to Community Advice Ards and North Down for Advice Services and Welfare Reform.
2. The Social Supermarket operated by North Down Community Works.
3. Contributions to the three Community Networks.
4. The recently approved Community Development Grants Scheme for community Group running costs.
5. A proportion of Community Development Officers salary and overhead costs.

as detailed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Community Support Grant Income 2022/23**

Funded Programme	Dept.	DfC Grant Awarded	Council Match	Elements
Community Support Programme	DfC	£384, 091.62  (to include all uplifts awarded in 2022/23)	£796,337.73	Community Advice Ards and North Down (CAAND), Welfare Reform Tribunal Reps (CAAND), Welfare Reform Mitigations Face to Face (CAAND), AND Social Supermarket, Community Development Grants,

				Service Level Agreements with the 3 Networks, Community Development Officer salaries, Training and support services
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Therefore, as acknowledged by the Permanent Secretary, the situation would have a knock-on impact upon support and services delivered by the Voluntary and Community Sector at a time when the cost-of-living crisis continues to impact communities, groups and individuals.

### Salary Costs

In an attempt to alleviate some of the immediate pressures that organisations were facing, the Permanent Secretary had provided a level of financial support to help sustain some services and posts. That support only covers the 3-month period from 1 April to 30 June 2023, with a total of £70,240.57 being advanced to Council in relation to salary costs for Council staff and Community Advice Ards and North Down salary costs only as detailed in Table 2 below.

**Table 2 Community Support Fund, April – 30 June Advance Funding breakdown for Councils**

	Salary Support	Running Cost Support	Total Interim Financial Support
<b>Welfare Reform Tribunal Reps</b>	<b>£4,800.00</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>£4,800.00</b>
<b>Welfare Reform Mitigations Mitigations Face to Face</b>	<b>£14,439.97</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>£14,439.97</b>
<b>Community Support Programme</b>	<b>£51,000.60</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>£51,000.60</b>

All Council posts, including Community Development, Neighbourhood Renewal and Good Relations posts which were match funded by DFC and TEO were contracted permanent posts, therefore Council had an obligation to continue to fully fund those posts.

Council had a contract with Community Advice Ards and North Down which commenced on 1 April 2021, initially for a three-year period, expiring on 31 March 2024, with an option to extend for a further 2 x 12-month period subject to adherence to the Agreement, the Terms and Conditions of the Contract and satisfactory performance. The total amount of annual grant income from the Department, through Community Support Programme in 2022/23, for Community Advice Ards and North Down was initially £200,479.09 (excluding a number of additional uplifts). As per table 2 above at this point the Department had only committed £19,239.97 for quarter 1 and that amount was solely for salary costs.

### Community Development Grants

Following Council approval in March 2023 all applicants to the Community Development Grant scheme have been advised of the outcome of their applications,

subject to receipt of a formal Letter of Offer for matched funding from the Department of Development (DfC).

Of the £87,320.50 awarded to forty-five successful groups, £41,100 of this budget was grant income from DfC through the Community Support Programme. Given the current grant income uncertainty, it was recommended that Council released Letters of Offer to the successful groups for 52.96% of each total approved grant, which was Council's secured contribution to the grant budget. The balance of the approved awards, which was the Department's contribution to the total grant budget, could be released (or the proportion thereof) once the Department confirmed the level of grant income available to Council.

For Member's information, if the Department's contribution was not forthcoming, in order for Council to make up the grant award to 100% of what communities would be entitled to receive as a result of their application for running costs being approved by Council in March, an additional £41,100 would be required from another source. There was no additional Council budget available for this.

### **Other Funded Community Support Programme Services**

Other support services supported through the Community Support Programme include financial support for the Social Supermarket (SSM) operated by North Down Community Works.

In 2022-23 £82,155.18 was ringfenced in the CSP for the SSM although approximately £48,847 of this budget was unspent, largely due to delays in employing staff to deliver the project. There was no matched funding from Council for the SSM, therefore at that point Council was unable to issue a Service Level Agreement or release funding to North Down Community Works, until the Department confirmed the level of grant funding, they were able to commit.

Officers had also written to the Department asking if the proportion of this budget which was ringfenced by the SSM for salary costs for the project co-ordinator and the driver, was secure and could be confirmed. At the time of writing this report officers awaited a reply.

### **Good Relations Programme**

The correspondence received from The Executive Office (TEO), set out the Department's intention to consult on budget reductions and highlights the fact that there would be *"some very difficult choices and challenges ahead; and this may have an impact on the District Council Good Relations Programme in the coming year"*.

The grant income from TEO for the Council Good Relations Programme received for 2022/23 was detailed in Table 3 below.

**Table 3. Good Relations Programme Grant Income 2022/23**

Funded Programme	Dept.	Grant Awarded	Council Match	Elements
Good Relations	TEO	£170,053.50	£56,684.50	Delivery of GR Action Plan

(GR) Programme				to include the Cultural Expressions Programme GR Salaries and overhead costs
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Officers had reviewed the agreed Good Relations (GR) Action Plan to consider which of the agreed GR Programmes need to proceed in the first six months “at risk” and it was recommended that the Cultural Expressions programme proceeded, along with the Community Cup with ANDBC’s Football Development Team which was being delivered in May 2023 at a cost of £1,000. All other planned programmes and activity could be postponed until the second half of the financial year, or until further clarity on funding from TEO becomes available.

In line with the principles applied to the Community Development Grants, it was recommended that the grants ring fenced for community festivals through the Cultural Expressions Programme, were limited to the Councils financial contribution, which was 25% of the total grant funding. (£15,000). That equated to individual grants of £595 rather than the normal grant amount of £2,300. Once the Department confirms the level of grant income available to Council the balance of match funding available can be awarded accordingly, subject to normal audit requirements. For Member’s information, if TEOs contribution was not forthcoming, in order for Council to make up the funding award to 100% of what communities normally receive, an additional £45,000 was required. There was no additional Council budget available for this, however it could be funded from other good relations programmes in this year’s activity plan, but that would be to the detriment of those programmes pending receipt of a letter of offer from TEO. There may be some budget available from NIHE which had contributed towards the costs in the past, but that was uncertain at this stage.

All other costs in relation to the Cultural Expression Programme were funded by Council, including the cost of beacons, set up, clearance costs and reinstatement. Council was also seeking a contribution from NI Housing Executive towards clearance costs.

As reported to Members in March 2023, Council had received £142,087.46 Dispersal Funding from TEO for support and the integration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers, which supported the delivery of services up to 31 March 2024. The Good Relations team could prioritise the administration of this financial support whilst other GR programmes were in abeyance.

**Grant Income for other Community and Culture Services**

Although there had been no written confirmation from other Departments regarding further reductions to grant income, Council received grant funding for a number of other services, detailed in Table 4 below.

**Table 4. Grant Income for other Community and Culture Services**

Funded Programme	Dept.	Grant Awarded	Council Match	Elements
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Community Festivals Fund (Events and Festivals Fund)	DfC	£31,400.00	Minimum of 50% £31,400.00	This budget is now included in the Events and Festivals Fund -Tranche 1 and 2
Neighbourhood Renewal Funding	DfC	£16,000.00	£5,000.00	Proportion of Salary costs and overheads for Neighbourhood Renewal Officer
Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP)	DoJ	£317,834	£56,584.50	Delivery of PCSP Action Plan – grants and 3-year contracts
PCSP Members Allowances	DoJ	£18,000.00	£0.00	Members costs e.g., Mileage

Officers' recommendations in relation to the Events and Festivals fund were included in the Events and Festivals Report.

A formal Letter of Offer from the Department of Justice (DoJ) for the administration and activities of the PCSP remains outstanding. Members should note that the DoJ funds the activities of the PCSP on the basis of 100% and there was no matched funding for those activities from Council. It was therefore recommended that Council did not issue any further PCSP contracts or grants until the Departments financial position was confirmed.

### Hardship Fund

Members would be aware that in February 2023 Council approved the establishment of a Hardship Fund. With the approval of the Department, this budget was comprised of unspent funding allocated to the SSM operated by North Down Community Works, totalling £48,847. This funding was an element of the Community Support Programme (2022-23) provided by DfC, in Table 1 above. If the underspend could not be used in 2022-23, it would have had to be returned to the Department.

Nine Community Partners, providing food and hardship support were to benefit from the underspend. Members also agreed that £20,000 should be awarded to the SSM operated by Kilcooley Womens Centre (KWC) rather than the recommended award of £6,672. The balance of funding required was £13,328 and it was agreed that this amount would be contributed by Council only if additional further Hardship Funding for 2023-24, was not secured from the NI Executive.

Council agreed that should additional Hardship Funding from Executive become available for 2023-24 it would be distributed it to the same nine Community Partners based on the same percentage applied to the total grant funding of £48,648 awarded, (excluding the additional funding awarded to Kilcooley Womens Centre).

In April 2023 received confirmation from DfC that £344,027.00 would be awarded to Ards and North Down Council, to be distributed in 2023-24. This amount was approximately six times what was expected and on which the recommendation to

distribute based on the proportions already awarded was made. Therefore, it was recommended that what was expected, i.e., 1/6 or £48,648 was distributed in the agreed manner. Therefore, each Community Partner would receive additional awards as set out in Table 5 below.

**Table 5. DfC Hardship Awards**

Organisation	Purpose of Funding	Funding Recommended
Community Advice Ards and North Down	To collaborate with partners to provide advice, signposting and wraparound support	£6,672
St Vincent De Paul	To collaborate with partners to provide food, advice, signposting and wraparound support	£6,672
Ards Foodbank	To collaborate with partners to provide food, signposting and wraparound support	£6,672
Bangor Food Bank	To collaborate with partners to provide food, signposting and wraparound support	£6,672
Storehouse Food Bank	To collaborate with partners to provide food, signposting and wraparound support	£6,672
Kilcooley Womens Centre SSM	To collaborate with partners to provide food, signposting and wraparound support by supporting their running costs	£6,672
Ards Community Network	To collaborate with partners to provide advice, signposting	£2,872
County Down Community Network	To collaborate with partners to provide advice, signposting by supporting their running costs	£2,872
North Down Community Network	To collaborate with partners to provide advice, signposting by supporting their running costs	£2,872
<b>Total</b>		<b>£48,648.00</b>

In addition, the extra funding of £13,328 allocated to KWC SSM in 2022-23 which completed the top up of £20k in accordance with the Councils previous decision, should be taken from the Executives Hardship Fund, leaving a balance of £282,051 to be utilised.

Given the uncertainty of the Department's contribution under the Community Support Programme, that normally funds Community Advice Ards and North Down and the Social Supermarket operated by North Down Community Works it was recommended that Council seeks approval from DfC to allocate the remaining £282,051 to *initially* cover the annual costs for both Community Advice Ards and North Down and the Social Supermarket, operated by North Down Community Works.

The DfC percentage recommended for award to each organisation was based on the percentages awarded in the Letter of Variance, dated 22 June 2022, excluding consolidated uplifts i.e.,

- £148,048.57 for Community Advice Ards and North Down (plus £19,239.97 confirmed for salaries) and
- £63,799,93 for the SSM operated by North Down Community Works pending confirmation of a letter of offer for these schemes from the Department.

If with DfCs permission the hardship fund balance was used for these, a residual balance of approximately £70,000 remained, which could be used to top up the approved community development 'running costs' pending receipt of the letter of offer.

Thereafter, the balance of the approved awards, can be released (or a proportion thereof) once the Department confirmed the level of grant income available to Council through the CSP for 2023/24, adjusting for any advance payments from the DfC. Furthermore, once the Department confirmed the Councils CSP grant income for 2023/24, Council could then consider how any unused and remaining balance in the Departments Hardship Fund for 2023/24 was allocated, with Departmental approval i.e., up to the balance of £282,051.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves:

1. The release of Community Development Grants (for running costs) Letters of Offer to the successful groups for 52.96% of each total approved grant, which is Councils secured contribution to the grant budget.
2. That a Service Level Agreement or funding for 2023/24 is not released to North Down Community Works, until the Department confirms the level of grant funding, they are able to commit.
3. That the Council Goods Relations Cultural Expressions Programme continues "at risk", however the associated grants are limited to Councils contribution of £595, until TEO confirms their financial contribution to the Programme.
4. That the Good Relations Community Cup proceeds "at risk"
5. That the PCSP does not issue any further contracts or grants until the Departments financial position is confirmed.
6. That £48,648 from the Executives Hardship Fund for 2023/24 is distributed as detailed in Table 5 above.
7. That Council seeks approval from DfC to allocate the remaining £282,051 (based on the percentages detailed in this report) to initially cover the annual costs for both Community Advice Ards and North Down (plus £19,239.97 confirmed for salaries) and the Social Supermarket, operated by North Down Community Works, until the Department confirms Councils CSP allocation, and redistributes any remaining balance towards approved Community Group Running Cost awards.
8. Once the Departments confirm the Councils grant incomes for 2023/24 Council considers how any remaining balance in the Executives Hardship Fund for 2023/24 is allocated, with Departmental approval i.e., the balance of £282,051.

(Alderman Gibson and Councillor McClean withdrew from the meeting – 9.56 pm)

Proposed by Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor Woods, that the recommendations be adopted.

Councillor McKee sought an update from the Director. The Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that Officers had been contact with the DfC that day and there was no further update available.

Councillor McKee stated that the uncertainty around funding services would be entirely avoidable if there was functioning Executive. He hoped the funding would be redistributed highlighting how in need people were for the services.

Councillor Woods agreed with the comments of Councillor McKee.

Councillor Irwin referred to the barrage of cuts that had occurred as result of Stormont sitting inactive and MLAs being held to ransom by the DUP. The voluntary and community sector had been hit hard in recent times with rising energy costs and the ending of the European funds. Now the sector was being faced with further financial uncertainty due to the lack of a budget from the Executive. Councillor Irwin expressed the view that the DUP had to end the boycott - Northern Ireland was suffering.

In relation to the report, Councillor Gilmour welcomed that confirmation had been received from DfC for the hardship funding. Referring to the social supermarket she asked how long the pilot scheme was agreed for. She had previously argued the need for two supermarkets in the Borough, one of which to be located in Kilcooley Women's Centre. She referred to the previous year and the issue of the social supermarket having been unable to avail for the funding and there had been sizeable underspend. The Director of Community and Wellbeing was unsure of the period of the pilot for the social supermarket and undertook to confirm that time. In terms of the underspend that had occurred last year there had been a delay in recruiting key staff with the social supermarket and had been a surplus. That reasoning did not exist this year and therefore an underspend was less likely.

Alderman McIlveen refuted the comments from Councillor Irwin.

(Councillor McClean re-entered the meeting – 10.06 pm)

When the Assembly was sitting, the Alliance Party along with the DUP did not support the budget as it was not sufficient. He did not believe anything would be different with the funds available. The money needed to come from the Treasury to meet the needs.

(Alderman Keery withdrew from the meeting – 10.09 pm)

Councillor P Smith stating it was good to see monies from the hardship fund which would assist. However, there were major funding gaps and his biggest concern was surrounding community development grants and he hoped DfC would allow flexibility in the hardship fund. He highlighted the areas of concern and he feared there would

be a challenging budget provided. He asked if there was any indication of a decision. The Director was unable to provide a date and Officers would continue to follow up the matter with the DfC.

Councillor Kennedy expressed his disappointment with the unnecessary remarks of Councillor Irwin.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McKee, seconded by Councillor Woods, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **20. CONSULTATIONS**

### **20.1 EA Plan of Arrangements for Special Educational Provision Consultation**

(Having previously declared an interest in the item, Councillor Irwin withdrew from the meeting)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy correspondence in respect of the above consultation. Consultation closed on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023. Document available at <https://www.eani.org.uk/ea-plan-of-arrangements-for-special-educational-provision-consultation>.

### **20.2 NIE Networks Providing Distribution Generation Export Offers to Applicants Less than 5MW.**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy correspondence in respect of the above consultation. Consultation closed on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2023. Document available at [Consultation on NIE Networks Providing Distribution Generation Export Offers to Applicants less than 5MW.](#)

**AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Armstrong-Cotter, that the consultations be noted and that individual parties may provide their response.**

(Councillor Irwin re-entered the meeting)

## **21. CONSULTATION ON DRAFT NAC NI CONSTITUTION**

(Appendix X

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Corporate Services attaching draft NAC Constitution (Revised 15 March 2023). The report detailed that that the National Association of Councillors (NAC) Northern Ireland Region had undertaken a review of its Constitution.

It was requested that the proposed amendments to the NAC Constitution following the review would be issued to Councils for feedback. Feedback from the Council was requested no later than Friday 28th April 2023. Officers had sought an extension to this deadline to ensure ratification of Council meeting.

Officers request that any feedback was discussed at this meeting and all comments would be collated into a draft response, which would be circulated to all Elected Members for information before the deadline.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council consider the NAC Constitution (Revised 15 March 2023) and provide feedback at Council to inform consultation response.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor T Smith, that Council propose point 3 Membership be amended to "membership shall be open to individual Councillors in Northern Ireland as individual membership. Delegates to NAC Members meetings shall be appointed by Councillors who hold membership. All delegates shall have voting rights."

Councillor Gilmour was not supportive of the NAC and she remained unsure of the reasoning for the organisation. She did not see the reason why ratepayers should be paying for the Councillors membership.

Councillor T Smith spoke in support of the proposal. The NAC was a trade union for Councillors and it should be up to Members to join if they wished and ratepayers should not be paying for the membership of the body.

Alderman McIlveen agreed that the ratepayers should not be paying the subscription to the union.

Councillor T Smith requested a recorded vote.

Councillor Gilmour was consistent in her view on the NAC and did not see the value in the body and the delivery for the ratepayers.

(Alderman Keery re-entered the meeting during the vote – 10.27 pm)

The Chief Executive undertook a recorded vote and on the proposal being put to the meeting with 22 voting For, 11 voting Against and 1 Abstained and 5 Absent it was declared CARRIED.

<b>FOR (22)</b>	<b>AGAINST (11)</b>	<b>ABSTAINING (1)</b>	<b>ABSENT (5)</b>
<b>Aldermen</b>	<b>Aldermen</b>	<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Aldermen</b>
Armstrong-Cotter	McDowell	Douglas	Carson
Irvine	Wilson		Gibson
Keery	<b>Councillors</b>		<b>Councillors</b>
McIlveen	Dunlop		Boyle
M Smith	Irwin		Cooper
<b>Councillors</b>	McAlpine		MacArthur
Adair	McKee		
Blaney	McRandal		
Brooks	Moore		
Cathcart	Morgan		
Chambers	Walker		
Cummings	Woods		

Edmund  
Gilmour  
Irvine  
Johnson  
Kennedy  
McClellan  
McKee  
Smart  
P Smith  
T Smith  
Thompson

**RESOLVED**, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor T Smith, that Council propose point 3 Membership be amended to “membership shall be open to individual Councillors in Northern Ireland as individual membership. Delegates to NAC Members meetings shall be appointed by Councillors who hold membership. All delegates shall have voting rights.”

## **22. SEALING DOCUMENTS**

**RESOLVED: -** On the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Councillor Armstrong-Cotter

**THAT** the Seal of the Council be affixed to the following documents:-

- (a) Grant of Rights of Burial: Nos 14516 – 14663
- (b) Tender for Portaferry Public Realm
- (c) Ardar CR05 Comber Planning Agreement

## **23. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL**

The following transfers were received:

Transfer/Assignment – Clandeboye Cemetery Section BX Grave 751 – James Bailie to Peter Bailie.

**RESOLVED**, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Adair, that the transfer be noted.

## **24. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT**

(Appendix XI)

**PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: -** Report from the Chief Executive attaching Status Report in respect of Notice of Motions.

This was a standing item on the Council agenda each month and its aim was to keep members updated on the outcome of Motions. Please note that as each Motion was dealt with it would be removed from the report.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Council notes the report.

Proposed by Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor McKee, that Council notes the report with the exception of the Notice of Motion on Page 24 and in that regard that Council staff reinstate immediately the locking of play parks and MUGA at Bloomfield and Clandeboye until a suitable contract can be put in place.

Speaking to her proposal, Councillor Gilmour reminded Members that the Council in February 2023 unanimously agreed to reinstate the locking of the play parks at Clandeboye and Bloomfield. Two months on, the Council were no further forward with the play parks remaining unlocked. Her proposal was asking that Council staff be used to reinstate the locking of those play parks until such times that a contract was put in place. She had been led to believe there was an issue with resourcing along with a tender that was required to go through procurement. The matter was impacting the local residents and in particular Clandeboye there were residents that had moved house with the anti-social behaviour. Councillor Gilmour called for the unanimous decision that had been made in February to be actioned to ensure those affected residents did not suffer any longer.

Councillor McKee stated that the Council had agreed to act on the issue as quickly as possible in February 2023 and was disappointed that no progress had been made. The Council had let the residents of Clandeboye down as Councillor Gilmour alluded to residents had moved away and the Council must demonstrate that the problems would not continue.

Alderman Irvine hoped progress could be made as soon as possible. The Bloomfield Park was beside a bonfire site and there was a need for the area to be secured at night.

Alderman Wilson was supportive of the proposal, the matter was urgent, highlighting those that were suffering serious anti-social behaviour.

The Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that there was no existing staff that could carry out the role with teams already being fully deployed. He stated that there were no funds available and in terms of staff he outlined the options available in terms of split shifts, backfilling and other jobs could not be undertaken.

Councillor Gilmour stated that the locking needed to occur as soon as possible for the residents.

The Chief Executive sought a direction in respect of funding. Staff were not available unless they were taken off other duties.

Proposed by Councillor T Smith, seconded by Alderman Irvine, that any necessary funds be taken from reserves.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Gilmour, seconded by Councillor McKee, that Council notes the report with the exception of the Notice of Motion on Page 24 and in that regard that Council staff reinstate immediately the locking of play parks and MUGA at Bloomfield and Clandeboye until a suitable contract can be put in place.**

**FURTHER RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor T Smith, seconded by Alderman Irvine, that an necessary funds be taken from reserves.**

## **25. NOTICES OF MOTION**

### **25.1 Notice of Motion from Councillor Adair and Councillor Edmund**

That Council writes to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure highlighting the benefits of Community Transport and the Dial a Lift Service for elderly, disabled and socially isolated residents living in rural areas who depend on this service. Further request that funding is allocated on a longer term basis to continue this vital transport service for our residents going forward.

Councillor Adair had sought permission from the Mayor for the motion to be heard as it was urgent. The Mayor agreed.

Proposed by Councillor Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the Notice of Motion be adopted.

Councillor Adair spoke to his motion and stated that the matter was an important issue in particular in the area which he represented with many people not having access to a car. Community Transport was of huge benefit to many who were socially isolated, elderly or disabled. Down Community Transport was founded in 1998 and two ladies had been instrumental in that service. The dial a lift service helped those in rural communities who had no access to a car. Many people were disabled and unable to use public transport. The service provided a vital link to allow people to do their banking, attend appointments, shopping etc. The funding had been under threat before, it had been secured to June however there was future uncertainty. The Council needed to write urgently to ensure this service was retained.

Councillor Edmund outlined the importance of the service and stated that the service was vital to rural residents. He noted it could be the only link for some people to get into the town and to have social contact.

Councillor Morgan agreed with the importance of the vital service and expressed her disappointment that there was no Executive to provide funding on a longer term basis.

Councillor Thompson also spoke in support and advised that the Permanent Secretary had provided an extension to June and he hoped that a longer extension could be given.

Councillor Adair advised that he had seen the benefit of the service for people in tackling loneliness and social isolation. He had been contacted by a resident who used the service and was worried if the service was to be lost. He hoped that the Permanent Secretary would be able to provide an extension.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Adair, seconded by Councillor Edmund, that the recommendation be adopted.**

## **25.2. Notice of Motion from Councillor T Smith and Councillor McKimm**

That this Council brings back a report that looks at the restoration of much missed events namely the Bangor Easter activities (including the Easter parade), Donaghadee Lights Up and Groomsport Music Festival.

As part of this report, officers should engage and consult with local communities and business to gauge not only their support for the return of these events but also ask, if they do return, what could be done to improve these events to allow for more community involvement and also to maximize footfall and trade for local businesses.

**RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor T Smith, seconded by Councillor McKimm, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Place and Prosperity Committee.**

## **CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Undernoted items of information:

- a) Waterways Ireland Equality and Disability Action Plans 2023-2025.
- b) Department for the Economy consultation on Draft Equality Scheme 2022-27, Draft Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan 2022-27 and Draft Disability Action Plan 2022-27. Consultation closing date of 4<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Document available at: [Consultation launched on the Department for the Economy Draft Equality Scheme 2022-27, Draft Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan 2022-27 and Draft Disability Action Plan 2022-27](#).
- c) Equality screening of Ulster University's new and revised policies. Consultation closing date of 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023. Document available at [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) webpage](#).
- d) Translink – Better Connected – Public Transport in Northern Ireland.

**AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor T Smith, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the information be noted.**

## **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC/PRESS**

**AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen seconded by Alderman Keery, that the public/press be excluded during the discussion of the undernoted items of confidential business.**

## **RECESS**

Due to technical issues, the meeting went into recess (10.52 pm – 11.02 pm).

(Alderman Smith, Councillor Blaney and Councillor Brooks withdrew from the meeting at this stage)

**26. PORTAFERRY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEME - SINGLE TENDER ACTION (OPENREACH) (FILE REG66)**

**\*\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\*\***

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

Schedule 6 – Part 1 – 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)

**27. KINNEGAR LOGISTICS BASE UPDATE (FILE RDP37)  
(Appendices XII, XIII)**

**\*\*\*IN CONFIDENCE\*\*\***

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

Schedule 6 – Part 1 – 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)

**28. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS (FILE)  
(Appendix XIV)**

**\*\*\*IN CONFIDENCE; STAFF, LEGAL AND COMMERCIAL\*\*\***

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

Schedule 6 – Part 1 – 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)

Schedule 6 – Part 1 – 4 – Information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connect with any labour relations matter arising between the Council or a Government department and employees of, or office holders under, the Council.

Schedule 6 – Part 1 – 5 – Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

**RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC/PRESS**

**AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, that the public/press be re-admitted to the meeting.**

**TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting terminated at 12.08 pm.

Unclassified

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## ITEM 7

## Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	12 June 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Leisure Services
Date of Report	02 May 2023
File Reference	SD135
Legislation	Recreation and Youth services Order (1986)
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Ards and North Down Sports Forum Grants (WG April & May 2023)
Attachments	Appendix 1 Successful Coaching Report for Noting Appendix 2 Successful Coaching Report for Approval Appendix 3 Successful Event Report for Approval Appendix 4 Successful Goldcard Report for Noting Appendix 5 Successful Travel & Accommodation Report for Noting Appendix 6 Successful School/Sports Club Pathway Report for Noting Appendix 7 Unsuccessful Report

Members will be aware that on the 26<sup>th</sup> August 2015, Council delegated authority to the Ards and North Down Sports Forum, in order to allow it to administer sports grants funding on behalf of the Council. £45,000 had been allocated within the 2023/2024 revenue budget for this purpose.

## Unclassified

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The Council further authorised the Forum under delegated powers to award grants of up to £250. Grants above £250 still require Council approval. In addition, the Council requested that regular updates are reported to members.

During March 2023, the Forum received a total of 42 grant applications: 33 Individual Travel/Accommodation, 3 Coaching, 4 Goldcards and 2 Events. A summary of the **41** successful applications are detailed in the attached Successful Coaching, Successful Event, Successful Goldcard and Successful Travel & Accommodation Appendices.

During April 2023, the Forum received a total of 27 grant applications: 21 Individual Travel/Accommodation, 1 Goldcard and 5 School/Sports Club Pathway. A summary of the **25** successful applications are detailed in the attached Successful Goldcard, Successful Travel & Accommodation & Successful Schools/Sports Club Pathway Appendices

For information, the annual budget and spend to date on grant categories is as follows:

	Annual Budget	Funding Awarded March 2023	Funding Awarded April 2023	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£1,000	£0	£0	£1,000
Coaching	£3,000	*£600	£0	£2,400
Equipment	£14,000	£0	£0	£14,000
Events	£6,000	*£1,600	£0	£4,400
Seeding	£500	£0	£0	£500
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	*£4,183.98	*£2,540.95	£7,775.07
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£0	£1,000
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£5,000	£0	*£500	£4,500
	*Goldcards proposed during the period March 2023 is 4 and Goldcards proposed during the period April 2023 is 1 (5 Goldcards in total during 2023/24).			

\* The proposed remaining budget for Coaching of **£2,400** is based on a proposed award of **£600.00** – for Noting and Approval. \* The proposed remaining budget for Events of **£4,400** is based on a proposed award of **£1,600.00** – for Approval. \* The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **£7,775.07** is based on a proposed award of **£6,724.93** – for Noting. \* The proposed remaining budget for Schools/Sports Club Pathway of **£4,500** is based on a proposed award of **£500** – for Noting.

Unclassified

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council approves the attached applications for financial assistance for sporting purposes valued at above £250, and that the applications approved by the Forum (valued at below £250) are noted.



**APPENDIX 2 - SUCCESSFUL COACHING REPORT FOR APPROVAL**

NAME	COURSE	BENEFITS	FACILITATOR	DATES	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
Donaghadee Sailing Club	RYA Dinghy Instructor	Promoting female instructors in the sport, helping to provide training to support RTC scheme for adult & youth sailing	RYA	18 March - 14 April	£405	£300.00	Current guidelines state funding limits for Governing Body sports coach qualification – up to 75% of costs up to a maximum of £300. Recommend funding of £300.
<b>TOTALS</b>					<b>£405</b>	<b>£300.00</b>	

## APPENDIX 3 - SUCCESSFUL EVENT REPORT FOR APPROVAL

NAME	SPORT	EVENT	EVENT OUTLINE	DATES	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
North Down Cycling Club	Cycling	2023 North Down Grand Prix	Classic annual cycling event for Open Road Racing. Attracts over 200 participants & support crew to North Down every year	28th May	£650	£600	All documentation submitted. Recommend funding of £600, we do not fund "publicity/marketing"
Donaghadee Sailing Club	Sailing	2023 Women on Water Festival	WOW Festival aims to encourage women to experience scuba diving & snorkelling, coastal rowing, dinghy sailing, keel boating, powerboating, SUP. Gain confidence, create Pathways in the sport, Postitive impact on physical & mental health, wellbeing, self-esteem, confidence & reduced stress, trying something new within their local community, gaining confidence in a supportive learning environment with the chance to meet new people.	20th May	£1,000	£1,000	Recommend funding of £1,000 'subject to' Public Liability Insurance and a 'signed & dated' Risk Assessment.
<b>TOTALS</b>					<b>£1,650</b>	<b>£1,600</b>	

## APPENDIX 4 - SUCCESSFUL GOLDCARD REPORT FOR NOTING

APPLICANT	REPRESENTING	SPORT	EVENT	DATES	GYM	PROPOSED	NOTES
Emily Ridout	N.Ireland	Sailing	2023 RS Feva World Championships	24-28 July	ABM, BA, QLC	YES	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Emily has been selected for the RS Feva World Championships in Italy, 24-28 July 2023. Goldcard recommended from 12 April until 28 July 2023.
Annabel Ridout	N.Ireland	Sailing	2023 RS Feva World Championships	24-28 July	ABM, BA, QLC	YES	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Annabel has been selected for the RS Feva World Championships in Italy, 24-28 July 2023. Goldcard recommended from 12 April until 28 July 2023.
Matthew Ridout	N.Ireland	Sailing	2023 RS Feva World Championships	24-28 July	ABM, BA, QLC	YES	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Matthew has been selected for the RS Feva World Championships in Italy, 24-28 July 2023. Goldcard recommended from 12 April until 28 July 2023.
Peter Ridout	N.Ireland	Sailing	2023 RS Feva World Championships	24-28 July	ABM, BA	YES	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Peter has been selected for the RS Feva World Championships in Italy, 24-28 July 2023. Goldcard recommended from 12 April until 28 July 2023.

Barry McClements	Ireland	Swimming	2023 Para Swimming World Championships	30 July - 6 August	ABM	YES	Barry has competed in the Commonwealth Games & World Para Swimming Championships in 2022 and will compete again this year. Selection will be officially confirmed in June. Goldcard recommended until 2 November 2023 (minimum 6 months).
<b>TOTALS</b>						5	

## APPENDIX 5 -SUCCESSFUL TRAVEL/ACCOMMODATION REPORT FOR NOTING

APPLICANT	SPORT	EVENT	REPRESENTING	LOCATION	DATES	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
Sandra Canning	Bowls	2023 International Deaf Lawn Bowls	N.Ireland	Edinburgh	1-14th Sept	£750	£150	Selection Letter received from Northern Ireland Deaf Bowling, says Sandra has been selected for the International Deaf Lawn Bowls in Edinburgh, 1-14 September 2023. Recommend funding of £150.
Paul Canning	Bowls	2023 International Deaf Lawn Bowls	N.Ireland	Edinburgh	1-14th Sept	£583	£150	Selection Letter received from Northern Ireland Deaf Bowling, says Paul has been selected for the International Deaf Lawn Bowls in Edinburgh, 1-14 September 2023. Recommend funding of £150.
Robin Beattie	Bowls	2024 International Deaf Lawn Bowls	N.Ireland	Edinburgh	1-14th Sept	£750	£150	Selection Letter received from Northern Ireland Deaf Bowling, says Robin has been selected for the International Deaf Lawn Bowls in Edinburgh, 1-14 September 2023. Recommend funding of £150.

Holly Bythe	Equestrian	2023 Royal Windsor Horse Show	N.Ireland	Windsor Castle, London	11-14 May	£150	£150	Selection Letter received from British Equestrian Federation, says Holly has been selected for the Royal Windsor Horse Show in London, 11-14 May 2023. Recommend funding of £150.
Annabel Ridout	Sailing	2023 RS Feva UK National Championships	N.Ireland	Plas Heli, Wales	27-30 May	£150	£150	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Annabel has been selected for the RS Feva UK National Championships in Wales, 27-30 May 2023. Recommend funding of £150.
Emily Ridout	Sailing	2023 RS Feva UK National Championships	N.Ireland	Plas Heli, Wales	27-30 May	£150	£150	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Annabel has been selected for the RS Feva UK National Championships in Wales, 27-30 May 2023. Recommend funding of £150
Matthew Ridout	Sailing	2023 RS Feva UK National Championships	N.Ireland	Plas Heli, Wales	27-30 May	£150	£150	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Matthew has been selected for the RS Feva UK National Championships in Wales, 27-30 May 2023. Recommend funding of £150.
Peter Ridout	Sailing	2023 RS Feva UK National Championships	N.Ireland	Plas Heli, Wales	27-30 May	£150	£150	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Peter has been selected for the RS Feva UK National Championships in Wales, 27-30 May 2023. Recommend funding of £150

Jessica Dadley-Young	Sailing	2023 RS Feva National Championship	Ireland	Plas Heli, Wales	27-30 May	£150	£150	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Jessica has been selected for the RS Feva UK National Championships in Wales, 27-30 May 2023. Recommend funding of £150.
Annabel Ridout	Sailing	2023 RS Feva World Championships	N.Ireland	Follonica, Italy	24-28 July	£170	£170	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Annabel has been selected for the RS Feva World Championships in Italy, 24-28 July 2023. Recommend funding of £170
Emily Ridout	Sailing	2023 RS Feva World Championships	N.Ireland	Follonica, Italy	24-28 July	£170	£170	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Annabel has been selected for the RS Feva World Championships in Italy, 24-28 July 2023. Recommend funding of £170
Matthew Ridout	Sailing	2023 RS Feva World Championships	N.Ireland	Follonica, Italy	24-28 July	£170	£170	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Matthew has been selected for the RS Feva World Championships in Italy, 24-28 July 2023. Recommend funding of £170.
Peter Ridout	Sailing	2023 RS Feva World Championships	N.Ireland	Follonica, Italy	24-28 July	£170	£170	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Peter has been selected for the RS Feva World Championships in Italy, 24-28 July 2023. Recommend funding of £170.

Mathias Pickett	Swimming	2023 Glasgow International Swim Meet	Ireland	Glasgow, Scotland	26-28 May	£83.98	£83.98	Selection Letter received from Swim Ireland, advises Mathias has been invited to represent Swim Ireland at the Glasgow International Swim Meet in Scotland, 26-28 May 2023. Recommend funding of £83.98.
Daniel Palmer	Sailing	2023 ISA Youth Nationals	Individual	Howth, Dublin	13-16 April	£100	£100	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Daniel has been selected for the ISA Youth Nationals in Ireland, 13-16 April 2023. Recommend funding of £100.
Erin McConnell	Triathlon	2023 EUROPE TRIATHLON CUP	Ireland	Melilla, Spain	19-Mar	£170	£170	Selection Letter received from Triathlon Ireland, advises Erin has been selected for the Europe Triathlon Cup in Spain, 19 March 2023. Recommend funding of £170.
Toby Hughes	Sailing	2023 Irish Sailing Youth Nationals	Ireland	Howth, Dublin	13-16 April	£100	£100	Selection Letter received from RYA NI, says Toby has been selected for the ISA Youth Nationals in Ireland, 13-16 April 2023. Recommend funding of £100.
Eva Patton	Athletics	2023 Irish Indoor Championships	Ulster	Athlone, Ireland	25-Mar		£100	Selection Letter received from Athletics NI, says Eva has been selected for the Irish Indoor Championships in Ireland, 25 March 2023. Recommend funding of £100.

Eva Patton	Athletics	2023 Irish Indoor Championships	Ulster	Athlone, Ireland	1-2 March	£100	Selection Letter received from Athletics NI, says Eva has been selected for the Irish Indoor Championships in Ireland, 1-2 April 2023. Recommend funding of £100.
Lauren Taylor	Tetrathlon	2023 UK Pony Club Winter Tri Championships	N.Ireland	England	26-Mar	£150	Selection Letter received from British Equestrian Federation, says Lauren has been selected for the UK Pony Club Winter Tri Championships in England, 26 March 2023. Recommend funding of £150.
Zac Hanna	Triathlon	2023 Winter Triathlon Championships	N.Ireland	England	26-Mar	£150	Recommend funding of £150, 'subject to' a British Equestrian Federation Selection Letter, saying Zac has been selected to represent Northern Ireland at the Winter Triathlon Championships (The Pony Club is not a recognised NGB).
Mason McCreery	Athletics	2023 All Ireland U16 Relays	Ulster	Athlone, Ireland	25-Mar	£100	£100 Letter from Athletics NI confirms Mason has qualified and will be representing Ulster at the All Ireland Track & Field Championships 25th March - 2nd April. Recommend funding of £100.

Heidi Martin	Equestrian	2023 Royal Windsor Horse Show - Pony Club Junior Tetrathlon	N.Ireland	Windsor Castle, London	13-14 May	£150.00	£150	Selection Letter received from British Equestrian Federation, says Heidi has been selected for the Royal Windsor Horse Show in London, 13-14 May 2023. Recommend funding of £150.
Aaron Burgess	Athletics	2023 Irish Indoor Championships U16 4 x 200m Relay	N.Ireland & Ulster	Athlone, Ireland	25-Mar	£100.00	£100	Selection Letter received from Athletics NI, says Aaron has been selected for the All Ireland U16 Relays in Athlone, 25 March 2023. Recommend funding of £100.
Kris Burgess	Athletics	2023 Irish Indoor Championships U17 4 x 200m Relay	N.Ireland & Ulster	Athlone, Ireland	25-Mar	£100.00	£100	Selection Letter received from Athletics NI, says Kris has been selected for the All Ireland U17 Relays in Athlone, 25 March 2023. Recommend funding of £100.
Euan Monro	Athletics	2023 Irish Indoor Championships	N.Ireland & Ulster	Athlone, Ireland	25-Mar	£245.00	£100	Selection Letter received from Athletics NI, says Euan has been selected for the All Ireland U17 Relays in Athlone, 25 March 2023. Recommend funding of £100.
Freya Boyce	Athletics	2023 Irish Juvenile Indoor Athletics Championships	N.Ireland & Ulster	Athlone, Ireland	1st April		£100	Selection Letter received from Athletics NI, says Freya has been selected for the All Ireland U16 Girls 60m in Athlone, 1 April 2023. Recommend funding of £100.

Eloise Keers	Polocrosse	2023 Training & Selection Camp for 4 Nations	Ireland	England	25-26 March	£50.00	£50	Recommend funding of £50, 'subject to' a British Equestrian Federation Letter, advising Eloise has been invited to attend the Training & Selection Camp for the Four Nations.
Tilly Hunniford	Athletics	2023 60M Irish Indoor Championships	N.Ireland & Ulster	Athlone, Ireland	01-Apr	£100.00	£100	Selection Letter received from Athletics NI, says Tilly has been selected for the All Ireland U12 Girls 60m in Athlone, 1 April 2023. Recommend funding of £100.
Poppy Duff	Show Jumping & Eventing	2023 The Pony Club Spring Festival	N.Ireland	Kilmarnock, Scotland	1-3 April	£350.00	£150	Selection Letter received from British Equestrian Federation, says Poppy has been selected for The Pony Club Spring Festival in Scotland, 1-3 April 2023. Recommend funding of £150.
Ollie Hanna	Athletics	2023 Juvenile Indoor championships	Ulster	Athlone, Ireland	02-Apr	£347.20	£100	Letter from Athletics NI confirms Ollie has qualified and is representing Ulster & NI at this event. Recommend funding of £100.
Poppy McIlduff	Show Jumping & Eventing	2023 Barrier Spring Festival	N.Ireland	Kilmarnock, Scotland	1-3 April	£243.50	£150	Selection Letter received from British Equestrian Federation, says Poppy has been selected for the Barrier Spring Festival in Scotland, 1-3 April 2023. Recommend funding of £150.

Hannah Dadley-Young	Sailing	2023 Irish Sailing Youth Nationals	Northern Ireland	Howth Yacht Club, Dublin	13-16 April 2023	£100.00	£100	RYA Letter confirms Hannah has been selected to represent N.I. at this event. Recommend funding of £100
Hannah Dadley-Young	Sailing	2023 29er Irish Nationals	Northern Ireland	National Yacht Club, Dublin	30 June - 2 July 2023	£100.00	£100	RYA Letter confirms Hannah has been selected to represent N.I. at this event. Recommend funding of £100
Hannah Dadley-Young	Sailing	2023 29er UK National Championships	Northern Ireland	Weymouth, England	22-26 July 2023	£150.00	£150	RYA Letter confirms Hannah has been selected to represent N.I. at this event. Recommend funding of £150.
Hannah Dadley-Young	Sailing	2023 29er World Championships	Northern Ireland	Weymouth, England	29 July - 4 August 2023	£150.00	£150	RYA Letter confirms Hannah has been selected to represent N.I. at this event. Recommend funding of £150.
Mason McCreery	Athletics	2023 All Ireland U16 800m	Ulster	Athlone, Ireland	02-Apr	£100.00	£100	Selection Letter received from Athletics NI, says Mason has been selected to compete for Ulster & NI at the All Ireland Track & Field Championships in Athlone, 2 April 2023. Recommend funding of £100.
Eloise Keers	Polocrosse	2023 Polocrosse Challenge	Northern Ireland	Warwickshire, England	22-23 April	£150.00	£150	British Equestrian Federation Letter, advising Eloise has been selected to represent N.Ireland at the Polocrosse Challenge on 21-23 April. Recommend funding of £150.

Charlotte Keers	Dressage	2023 Dressage Home International	Northern Ireland	The Royal Windsor Horse Show, England	12-May	£150.00	£150	British Equestrian Federation Letter, advising Charlotte has been selected to represent N.Ireland at the Royal Windsor Horse Show on 10-14 May. Recommend funding of £150.
Grace Anderson	Gymnastics	2023 NDP National Finals	Northern Ireland	Stoke on Trent, England	13-14 May 2023	£150.00	£150	Letter from Gymnastics N.I confirms Grace has qualified to represent N.Ireland at the N.D.P National Finals in Stoke-On-Trent, 13-14 May. Recommend funding of £150.
Caitlin Moore	Gymnastics	2023 Inter Regionals Southampton	Northern Ireland	Southampton, England	29-30 April 2023	£150.00	£150	Letter from Gymnastics NI confirms place Caitlin has qualified to represent Northern Ireland at the Inter-Regional Championships, Southampton 29th & 30th April, 2023. Recommend funding of £150.
Maddie Johnson	Gymnastics	2023 Inter Regionals Southampton	Northern Ireland	Southampton, England	29-30 April 2023	£150.00	£150	Letter from Gymnastics NI confirms Maddie has qualified to represent N.Ireland at the Inter-Regional Championships in Southampton on 29 & 30 April. Recommend funding of £150.

Jessica Dadley-Young	Sailing	2023 Eric Twiname Junior Championships	Northern Ireland	Rutland, England	29 April - 1 May 2023	£150.00	£150	Letter from RYA confirms Jessica was selected to represent Northern Ireland at Eric Twiname Junior Sailing Championships 29 April - 1 May. Recommend funding of £150.
Ivy Easter	Gymnastics	2023 Inter Regionals Southampton	Northern Ireland	Southampton, England	29-30 April 2023	£150.00	£150	Letter from Gymnastics NI confirms Ivy has qualified to represent N.Ireland at the Inter-Regional Championships in Southampton on 29 & 30 April. Recommend funding of £150
Zac Hanna	Polocrosse	2023 Polocrosse Arena Tournament	Northern Ireland	Dallas Burston Polo Club, England	22-23 April	£150.00	£150	Letter from British Equestrian Federation confirms Zac has been selected to represent N.Ireland at the Pony Club Polocrosse Challenge, 21-23 April. Recommend funding of £150.
Sean McManus	Polocrosse	2023 Polocrosse Arena Tournament	Northern Ireland	Dallas Burston Polo Club, England	22-23 April	£150.00	£150	Letter from British Equestrian Federation confirms Sean has been selected to represent N.Ireland at the Pony Club Polocrosse Challenge, 21-23 April. Recommend funding of £150.

Abbey Wallace	Polocrosse	2023 Polocrosse Arena Tournament	Northern Ireland	Dallas Burston Polo Club, England	22-23 April	£150.00	£150	Letter from British Equestrian Federation confirms Abbey has been selected to represent N.Ireland at the Pony Club Polocrosse Challenge, 21-23 April. Recommend funding of £150.
Sally Nixon	Sailing	2023 Eric Twiname Championship	Northern Ireland	Rutland Sailing Club, England	29 April - 1 May 2023	£150.00	£150	RYA letter confirms Sally is representing Northern Ireland at the Eric Twiname Championship, 29 April-31 May in Rutland, England. Recommend funding of £150.
Lucy Kingsley	Acro Gymnastics	2023 NDP National Finals	Northern Ireland	Stoke on Trent, England	13-14 May 2023	£150	£150.00	Letter from Gymnastics N.I confirms Lucy has qualified to represent N.Ireland at the N.D.P National Finals in Stoke-On-Trent, 13-14 May. Recommend funding of £150.
Cullen Courtney	Taekwondo	BUTL Junior Championships	Northern Ireland	Manchester, England	7th May 2023	£47.98	£47.98	Selection letter from Recognised NGB, SCoT, advises Cullen has qualified for the BUTL Junior Championships, on 7 May, in Manchester. Recommend funding of £47.98.
Soul-be Courtney	Taekwondo	BUTL Junior Championships	Northern Ireland	Manchester, England	7th May 2023	£92.97	£92.97	Selection letter from Recognised NGB, SCoT, advises Soul-be has qualified for the BUTL Junior Championships, on 7 May, in Manchester. Recommend funding of £92.97.

TOTALS							£6,724.93	
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## APPENDIX 6 - SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS/SPORTS CLUB PATHWAY FOR NOTING

NAME	SPORT	EVENT	EVENT OUTLINE	DATES	REQUESTED	PROPOSED	NOTES
North Down Cricket Club (1190)	Cricket	2023 Girls Cricket Programme - Regent House	This initiative is borne from our engagement / coaching locally with Girls and the proven demand for a structured Girls Cricket Intro programme in schools to create a school-club link.	May-June 2023	£100	£100	Recommend funding of £100 towards Coaching costs, 'subject to' a signed declaration from the school. The Girls engaged will be invited to Youth section/Ladies training sessions held at NDCC (May-Sep 23).
North Down Cricket Club (1204)	Cricket	2023 Girls Cricket Programme - Andrews Memorial Primary School	This initiative is borne from our engagement / coaching locally with Girls and the proven demand for a structured Girls Cricket Intro programme in schools to create a school-club link.	May-June 2023	£100	£100	Recommend funding of £100 towards Coaching costs, 'subject to' a signed declaration from the school. The Girls engaged will be invited to Youth section/Ladies training sessions held at NDCC (May-Sep 23).
North Down Cricket Club (1205)	Cricket	2023 Girls Cricket Programme - Comber Primary School	This initiative is borne from our engagement / coaching locally with Girls and the proven demand for a structured Girls Cricket Intro programme in schools to create a school-club link.	May-June 2023	£100	£100	Recommend funding of £100 towards Coaching costs, 'subject to' a signed declaration from the school. The Girls engaged will be invited to Youth section/Ladies training sessions held at NDCC (May-Sep 23).
North Down Cricket Club (1206)	Cricket	2023 Girls Cricket Programme - Killinchy Primary school	This initiative is borne from our engagement / coaching locally with Girls and the proven demand for a structured Girls Cricket Intro programme in schools to create a school-club link.	May-June 2023	£100	£100	Recommend funding of £100 towards Coaching costs, 'subject to' a signed declaration from the school. The Girls engaged will be invited to Youth section/Ladies training sessions held at NDCC (May-Sep 23).

North Down Cricket Club (1207)	Cricket	2023 Girls Cricket Programme - Regent Prep. Department	This initiative is borne from our engagement / coaching locally with Girls and the proven demand for a structured Girls Cricket Intro programme in schools to create a school-club link.	May-June 2023	£100	£100	Recommend funding of £100 towards Coaching costs, 'subject to' a signed declaration from the school. The Girls engaged will be invited to Youth section/Ladies training sessions held at NDCC (May-Sep 23).
<b>TOTALS</b>					<b>£500</b>	<b>£500</b>	

## APPENDIX 6 - UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS REPORT

APPLICANT	APPLICATION	REQUEST	EVIDENCE REQUIRED	EXPLANATION
Daniel Palmer	Travel & Accommodation	£100 funding to compete at the ILCA Ireland Munster Championships in Baltimore, Cork on 8-9 April 2023	Guidelines state that applicants must be "Qualified and selected to represent their province/country"	Funded not recommended due to level of competition. Funding not recommended for this event as RYA letter details other higher level events that Daniel has been selected for during 2023.
Hannah Dadley-Young	Travel & Accommodation	£100 funding to compete at the Irish Southern 29er Open Class in Cork, 6-7 May 2023	Maximum of £500 per Athlete per financial year.	RYA Letter confirms Hannah has been selected to represent N.I at this event. Funding not recommended for this event as funding for other higher level events takes Hannah to the maximum available annual funding per athlete (£500).
Toby Hughes	Travel & Accommodation	£100 funding to compete at the Irish Southern 29er and 49er open class Open Class in Cork, 6-7 May 2023	Maximum of £500 per Athlete per financial year, and RYA letter details other higher level events that Toby has been selected for during 2023	RYA Letter confirms Toby has been selected to represent N.I at this event. Funding not recommended for this event as RYA letter details other higher level events that Toby has been selected for during 2023.

Unclassified

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**ITEM 8****Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	12 June 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Corporate Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Administration
Date of Report	24 May 2023
File Reference	DIR/ADM4
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject	NILGA Regional Member Induction Programme - Request for £1,100 Contribution from Council
Attachments	NILGA Regional Member Induction Programme

Council is asked to consider a request from NILGA for a financial contribution to the Regional Member Induction Programme.

The attached Programme is based on the coordination of each in-person workshop being delivered at two cluster locations and one via digital delivery. NILGA is covering 50% of the costs involved and seeking £1,100 contribution from each of the 11 Councils.

The Programme is beneficial for new Members and complements local Induction events. There is available budget to cover this cost.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council approves a contribution of £1,100 to NILGA for the Regional Induction Programme.

# NILGA Regional Induction Programme 2023



	Facilitators	Workshop Content	Guildhall Derry City	Greater Belfast	Digital Online Facilitation
<b>Workshop 1: The Role of the Councillor</b>	Tony Bovaird & Elke Loeffler Governance International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your Role: Representation, Community Leadership and Developing Council Policy / Corporate Management</li> <li>Political skills framework, key knowledge and skills to support you in your role</li> <li>NILGA Councillor Development Charter and Charter Plus</li> <li>Regional Programme for Councillor Development</li> <li>Code of Conduct and Standards (including Officer / Member Protocol)</li> </ul>	9th June 2023 11-1pm	16th August 2023 6-8pm	5th July 2023 6-8pm
<b>Workshop 2: The Local Government Sector</b>	Sonya McAnulla LG Finance Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council functions, what councils do and don't do</li> <li>Local Government Finance</li> <li>Decisions and the Law</li> <li>Local Government Organisations</li> </ul>	3rd July 2023 4-6pm	3rd August 2023 6-8pm	6th July 2023 6-8pm
<b>Workshop 3: Placeshaping (LG Activities and Systems)</b>	Dr Gavan Rafferty Ulster University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding your role in place shaping</li> <li>Place Shaping Systems, what are they, why are they important, how to do them and what support is available:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Planning System NI</li> <li>Community Planning</li> <li>Performance Improvement</li> </ul> </li> <li>Place Shaping Activities                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regeneration</li> <li>Enterprise and local economic development</li> </ul> </li> <li>City and Growth Deals</li> </ul>	24th July 2023 4-6pm	10th August 2023 6-8pm	22nd August 2023 6-8pm
<b>Workshop 4: Local Government Related Challenges</b>	Stratagem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with the Draft Programme for Government</li> <li>Climate Action &amp; Green Growth</li> <li>Emergency Planning and Community Resilience</li> <li>Cybersecurity and Online scams</li> <li>'Cost of Living' crisis</li> </ul>	17th July 2023 4-6pm	17th August 2023 6-8pm	23rd August 2023 6-8pm
<b>Workshop 5: Strategic Relationships</b>	Stratagem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City and Growth Deal Partnerships</li> <li>Political Partnership Panel</li> <li>Community Planning Partnerships</li> <li>Policing and Community Safety Partnerships</li> </ul>	21st July 2023 11-1pm	24th August 2023 6-8pm	25th August 2023 6-8pm

**Hosted by NILGA these Induction Workshops are open to all Elected Members. To register please email [events@nilga.org](mailto:events@nilga.org)**

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# NILGA Regional Induction Programme 2023

	Facilitators	Workshop Content	Guildhall Derry City	Greater Belfast	Digital Online Facilitation
<b>Workshop 1: The Role of the Councillor</b>	Tony Bovaird & Elke Loeffler Governance International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your Role: Representation, Community Leadership and Developing Council Policy / Corporate Management</li> <li>Political skills framework, key knowledge and skills to support you in your role</li> <li>NILGA Councillor Development Charter and Charter Plus</li> <li>Regional Programme for Councillor Development</li> <li>Code of Conduct and Standards (including Officer / Member Protocol)</li> </ul>	9th June 2023 11-1pm	16th August 2023 6-8pm	5th July 2023 6-8pm
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<b>Workshop 3: Placeshaping (LG Activities and Systems)</b>	Dr Gavan Rafferty Ulster University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding your role in place shaping</li> <li>Place Shaping Systems, what are they, why are they important, how to do them and what support is available:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Planning System NI</li> <li>Community Planning</li> <li>Performance Improvement</li> </ul> </li> <li>Place Shaping Activities               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regeneration</li> <li>Enterprise and local economic development</li> </ul> </li> <li>City and Growth Deals</li> </ul>	24th July 2023 4-6pm	10th August 2023 6-8pm	22nd August 2023 6-8pm
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Unclassified

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## ITEM 9

## Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	12 June 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity / Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Various
Date of Report	01 June 2023
File Reference	
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Equality Impact Assessment (EQiA) Consultation on Government Departments' Budget 2023-2024 Allocations
Attachments	Item 9a - Department for Communities (DfC) EqIA on Spending Plans Consultation Item 9b - Draft Response to DfC consultation Item 9c - Department for Infrastructure (DfI) EqIA on Spending Plans Consultation Item 9d - Draft Response to DfI consultation Item 9e - The Executive Office (TEO) EqIA on Spending Plans Consultation Item 9f - Draft Response to TEO consultation

## Background

On 27 April 2023 the Secretary of State announced the 2023/24 budget for Northern Ireland. This budget will see Northern Ireland departments receive £14.2bn resource and £2.2bn capital, compared to £14.3bn resource and £2.1bn capital in 2022/23.

Unclassified

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The figures, however, do not fully reflect the extent of the pressures facing individual departments due to inflation, rising costs, increasing demands and pay pressures.

Following publication of the Budget, each Department is now working through the implications for each respective Department and the services each provides, in order to live within the funding available.

The process of setting budgets can in some cases have an unintentionally greater impact on some specific Section 75 groups than others, for example, on males, females, young people or pensioners. In allocating budgets, each of the Departments aim to identify any adverse impacts (via an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)) and, where possible, action will be taken to avoid or mitigate against specific adverse impacts.

Each of the Department for Communities, the Department for Infrastructure, and The Executive Office, have published an EqIA consultation on their respective Spending Plans for 2023/24, as attached, examining potential options for potential reductions and the potential equality impacts of these options.

Each consultation runs for a 12-week consultation period; however, each Department has particularly encouraged responses within the initial four weeks of the consultation period. Obviously, this period coincided with the post-election period during which each of the councils were preparing for the new Council term. Despite highlighting such concerns to the relevant Permanent Secretaries and The Executive Office, each has advised that is to inform the Departments' initial allocation of funds to its business areas and Arms Length Bodies as well as any early mitigations that can be put in place (given the lateness of receiving the budget from the Secretary of State). Responses received between week 5 and week 12 of the consultation will be used to consider further mitigation measures, to inform in-year budget reallocation processes, and to direct any additional funding (or further reductions) that emerge over the course of the financial year.

A draft response to each of the EQiA consultations on the Spending Plans for 2023/24 is attached for Members' consideration and approval.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council notes this report and approves the attached responses to the EQiA consultation to be submitted to the respective Departments and The Executive Office.



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# Budget 2023-24

# Equality Impact Assessment

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Department for Communities Budget 2023-24 consultation is published in a situation where Executive departments are collectively facing the most challenging budget in recent history, with pressures of over half a billion pounds in 2023-24.
- 1.2. In this context, the Department for Communities and its Arms' Length Bodies face unprecedented funding challenges and cuts in 2023-24. This is being delivered against a backdrop of political uncertainty, inflation, ongoing Industrial Action and during a Cost-of-Living crisis.
- 1.3. To inform Budget allocations for the 2023-24 financial year, a number of budget information gathering exercises were commissioned by the Department of Finance and the Northern Ireland Office over the course of the last few months, in order to provide background information and evidence to enable a 2023-24 Budget to be set by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.
- 1.4. Through these exercises the Department identified £97.9m of additional Resource requirements above 2022-23, over £375m of new requirements to progress previous Ministerial priorities and Capital requirements of £275.1m in 2023-24.
- 1.5. Despite the scale of pressures faced and in anticipation of reduced budget allocations, the Department's Arm's Length Bodies and Third-Party Organisations were provided with indicative opening allocations for the initial 3 months of 2023-24. This was to allow services to be maintained, albeit constrained, until a budget was set.
- 1.6. The Secretary of State made a Written Ministerial Statement to Parliament on 27 April 2023, setting a 2023-24 Budget for Northern Ireland. While some flexibility has been granted by Treasury on the repayment of the £297m 2022-23 Budget overspend, providing some protection to front line public services in Northern Ireland, very difficult decisions remain in order to live within the funding available for 2023-24.
- 1.7. **For the Department, the 2023-24 Budget allocations result in a Non-Ring-Fenced Resource funding gap of £111.2m (15.5%) and a £59m (27.3%) shortfall in Capital required for 2023-24.** Managing Resource and Capital shortfalls of this magnitude will undoubtedly have a significant and adverse impact on the Department's ability to deliver public services in 2023-24. It should also be noted that

the new bids totalling over £375m to progress Ministerial priorities such as new Welfare Mitigations have not been allocated within the 2023-24 Budget settlement against these bids.

- 1.8. The purpose of this Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is to present the decisions required by the Department to live within its 2023-24 Budget allocation and the potential impact to people in Section 75 categories of those decisions on the services and supports the Department provides.
- 1.9. In the absence of an Executive and a Minister, an assessment of the decisions required is ongoing. Some of the decisions required to live within the 2023-24 Budget allocation will fall to the Department's Permanent Secretary

under the Northern Ireland (Interim Arrangements) Bill which was introduced to the House of Commons on 27 April 2023, and is due to be taken through all its remaining Commons stages on Wednesday 10 May. However, some decisions may be outside the scope of the Bill and cannot be taken civil servants. Colleagues in The Executive Office are working with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) to understand how such cases will be handled.

- 1.10. Your comment and feedback on the decisions required and impacts is sought through this consultation. The consultation activities will inform decision-making, and every response received by the deadline will be considered.

## 2. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

- 2.1. Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 requires the Department, in carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between -
- people with different religious beliefs;
  - people from different racial groups;
  - people of different ages;
  - people with different marital status;
  - people with different sexual orientations;
  - men and women generally;
  - people with or without a disability;
  - people with or without dependants; and
  - people with different political opinions.
- 2.2. In addition, but without prejudice to the duty above, the Department should also have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people with different religious beliefs, different political opinions or from different racial groups.
- 2.3. The Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006, which came into effect on 1 January 2007, introduced new duties requiring all public authorities in carrying out their functions having due regard to the need to:
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
  - encourage participation by disabled people in public life.
- 2.4. Equality scheme commitments require public authorities to determine if there are any impacts on equality of opportunity and if there are opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity between people within the Section 75 equality categories. Where screening would not be an adequate means of gathering the information that is needed to assess the relevant equality impacts or opportunities, the public authority should proceed to do an EQIA. In response to this, the Department has determined that the Departmental allocation, as outlined in the Secretary of State's Budget 2023-24, requires an EQIA.

2.5. This document is therefore the prepared draft EQIA. The purpose of this document is to record the findings of the EQIA and invite comments.

2.6. To request an alternative format please contact:

**Financial Management Directorate**

**Department for Communities**

**Level 5, Causeway Exchange**

**1-7 Bedford Street**

**BELFAST**

**BT2 7EG**

Telephone: **028 90512 625**

Email:

**dfcbudgeteqia@communities-ni.gov.uk**

## 3. Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1. The process of setting Budgets can in some cases have an unintentionally greater impact on some specific Section 75 groups than others, for example, on males, females, young people or pensioners, etc. In allocating Budgets, the Department aims to avoid any adverse impacts and where possible, action will be taken to mitigate against specific adverse impacts and consider alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity.
- 3.2. To comply with its Section 75 obligations, the Department for Communities (hereinafter referred to as 'the Department') has carried out a draft EQIA on the Secretary of State's Budget 2023-24 allocation to the Department.
- 3.3. The primary function of an EQIA is to assess whether policy proposals would have a differential impact and in particular, an adverse differential impact on the categories of persons listed in Section 75, and any sub-groups within those categories.
- 3.4. When conducting an EQIA, the Department acts in accordance with the guidance published by the Equality Commission in February 2005<sup>1</sup> which recommends that there should be seven steps in the EQIA process:
- Step 1** Defining the aims of the policy.
  - Step 2** Consideration of available data and research.
  - Step 3** Assessment of impacts.
  - Step 4** Consideration of measures which may mitigate any adverse impact and alternative policies which may better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity.
  - Step 5** Formal consultation.
  - Step 6** Decision and publication of the EQIA results.
  - Step 7** Monitoring for adverse impact.

<sup>1</sup> Practical guidance on equality impact assessment - <https://www.equalityni.org/Publications/Employers-Service-Providers/Public-Authorities/Practical-guidance-on-equality-impact-assessment?ID=1117>

- 
- 3.5. In response to this, the Department has examined a number of potential scenarios for its 2023-24 Budget allocation and given potential for adverse impacts across Section 75 groups has prepared a draft EQIA and consultation, in order to collate views from interested stakeholders. This document is the draft of the EQIA prior to incorporating the outcomes of a public consultation.
- 3.6. This document includes information on how the publication of the results of the EQIA will be handled.

## 4. Policy Aim

### Budget 2023-24

- 4.1. The 2023-24 Budget for Northern Ireland was announced by the Secretary of State on 27 April 2023. The Budget provides the Resource and Capital funding allocations to departments for the 2023-24 financial year.
- 4.2. The Budget 2023-24 allocations are presented at an overall departmental outcome level and departments are then required to consider their funding allocations in line with equality commission guidance and should an EQIA be required, this is to be published to support the consultation process.
- 4.3. The purpose of this paper is to set out the Department's initial assessment of the equality impacts of the Budget on spending proposals for the 2023-24 financial year.
- 4.4. It is important to note that the Department's Budget 2023-24 allocations will provide funding for the Department's programmes, Arm's Length Bodies, administrative costs and capital investment, but do not cover benefits payments to customers which are funded directly by Treasury or by HMRC National Insurance Contributions.

### Department for Communities

- 4.5. The Department provides support to meet the needs of some of the most disadvantaged people, families and communities across Northern Ireland.
- 4.6. The Department delivers a diverse range of functions that impact on the lives of everyone in our society. The Department's common purpose is to make this a great place to live for everybody by supporting people, building communities, shaping places. Areas of responsibility include:
  - delivery of the social security system including child maintenance and pensions;
  - providing advice and support for those seeking employment and for those who are unable to work;
  - ensuring the availability of good quality and affordable housing;
  - encouraging diversity and participation in society and promoting social inclusion;
  - promoting sports and leisure within our communities;
  - supporting local government to deliver services;
  - supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector;

- 
- delivering Neighbourhood Renewal and tackling disadvantage in the most deprived areas;
  - identifying and preserving records of historical, social and cultural importance to ensure they are available to the public and for future generations;
  - realising the value of our built heritage;
  - supporting creative industries, and promoting the arts, language and cultural sectors;
  - providing free access to books, information, IT and community programmes through our libraries;
  - maintaining museums;
  - revitalising town and city centres; and
  - delivery of an Appeals Service
- 4.7. The funding allocated to the Department includes funding to support the Department's Arms' Length Bodies. These include:
- Armagh Observatory and Planetarium
  - Arts Council of Northern Ireland
  - Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland
  - Charity Commission for Northern Ireland
  - Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC)
  - Museums and Galleries NI (known as National Museums Northern Ireland)
  - Northern Ireland Library Authority (known as Libraries Northern Ireland)
  - Northern Ireland Museums Council
  - Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC)
  - Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
  - Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)
  - Sport NI
  - Ulster Supported Employment Limited
  - North South Language Bodies
    - Foras na Gaeilge
    - Ulster-Scots Agency
-

## 5. Budget 2023-24 Outcome

### Budget 2023-24

- 5.1. The Secretary of State's Budget 2023-24 document sets out the spending plans for the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.
- 5.2. The total Non Ring-fenced Resource DEL funding available for NICS Departments is £14,212m in 2023-24. Resource spending covers the day-to-day costs of public services and administration, plus debt interest. It is largely financed by the UK Block Grant (which comprises a core element determined by the Barnett formula plus 'non-Barnett additions' that include financing for political agreements), with a much smaller contribution from the Regional Rates.
- 5.3. The context of setting the Northern Ireland Budget for 2023-24 has been very difficult, with significant challenges for all NICS Departments to manage the forecasted level of pressures in 2023-24. HM Treasury have agreed to grant some flexibility on the repayment of the £297m Resource overspend against the 2022-23 Budget, which will now be repaid using future in-year Barnett consequential. This flexibility will provide some protection to front line public services in Northern Ireland. However, difficult decisions

remain in order to live within the funding available. The decision-making process is made more difficult in the absence of a functioning Executive and Ministers, and work is ongoing to clarify the powers of Permanent Secretaries to make decisions in the absence of Ministers.

- 5.4. The Capital funding available for NICS Departments totals £2,268.1m in 2023-24, including £2,239.7m Conventional Capital and £28.4m Financial Transactions Capital. Capital spending covers investment in infrastructure, plant and machinery. It is largely financed from the Block Grant, plus capital borrowing under the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative (RRI), which is limited in amount by legislation and agreement with the Treasury.

### Department for Communities Budget 2023-24 Allocation

- 5.5. The 2023-24 Budget settlement provides the Department for Communities with £861.6m Resource, £216.1m Capital and £25.6m Financial Transactions Capital (FTC). Table 1 details the Department's Budget 2023-24 allocations against 2022-23 allocations.

**Table 1 – DfC Budget 2023-24 allocations against 2022-23 allocations**

DfC Budget Position (£m)	2022-23 Allocation	2023-24 Allocation	Change
Resource DEL Non Ring Fenced	715.5	702.1	-1.9%
Resource DEL – Earmarked *	157.1	159.5	1.4%
<b>TOTAL RESOURCE *</b>	<b>872.60</b>	<b>861.6</b>	<b>-1.3%</b>
Capital DEL	224.8	216.1	-3.9%
Financial Transaction Capital	38.8	25.6	-34.0%

£24m for DoF's Rates Replacement Scheme added back into 2022-23 earmarked funding as it's included in the 2023-24 total

5.6. The Department's 2023-24 Non Ring-Fenced Resource Budget allocation reflects a £13.3m (1.9%) reduction on 2022-23 Resource DEL. This must be viewed in the context of £97.9m of additional Resource requirements in 2023-24, which increases the Department's Non Ring-Fenced Resource funding gap to £111.2m (15.5%). Managing a Resource shortfall of this scale will undoubtedly have a significant and adverse impact on the Department's ability to deliver public services in 2023-24.

5.7. Within the Resource DEL position, earmarked funding of £159.5m has been provided for Welfare Mitigations, Housing Benefit Rates and Debt Advice. It is positive that these allocations, will enable these provisions to continue in 2023-24 without cut and any adverse impact.

5.8. The Department's Capital allocation totals £216.1m Net Capital in 2023-24. This is a £8.7m decrease in Net Capital when compared to the Department's 2022-23 Net Capital allocation of £224.8m. Furthermore, given the greatest proportion of the Department's budget provides for new build Social Housing and recent construction industry inflation of 26%<sup>2</sup>, the Department's Capital allocation is now £59m (27.3%) short of £275.1m required for 2023-24.

5.9. Overall, given the Department's additional 2023-24 Resource and Capital requirements, the allocations present a very constrained budget position for the Department in 2023-24. In managing this position, the Department has firstly considered its ability to deliver internal efficiencies, prior to the need to reduce or stop service delivery or any reduction

<sup>2</sup> [https://bcis.co.uk/news/bcis-construction-review-2022/#:~:text=Construction%20materials%20price%20inflation%20peaks,\(RPI\)%20was%207.5%25](https://bcis.co.uk/news/bcis-construction-review-2022/#:~:text=Construction%20materials%20price%20inflation%20peaks,(RPI)%20was%207.5%25)

to its Arm's Length Bodies and 3rd party funded organisations, including the Voluntary and Community sector.

- 5.10. Further detail on the Department's Resource, Capital and Financial Transaction Capital requirements is provided below.

### **Resource Budget 2023-24**

- 5.11. The Department's 2023-24 Resource funding is intended to cover the administration of Social Security benefits, Pensions and Child Maintenance Service delivery, support social and affordable Housing, Urban Regeneration and Local Government, and provide support for the Voluntary and Community Sector, the sports, arts, language and cultural sectors, our Arm's Length Bodies, the Public Record Office of NI and our built heritage. The Department's Resource budget also includes ring fenced funding for Housing Benefits Rates benefits (£113.9m) administered by Land and Property Service in DoF on behalf of owner occupiers and the NI Housing Executive on behalf of tenants, and for continuing of existing Welfare Mitigations (£43.0m) which includes Social Sector Size Criteria (known as Bedroom Tax) and Benefit Cap mitigation.
- 5.12. Given over 90% of the Department's total Resource requirement relates to areas of protected, contractual, inescapable and statutory spend, only the remaining 10% of the resource budget can be classified as discretionary with potential for reduction. However, a proportion of the discretionary funding requirement relates to other statutory and contractual obligations related to Councils, Arm's Length Bodies and voluntary bodies. Therefore, even with a continued focus on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of existing spending, there is limited scope to reduce funding for particular areas over the budget period to help mitigate any adverse impacts on Section 75 categories.
- 5.13. In addition to the pressures faced, new bids totalling over £375m were included within the Department's 2023-24 Resource requirements. This included the funding required to progress Ministerial priorities such as new Welfare Mitigations, a Supporting People provider uplift, and replacement European Social Fund support. No funding was allocated within the 2023-24 Budget settlement against these bids.

**Capital 2023-24**

5.14. The Department's Capital allocation is £216.1m Net Capital in 2023-24. This is a £8.7m decrease in Net Capital when compared to the Department's 2022-23 Net Capital allocation of £224.8m. This allocation will allow the Department to meet its statutory obligations (such as Housing Disabled Adaptions and Renovation Grants, Discretionary Support Loans, Funeral Loans and Health and Safety requirements), other contractual and inescapable commitments and existing contractual delivery of new social house building. However, the remaining funding will have to be carefully prioritised to take forward a limited number of projects in Housing, Regeneration, Culture, Arts, Sports, Libraries and other sectors.

**Financial Transaction Capital 2023-24**

5.15. The Department's Financial Transaction Capital allocation is £25.6m in 2023-24, which is in line with the forecasted need. This will support loans to, or equity investment in, capital projects delivered by the private sector and allow continuation of Co-Ownership affordable housing in 2023-24.

## 6. Consideration of Available Data and Research

- 6.1. In assessing the impact of the Budget 2023-24 policy against obligations under Section 75 of the 1998 Act the Department concludes that there is evidence of significant and adverse impact in respect of some Section 75 categories. Impacts have been considered against the backdrop of available data and the stated policy intent to determine whether differential impacts identified are adverse. Where this is the case, consideration will be given to potential mitigating factors.
- 6.2. The data utilised to assess the impacts of the 2023-24 budget is derived from a number of sources, details of which are listed in the 'Research' section of the Department's Audit of Inequalities.<sup>3</sup>
- 6.3. The Department continues to work with its Arm's Length Bodies to understand the impact of the Budget 2023-24 outcome on service delivery, the potential impacts of the policy on the various Section 75 groups and how any impacts could be mitigated.

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<sup>3</sup> Audit of Inequalities - <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/dfc-audit-of-inequalities-2012-2022.pdf>

## 7. Assessment of Impacts

7.1. The Department is committed to ensuring that it fulfils its duties under Section 75 (1) and (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in relation to having due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and to have regard to desirability of promoting good relations.

7.2. This section provides an assessment using the most recent evidence available to help:

- Identify those who are likely to be most affected.
- Assess the likely impact on Section 75 equality groups, examining whether they are likely to have any direct or indirect differential impact on any of these groups.
- Assess the extent to which the specific needs of section 75 equality groups will be addressed.

7.3. In so doing the intention is to ensure that in identifying and taking forward Budget proposals, due regard has been given to the needs and concerns of all Section 75 groups and that the subsequent actions put forward in support of the Budget proposals effectively target the needs of those most vulnerable and at risk.

### **Actions already taken to live within 2022-23 Budget**

7.4. The Department faced budget challenges in 2022-23, partly due to the late setting of the Budget in November 2022, and many actions had to be taken to live within the reduced Budget outcome including:

- Reduction of the Rates Support Grant by £3m;
- Robust vacancy control so as not to increase the Department's overall headcount, despite resource pressures and critical vacancies;
- Internally managing a £5m funding gap, given a Resource funding shortfall against the 2022-23 Budget allocation;
- Curtailing all overtime spend apart from out of hours and essential statutory service provision;
- No funding allocated to support Covid Recovery schemes for Culture, Arts and Heritage, Sport and Voluntary and Community sectors;
- No additional investment in Employment Programmes, despite high levels of economic inactivity and the largest disability employment gap in the UK;

- No funding to Executive and New Decade New Approach commitments, including Social Inclusion strategies and associated legislation; and
- Hybrid adaptations in offices to support New Ways of Working curtailed and only essential expenditure on accommodation and Digital Transformation has been progressed.

### 2023-24 Resource

- 7.5. To set the Department's Resource position in context, the Department for Communities has seen a £277m (29.5%) reduction of its Resource Budget over the last 9 years to 2022-23. This further significant cut in 2023-24 exacerbates this position to a £290m (or 30.9%) Resource reduction since 2014-15.
- 7.6. Given the Non-Ring-Fenced Resource funding gap of £111.2m (15.5%) in 2023-24, preliminary, high-level considerations of the decisions required to live within budget were undertaken. On this basis, the Department has determined an EQIA is necessary given the decisions required to live within its 2023-24 Budget allocation will adversely impact on the services and supports the Department provides.
- 7.7. In managing the constrained financial position, the Department has firstly considered options for internal efficiencies, prior to considering the need to reduce or stop service delivery or the funding provided to its Arm's Length Bodies and 3rd party funded organisations. However, given the scale of the Department's Resource funding gap, cuts to services and supports the Department provides is inevitable. The functions and bodies identified as impacted by the 2023-24 Resource Budget include –
- **Social Security Delivery**
    - Universal Credit
    - Move to Universal Credit
    - Health Assessments
    - Ability to open all offices 5 days per week.
    - Social Security Benefit Delivery Laptop Replacement
  - **Discretionary Support Grants**
  - **Employment Support**
    - Labour Market Partnerships (LMP)
  - **Arm's Length Bodies;**
  - **Third Party Organisations;**
  - **Rates Support Grant (RSG); and**
  - **Supporting People (SP) Programme.**

Further detail on the functions impacted is provided below.

stock and put at risk the Department's ability to safeguard public funds.

## Potential Impact of Proposals

### i. Social Security Delivery

- **Universal Credit** - Similar to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Department's Universal Credit (UC) caseload doubled during the pandemic and continues to remain high. DWP has recruited significant numbers of additional staff to administer their increased UC caseloads and in the 2021 Autumn Budget and Spending Review were allocated £900m each year (until 31 March 2025) to meet recruitment costs. Given budget shortfalls facing DfC in both 2022-23 and 2023-24, the Department has curtailed (and now stopped) recruitment to avoid creating a further Departmental pressure. This has left the Department operating with insufficient staffing levels which is presently impacting on operational benefit delivery areas. Longer term continued failure to secure the funding necessary to appropriately resource benefit delivery will lead to delays in benefit payments and place working age customers in financial hardship and put at risk delivery of the Move to Universal Credit programme. The need to prioritise new benefit claims to deliver statutory obligations will lead to slippage in lower priority areas, such as debt referrals and increase the overall debt
- **Move to Universal Credit** - There is an immediate risk to service delivery given the additional staff required to deliver on the UK Government led Move to Universal Credit Programme, whereby all individuals on working age legacy benefits will be migrated to Universal Credit. The Move to Universal Credit in NI is aligned with DWP. Securing funding for the departmental staff needed to deliver Move to UC in 2023-24 in NI is critical, to meet the Executive's previous commitment to implement and maintain parity in statutory benefit delivery. There is a significant risk that if working age legacy customers here are not moved on to UC, the Department could become liable for the full IT costs associated with the maintenance and running of HMRC's National Tax Credit system and DWP legacy benefit systems. As part of closing tax credits activity, HMRC intend to introduce legislation to cease all payments of tax credits after 5 April 2025. If the 55,000 tax credits claimants in NI have not been migrated by this date, they will lose their access to welfare support. To mitigate the risk to NI tax credit claimants losing their access to welfare support and to maintain parity of social security the Department will aim to progress Move to UC within its existing staff complement. This position is not without significant

risk and will greatly exacerbate the pressure already being felt in operational benefit delivery areas and further adversely impact on service delivery.

- ▶ **Health Assessments** – Aligned with DWP and to maintain parity of social security delivery, the Department's Health Transformation Programme (HTP) will transform health assessments in NI from Spring 2024. The provision of health assessments in the administration of health-related benefits is a statutory requirement, currently provided by two suppliers. HTP will transition the current separate assessment services into one unified, integrated service with one supplier, and improve customer service delivery. Whilst there are inescapable costs associated with HTP delivery, there has been a significant increase in health-related benefit claims during the current cost of living crisis, which has increased demand and costs associated with health assessment delivery. This is effectively an inescapable cost for the Department, and failure to fund would have a fundamental impact on service delivery to customers, particularly people with a disability or health condition and older people. Impacts would include a diminished service leading to an increase in backlogs, waiting times and the possibility of benefits not being received by some of the most vulnerable in our society.
  - ▶ **Close Departmental Offices 1 day a week** – Given the very constrained 2023-24 Budget position, combined with increasing running costs of office estates and the ability of staff to work remotely, closing offices one day per week could realise savings in cleaning, security and energy. This option is being considered, in conjunction with longer-term opportunities to reduce the overall size of the DfC estate. However, given the potential impact on front line customer service delivery, further work to assess the impact of office closures is being progressed, particularly given the Department's responsibilities for delivery of benefits and pensions to vulnerable people, including people with a disability and older people who may require more face-to-face support.
  - ▶ **Social Security Benefit Delivery Laptop Replacement Programme** – Given the constrained budget position, the Department has no funding to progress replacement of IT (laptop) devices over 3 years old. This will pose a considerable risk to social security operational benefit delivery, including put at risk the Department's ability to pay all customers and maintain parity of social security with GB.
- ii. Discretionary Support (DS) Grants**
- ▶ **Discretionary Support (DS) Grants** (equivalent to GB Household Support Fund) provide support to people facing

financial hardship. Grant demand has risen to unprecedented levels, almost a fourfold increase, during the cost-of-living crisis. The Department's historic Baseline budget for Discretionary Support Grants totalled £13.7m; which given the constrained budget position is not sufficient to meet current demand of almost £40m forecast in 2023-24. Given the pressures facing the Department in 2023-24, it is proposed that DS Grants awards would be scaled back to live within budget available for 2023-24. Whilst it is proposed that the same range of grant supports would be available, such as grants for living expenses and household items, reductions would be applied through reducing the number of times and/or circumstances where help is made available, rather than removing certain elements of help completely. The Department recognises the vital support DS provides and the constrained budget position will curtail the Department's ability to support any vulnerable individual or household facing financial hardship, particularly during this cost-of-living crisis. Whilst Capital funded hardship loans will continue, these will also be subject to the same restrictions as grant awards. Scaling back grant awards will put at risk the Department's ability to help address the basic needs of people who present with hardship, particularly people with dependents, older people and people with a disability.

### iii. Employment Support

- ▶ **Labour Market Partnerships (LMP)** – LMPs, which are delivered through local councils, provide a suite of employability provision to support people to find and retain employment. LMP aims to improve employability outcomes and labour market conditions by working through a multi-agency partnership approach at local and regional level, with regional objectives whilst being flexible to meet the needs presented by localised conditions, such as economically inactive, long-term unemployment, youth unemployment, disability, skilled labour supply and economic shock. Whilst an initial 3-month allocation was provided to Councils to maintain provision in 2023-24, given the Department's constrained Budget position in 2023-24 funding for LMPs will be paused from 1 July 2023. There will be adverse impacts across Section 75 groups, especially in the context of the removal of European Social Fund (ESF) funding. LMPs not only help those seeking work, but they are also a critical intervention to help people with a disability or health condition to remain in work.

### iv. Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs);

- ▶ The Department's 11 ALBs provide services and support to a range of sectors including Housing, Arts, Libraries, Museums and Sports. Funding will have to be curtailed by reducing the 2022-23 baseline position by 5%.

Across these bodies this is likely to have impacts such as those set out below.

- ▶ The **NI Housing Executive** goal is that everyone has access to decent, affordable housing and they do this by working with communities and other organisations to meet the housing needs of existing and future generations. A reduction to the NI Housing Executive budget will likely impact on their ability to deliver better homes and support people into independent living. Given the services they provide are to those most in need there are likely to be adverse impacts across the Section 75 groups.
- ▶ **Arts Council NI** funding has decreased, in real terms, by 30% over the last decade. Whilst funding has remained standstill since 2018-19, a combination of historic reductions and inflation has considerably decreased the spending power of local groups working within and for communities. Evidence also points to long-standing disparity in per capita investment in the Arts here compared to other jurisdictions across the UK and in Ireland. Reduced funding will damage delivery by, and sustainability of, arts and cultural organisations based in and supporting communities across the region. Jobs are likely to be lost; groups and associated venues/facilities may close; and support and services currently aligned to departmental priorities on tackling poverty; enhancing well-being; inclusion,

community wealth building and life opportunities will be curtailed or cease.

Arts Council NI Funding Programmes are generally open and therefore a reduction in arts funding could have a negative impact across all Section 75 groups.

- ▶ **Libraries NI** focus on the delivery of services to the public is reflected in their use of financial resources with some 86% of all funding being expended directly on the provision of frontline services. In the absence of sustainable and stable funding it is inevitable that a reduction in the scale and scope of library provision will be necessary, and it will not be possible to continue to deliver the service in line with statutory obligations and the existing library policy and standards. It may lead to a reduction of libraries opening hours, potentially library closures and impact on services delivered by Libraries NI. Therefore, a reduction in funding impacting frontline staffing would have a negative impact on a number of Section 75 groups.
- ▶ **National Museums NI** develop, manage and care for the collections, making them accessible to the widest possible audience. As part of this National Museums NI provides a range of on-site and outreach activities to older people and those with mental health issues and physical disabilities. Therefore, a reduction in funding impacting frontline staffing would have a negative impact on a number of Section 75 groups.

- ▶ The previous NI Executive committed to having an active, healthier and fitter society, which is delivered by **Sport NI** through the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland. This is a cross-cutting strategy, contributing to the long-term health and well-being of the population.

Sport NI grants, if stopped or reduced, will affect the 3rd party organisations they support. They may not be able to deliver the policy objectives set by Sport NI to encourage participation in sport and physical activity in Northern Ireland and their viability may also be at risk.

- ▶ **Ulster Support Employment Ltd (USEL)** - Operates a social enterprise business model and is Northern Ireland's largest provider of support for people with disabilities or health conditions to move into and sustain employment. Each year USEL employ, support and train over 1,200 people with disabilities or health conditions across Northern Ireland. Funding reductions will adversely impact on the support USEL provides to people with disability and health conditions.
- ▶ **Other** - Reductions in funding for Charities Commission NI, NI Commissioner for Children and Young People and Commissioner for Older People NI may impact the statutory work they carry out and therefore adversely impact on Section 75 groups including children and young people and older people.

#### v. Third Party Organisations;

- ▶ Withdrawal of funding support by the Department to some third-party organisations may lead to viability issues or closure of the bodies. On this basis there may be impacts on Section 75 Groups.

#### vi. Rates Support Grant

- ▶ The **Rates Support Grant** provides financial support, on an annual basis, to those councils whose needs exceed their wealth relative to other councils in NI. The Rates Support Grant is a statutory grant; however, the level of funding is not set in legislation. The Rates Support Grant was reduced by £3m in 2022-23, and a further reduction of £4m has been proposed for 2023-24 and the decision to implement was screened out for Section 75 Equality purposes as no adverse impacts were identified.

#### vii. Supporting People Programme

- ▶ **The Supporting People** programme is the policy and funding framework for housing support services. The Programme assists 19,000 vulnerable people each year to live independently and is focused on four thematic areas; working with people who are experiencing homelessness, young people, older people and people with a disability including mental health and learning disabilities. A report in 2020 identified significant shortfalls in supply of housing support particularly for the following groups:

- Older people with housing support needs (service shortfall of 9% or c. 920 units).
- Women who are at risk of domestic violence (service shortfall of 49% or c.650 units).
- People with learning disability or mental health issues (service shortfall of 15-21% or c.540 units).
- Homeless people experiencing alcohol or drug issues, homeless families, offenders and other homeless people (service shortfall of 12-24% or c. 540 units).

Therefore, a number of Section 75 groups including older people and people with a disability including mental health and learning disabilities may be disproportionately impacted by a reduction in funding.

### Capital

- The Department's Net Capital budget has decreased by £8.7m when compared to the 2022-23 Net Capital allocation of £224.8m. This allocation will allow the Department to continue to meet its statutory and contractual obligations, however only a small portion of the budget will be left to allocate funding to other priority investment projects, with potential for impacts on Section 75 groups.
- **Social Housing** is a priority for the Department, but the 2023-24 net capital allocations will have a significant detrimental effect on the numbers of new social homes that can be built through the Social Housing Development Programme in 2023-24. This Programme is the means to counter increasing waiting lists, which are currently at record levels. The target for 2023-24 is 2,000 starts. The previous Executive agreed to prioritise Green Growth and Social Housing with any surplus Capital DEL which emerges.
- In the scenario that the split of the capital allocations across the different sectors supported by the Department is in similar proportion to 2022-23, then a high-level estimate of the numbers of New Social Housing which could be delivered with 80% of the total Departmental budget, is 1,400. This represents a 600-unit reduction against the current target of 2,000 units.
- Any reduction in budget for the current **Affordable Warmth Scheme**, which runs until March 2024, could mean consideration may need to be given to closing the Scheme to new applicants in the current year. This could potentially impact Section 75 groups, in particular vulnerable, low-income households who are most at risk of fuel poverty.
- Most of the **Private Sector Grants and Major Adaptations** budget is in relation to statutory Disabled Facility and Repairs grants. The reduced budget in year could necessitate the need for an immediate reduction in the number of grant approvals in order to reduce financial commitments.

This means that future statutory requirements may not be met in full. This would have a disproportionate impact on Section 75 groups, in particular those with a disability and low-income households.

- ▶ The **Urban Regeneration programme** contributes to the previous Executive's commitment to create town and city centres in which people want to live, shop, work, or visit. At the core of the Department's investment in public realm, and other regeneration projects, is the desire to create public spaces that are accessible to all. Stopping this investment would have an adverse impact on people with disabilities and older people.
- ▶ Urban regeneration also encourages the economic improvement of the retail and hospitality sectors. These are often predominant in town and city centres and employ a younger workforce. Stopping investment in these projects could therefore also have a disproportionate impact on younger people.
- ▶ Capital projects in **Culture, Arts and Heritage, Sports and Green growth** will either be significantly curtailed or stopped completely. The previous Executive had agreed to prioritise Green Growth and

Social Housing with any surplus Capital DEL which emerges. Without additional funding this is likely to have a negative impact across Section 75 Groups.

### Section 75 Categories Potentially Impacted

- ▶ As set out above, the actions being proposed by the Department to live within the Budget for 2023-24 will have a dramatic impact on public services delivery. Following consideration of the Department's 2023-24 budget allocation, it is identified that there is potential for adverse impact on five Section 75 categories -

#### - People of different ages

The Department's Audit of Inequalities identifies young people (18-24 year olds) as having the lowest working age employment rates and the highest rates of unemployment and economic inactivity. Young people and in particular those aged 18 to 24, faced a particular disadvantage in the labour market even before the Covid-19 pandemic. This has been highlighted in researched reports from the Centre for Labour and Social Studies<sup>4</sup>, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development<sup>5</sup>, European Economic and Social Committee<sup>6</sup>, City and Guilds<sup>7</sup> and the TUC<sup>8</sup>. This disadvantage is likely to continue as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. This position would

4 Labour Market Realities: Barriers Facing Young People | Blog | CLASS ([classonline.org.uk](http://classonline.org.uk))

5 Recruiting young people facing disadvantage: an evidence review ([cipd.co.uk](http://cipd.co.uk))

6 Young people are worse off than older generations in today's labour market | European Economic and Social Committee ([europa.eu](http://europa.eu))

7 Youth Misspent: Uncovering the harsh realities for Britain's young people in today's job market - News ([cityandguilds.com](http://cityandguilds.com))

8 <https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/young-workers-three-times-more-likely-be-employed-sectors-where-jobs-are-most-risk-tuc>

be exacerbated with reduction and/or withdrawal of local employment support provision such as the Department's Labour Market Partnerships with Councils and supports currently available through Universal Credit work coaches to help move people into employment.

#### - **Men and women generally**

The Department's Audit of Inequalities identifies that women may experience barriers to employment and economic participation whilst men may be subject to health problems leading to higher rates of morbidity and mortality associated with poverty.

Lack of funding to provide employment support is likely to adversely impact on both men and women. Additionally, both men and women will be impacted by the constrained funding available to support parity social security benefit delivery and Move to Universal Credit which will also impact on their households and dependents.

Men and women will also be impacted by lack of funding to take forward new welfare mitigations.

#### - **People with or without a disability**

The Department's Audit of Inequalities identifies that people with a disability and/or health conditions may experience barriers of economic participation, social isolation and poverty. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation – Poverty in

Northern Ireland (2022) report outlines that disabled people in Northern Ireland have faced a higher poverty risk for at least the last 20 years. This is driven partly by the additional costs associated with disability and ill-health, and partly by many disabled people facing barriers to accessing work. Those barriers mean that many disabled people and/or families where someone is disabled rely on benefits as a source of income. The Department's 2023-24 funding gap will impact on the ability to maintain parity of social security benefit provision and meet Discretionary Support Grant demand in 2023-24; which will adversely impact on people with disabilities reliant benefit income. Furthermore, the lack of labour market support will also adversely impact on unemployed disabled people, who will now be even further from the labour market during the current cost of living crisis.

#### - **People with or without dependants**

The Department does not collect information on dependents. The 2021 Census however identifies that 29% of all households had dependent children. Where these households are receiving Universal Credit, the impact on payment times due to staff shortages will indirectly and adversely impact on children. Additionally childcare can act as a barrier to moving towards employment or obtaining, retaining or progressing

within employment, particularly for women, lone parents and those from disadvantaged backgrounds and the Department's proposed labour market interventions were aimed at supporting Section 75 groups adversely impacted by increasing unemployment.

Additionally, the lack of funding for the Department's Arm's Length Bodies and potential reductions to other funded 3rd party organisations could also impact on these Section 75 groups. As the people in need of financial support, including disabled people and people with dependents are more likely to require the services and supports the Department provides.

- **People with different religious beliefs;**

Failure to provide funding sufficient funding for new build housing could potentially impact on people with different religious beliefs. The Equality Impact Assessment for the Housing Supply Strategy<sup>9</sup> contains a detailed Equality Impact analysis of the whole Housing system. This outlines that following examination of NIHE waiting list time data for social housing for the period 2016 to 2021 that Catholic household reference person applicants experienced the longest median waiting times for social housing at the point of allocation in Northern Ireland as a whole (18 months, as opposed to an average of 13 months).

The Budget 2021-22 consultation responses reference that failure to provide funding to mitigate the impact of the two-child policy in NI is of particular concern. Responses outline family size could disproportionately affect families from specific religious beliefs and racial groups where there is a trend for bigger families. This is supported by the 2011 Census which notes that in Northern Ireland Catholics had the largest average household size, at 2.76 persons.

- **People with different sexual orientations;**

No inequalities with regard to people with different sexual orientations have been identified in considering of the Department's Budget 2023-24 allocations.

- **People with different marital status;**

No inequalities with regard to people with different marital status have been identified in considering of the Department's Budget 2023-24 allocations.

- **People with different political opinions.**

No inequalities with regard to political opinion have been identified in considering of the Department's Budget 2023-24 allocations.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/communities/dfc-draft-eqia.pdf>

## 8. Consideration of Mitigation/ Alternative Policies

- 8.1. The impact of the Budget 2023-24 on the Department is extremely challenging with the Department facing a very constrained financial position in 2023-24. In the context of delivering public services with constrained allocations and other inescapable pressures, the Department has considered options to live within its 2023-24 allocation whilst continuing to maintain public service delivery in so far as this is possible.
- 8.2. Sustaining an accessible social security and financial support system and supporting people into employment are a core priority for the Department. The Department's budget will continue to be deployed in support of this objective. The promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations is also an important part of ongoing policy development, legislative activities and operational programmes. In managing within the Resource Budget allocations, the Department will make every effort to protect front line service delivery.
- 8.3. The Department will seek to ensure that its budget allocations are applied as far as possible in a manner that does not disproportionately or adversely affect one Section 75 category, over another and has identified the following potential areas for mitigation:
- Baseline staffing within Universal Credit will be used to support the Move to Universal Credit, to ensure tax credit claimants transition to Universal Credit and do not lose access to welfare support. However, it should be noted this will increase pressures on staff delivering Universal Credit.
  - Whilst there is a significant shortfall in the funding available to support Discretionary Support grants demand, scaling back to live within the available budget, whilst far from ideal particularly during a cost-of-living crisis, will at least ensure a level of support is available for people presenting with hardship.
  - Budget allocations will be revisited during the financial year, particularly during the Monitoring Round process. Funding may be reallocated to other priority areas depending on relative spend levels in each Departmental business area. Response from this consultation will be used to inform such reallocations.

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- d. The Department will seek to ensure that any available Capital funding made available during the year is allocated to Social Housing, as was the intention of the previous Executive.
- 8.4. It will however be difficult to mitigate the potential adverse impacts anticipated, given the scale of additional funding required in 2023-24. Where options for efficiencies are identified, these will be subject to separate screening. Where necessary, full EQiAs will be undertaken as options to live within the Department's 2023-24 budget allocations are further developed and implemented.
- 8.5. The Department would welcome comments on any potential equality implications arising from the 2023-24 Budget and will consider the need for any further mitigating actions in light of responses received during the consultation. Promotion of equality of opportunity and the protection of services to vulnerable groups will be a key consideration in the Department's final Budget decisions.

## 9. Consultation, Decision and Publication

- 9.1. The Department is committed to seeking the views of those who are affected by the decisions that it will make in relation to its budget reductions. We are keen to hear from individuals and organisations about their views on the equality implications of the decisions being made and about any mitigations that the Department could put in place to address what will undoubtedly be the adverse impacts of a reduction of this size.
- 9.2. Any further mitigating actions received during the consultation will be carefully considered. Promotion of equality of opportunity and the protection of services to vulnerable groups will be a key consideration in final Budget decisions.
- 9.3. Decisions around the budget reductions need to be made urgently. This is so they can be implemented in time to take effect over as much of the financial year as possible; and so that business areas, Arms' Length Bodies and organisations who depend on our funding can make the necessary plans as soon as possible.
- 9.4. Therefore, given the urgent need to provide certainty of funding to the Department's Arm's Length Bodies and other organisations, the Department will consult over a four-week period. Views received during this time will be used to inform the Department's allocation of funds to its business areas and ALBs as well as any early mitigations that can be put in place. Any responses received between weeks 5 and 12 of this consultation will be used to consider further mitigation measures, to inform in-year budget reallocation processes, and to direct any additional funding (or further reductions) that emerge over the course of the financial year.
- 9.5. The purpose of this consultation paper is to set out the Department for Communities' initial assessment of the impact of the Draft Budget on spending proposals for the 2023-24 financial year. The Department will analyse the responses to this consultation and consider the findings of the EQiAs before making any final decisions on its Budget 2023-24 allocations. The outcomes of the Department's EQiA will be posted on the Department's website.

- 
- 9.6. The Department welcomes comment on any aspects of this document. Interested parties are encouraged to make responses by 7 June 2023, which will be used to inform the Department's allocation of 2023-24 funds. Any further consultation responses received between 7 June 2023 to 19 July 2023 will be used to inform further mitigation measures and reallocation of any additional funding available during 2023-24.
- 9.7. Further consultations and equality screening will be considered, as appropriate, as plans to live within Budget 2023-24 allocation are considered.

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## 10. Monitoring

- 10.1. In keeping with this Department's commitments under its Equality Scheme, any adverse differential impact on equality of opportunity or good relations that may be identified through this assessment process will be taken into account in informing the Department's Budget 2023-24 allocations. Any such findings will be used to inform further development of mitigations, revised Budget allocations and in-year bids.

# 11. Confidentiality

11.1. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public the right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided in response to this consultation, including information about identity, should be made public or treated as confidential.

11.2. This means that information provided in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that -

- the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;

- the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature; and
- acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

11.3. For further information regarding confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office at -

**Information Commissioner's Office – Northern Ireland**

**3rd Floor**

**14 Cromac Place,**

**Belfast**

**BT7 2JB**

Telephone: **028 9027 8757**  
**/ 0303 123 1114**

Email: **ni@ico.org.uk**

Website: **http://www.ico.org.uk**

## 12. Consultation Questions

- 12.1. As set out in this document, the Department is facing a constrained financial position in 2023-24.
- 12.2. In consulting on the Department's 2023-24 Budget allocations views were welcomed on the following:
  1. Are there any data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 equality categories that have not been identified in Section 6 of the EQIA consultation document? If so, what are they and can you provide details?
  2. Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in section 7 of the EQIA Consultation document? If so, what are they?
  3. Please state what action you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts in allocation of the Department's budget.
  4. Are there any other comments you would like to make in regard to this pro forma or the consultation process generally?
- 12.3. Comments are sought by online survey, email or postal response.
- 12.4. The Department welcomes comment on any aspects of this document. Interested parties are encouraged to make responses by 7 June 2023, which will be used to inform the Department's allocation of 2023-24 funds. Any further consultation responses received between 7 June 2023 to 19 July 2023 will be used to inform further mitigation measures and reallocation of any additional funding available during 2023-24.
- 12.5. The final deadline for responses is 19 July 2023.

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## ANDBC Response to EQiA on DFC Budget for 2023-24

119

### Response in relation to: Affordable Warmth

#### Data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q1:** Are there any data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 equality categories that have not been identified in Section 6 of the EQiA consultation document?

**Answer:** NO

#### Potential adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q2:** Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in section 7 of the EQiA Consultation document?

**Answer:** NO

#### Potential action to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts

**Q3:** Please state what action you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts in the allocation of the Department's budget?

**Answer:** N/A

#### Any further comments

**Q4:** Are there any other comments you would like to make with regard to this pro forma or the consultation process generally?

**Answer:** *It is understood by Ards and North Down Borough Council that the decision to terminate the Service Level Agreement between Councils delivering the Affordable Warmth Scheme has already been made with a final termination date of 31<sup>st</sup> August.*

*The Council is disappointed both with the decision itself and the timing to the decision having been made and communicated during this consultation period. Vulnerable people within the Borough will not avail of the service without the local knowledge and support. There are concerns that with direct applications to NIHE that the existing equal shared allocation of funding across the 11 Councils will now not take place as some Councils have extensive waiting lists whereas the vulnerable clients in Ards and North Down are harder to reach.*

## ANDBC Response to EQiA on DfC Budget for 2023-24

120

### Response in relation to: Labour Market Partnership

#### EQIA on DfC Budget for 2023-24

#### Data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q1:** Are there any data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 equality categories that have not been identified in Section 6 of the EQIA consultation document?

*(Required – please answer only yes or no)*

**Answer: Yes**

#### Q1a: If yes was answered, what are they?

The EQIA document fails to provide data relating to section 75 at local and council area level. The data provided in the document is of a general nature and covers Northern Ireland as a geographical area. It does not drill down into data which have been gathered at local level. The data, needs and Issues identified in the Document are not representative of the Ards and North Down area.

The groups most affected in Ards and North Down will be (as per Section 75 groups):

- People of different ages (16-24)
- Men and women generally (lack of funding to break barriers to unemployment and economic inactivity)
- People with or without a disability (barriers facing people with disability when wanting to access work or training)
- People with or without dependants (Parents and Single parents seeking employment or training)

**The role of the LMP is to develop and support LOCAL and TARGETED interventions, programmes and projects within various employment sectors to meet sector/industry specific needs, review supply and demand levels for skills, expertise, qualifications and commission new provisions to fill any local gaps.**

In doing so, the ANDBC commissioned a Scoping Study in existing work programmes to aid people into employment. This document and its content has not been taken into consideration by the EQIA.

The document states that labour market interventions, which affect mainly the four Section 75 groups highlighted in this section aim to:

## ANDBC Response to EQiA on DFC Budget for 2023-24

- To help people back to work as quickly as possible – sometimes called ‘work first’
- To help build the skills, capabilities and assets of the workforce.

However, with the proposal removal of the LMP, the most vulnerable groups in our council area are at risk of being further pushed into poverty and economic inactivity as the support currently and previously available will not be there to address their needs.

The ending of Step 2 Success converged with the Covid pandemic, furlough and subsequent economic and cost of living challenges currently hitting households and businesses across Northern Ireland. Ever since S2S finished European Social Fund had been available to support unemployed, economically inactive and disabled individuals within the Council area. However, these too closed on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2023.

**In Ards and North Down**, the following ESF programmes supporting the four section 75 groups highlighted in this section have now closed and support is not available to support people into training and employment, having an adverse and detrimental effect on the individuals living in our Borough:

<p><b>Employability2 (ESF)</b> Mencap</p>	<p>Employability aims to promote the active inclusion and participation of economically inactive people with learning disabilities of working age across Northern Ireland. It promotes their active inclusion and participation in the workplace by offering an evidenced-based programme of person-centred, specialist employment support.</p>
<p><b>Eye Work Too (ESF)</b> RNIB Northern Ireland</p>	<p>Participants complete a work placement relevant to their chosen career path. All participants will receive 1:1 pre-employment support (pre-employment assessment, individual action plan and pre-employment workshops) and can avail of a level 1 accredited OCN qualification.</p>
<p><b>Recruit++ (ESF)</b> Specialisterne Northern Ireland</p>	<p>Recruit++ activities support autistic people to access employment, education and training through activities which reduce attitudinal and communication barriers, and which support having a career and feeling socially connected. Participants complete the Thriving Now Certification and NOCN Level 2 Certificate in Employability.</p>
<p><b>Specialist Employment Programme (ESF)</b> Action on Hearing Loss</p>	<p>One to one support including individual assessment, CV writing, job search, completing applications, interview skills and development of personal development plans.</p>
<p><b>STRIDE (ESF)</b></p>	<p>STRIDE assists unemployed/economically inactive people with disabilities to find and secure paid work. Project staff offer</p>

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Ulster Supported Employment Limited	tailored supports including mentoring, opportunities to gain employability skills, qualifications and experience required by employers. Both pre-employment and in-work support are provided for up to 1 year.
<b>Verve (ESF)</b> NOW Group	Supports individuals on their journey to employment by offering accredited training to build up skills and confidence as well as workplace experience and voluntary placements.
<b>Inclusion Works (ESF)</b> The Cedar Foundation	Inclusion Works is a flexible service built around the individual, supporting people with disabilities to explore opportunities and choices for training, employment and participation in their community; while building resilience, confidence and independence.
<b>Job Match (ESF)</b> Network Personnel	Delivers personalised one-to-one support to people with disabilities to gain and sustain paid work (parttime or full-time), including self-employment.

Of the 12 health and/or **disability employability programmes** provided across the Ards & North Down Council area, eight were ESF funded programmes which ended in March 2023.

In terms of Career Advice and job search, the following ESF programmes which contributed to support the more specifically people of different ages, men and women generally, people with or without dependants, have now ended:

<b>College Connect</b> South Eastern Regional College (SERC) <b>(ESF)</b>	College Connect supports young people aged 16-24 to integrate into the labour market through a mentor led programme which supports the holistic development of young people and provides opportunity to achieve a full L1 qualification and assist progression into employment, education or training.
<b>CO-MENT</b> GEMS NI <b>(ESF)</b>	CO-MENT supports participants to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve their 'soft' employability skills</li> <li>• Improve their essential skills/English language skills</li> <li>• Gain skills/qualifications linked to labour market requirements</li> <li>• Undertake workplace placements enhancing their knowledge of the world for work</li> <li>• Gain underpinning knowledge/career motivations to progress to Further Education/training routes</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Extern Works</b> Extern (ESF)</p>	<p>Provides learning and employment opportunities and support across four sites in the following areas: Catering, Electrical, Employability, Essential Skills, IT, Joinery, Warehousing and Waste Recycling, as well as a range of short, accredited courses.</p>
<p><b>LEMIS+</b> People 1<sup>st</sup> (ESF)</p>	<p>Help and support to find a job by providing information, advice, guidance and practical help in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updating your CV</li> <li>• Completing application forms</li> <li>• Improving your job interview technique</li> <li>• Support with job searching</li> <li>• Sourcing industry relevant training</li> <li>• Participating in our industry specific academies</li> <li>• Obtaining Essential Skills qualifications</li> <li>• Building your self-confidence</li> <li>• Disclosing convictions advice</li> <li>• Sourcing confidential 'Better of Calculations' before returning to employment</li> </ul>
<p><b>STEP UP</b> Kilcooley Women's Centre (ESF)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable individuals to meet personal/educational goals.</li> <li>• Increase participation in employment related training.</li> <li>• Remove barriers to participation in education/training.</li> <li>• Enable individuals to recognize their value/potential, assist in developing their personal/professional skills including volunteering and work experience.</li> <li>• Identify/address social exclusion, social need, multi-faceted economic and social deprivation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Working Well</b> NIACRO (ESF)</p>	<p>Working Well offers a suite of specialist services which, when combined, help to break down barriers to employment for all concerned, including employers, FE Colleges, and training organisations.</p> <p>The focus is on supporting participants to move into training, education or employment (as appropriate), offering opportunities for building confidence, employability skills and undertaking relevant qualifications.</p>
<p><b>Community Family Support Programme</b> People 1<sup>st</sup> (ESF)</p>	<p>Addressing the employment, educational, training, health, social /economic issues that impact on participants' daily lives.</p>

**In terms of skills services**, the following ESF programmes which contributed to support the more specifically people of different ages, men and women generally, people with or without dependant have now ended:

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<p><b>Journey to Success</b> The Prince's Trust <b>(ESF)</b></p>	<p>Aim is to develop participant's personal, social and employability skills towards employment.</p>
<p><b>PASS</b> Training for Women Network (lead) &amp; Millisle Youth Forum <b>(ESF)</b></p>	<p>The objectives of the PASS Project are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce economic inactivity among marginalized young women</li> <li>• Reduce long-term unemployment among disadvantaged young women</li> <li>• Support young women in a range of activities, such as skill development, training and networking to access employment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reaching Further</b> The Prince's Trust <b>(ESF)</b></p>	<p>Reaching Further offers individually tailored, flexible support to 18-30 year olds who are unemployed (including long-term unemployed and economically inactive) to develop their personal, social and employability skills towards employment. The Project is delivered through all areas of NI, providing locally accessible, tangible opportunities and connections to support participants' employability/employment outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Training for Employment</b> The Conservation Volunteers <b>(ESF)</b></p>	<p>The programme will focus mainly, but not exclusively, on land-based qualifications and employment. Provide work experience and employability skills in a real work environment, achieving a Level 1 vocational qualification and a short accredited qualification such as First Aid.</p>
<p><b>Give &amp; Take</b> Include Youth <b>(ESF)</b></p>	<p>Programme includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NOCN Level 1 Certificate in Vocational Skills Essential Skills in Numeracy and Literacy - up to level 2</li> <li>• Vocational Sampling</li> <li>• Mentoring - 1:1 support, help with applications, classroom support, cv, interview skills, confidence building, goal setting and addressing participant specific needs</li> <li>• Work placements</li> <li>• Team building Trips</li> </ul> <p>This programme helps young people to progress to further education or training.</p>

The introduction of the UKSPF, which was due to go live in April 2023 was expected to fill some of the void left by ESF; however, there are considerably less funds available, and it is suggested that there will be fewer but larger programmes delivered by regional bodies. The Ards & North Down Council area has not been able to draw any significant funds yet from UK SPF and it is unlikely that any funds secured through

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that programme will hit the ground before the end of the year, leaving a significant gap in the nature and level of funding available to address inequalities in the Council area.

Less provision, greater needs arising, and generally less public funds available will mean the focus must be on delivering quality services which meet local need for all groups of Section 75 in a more cost efficient way. Therefore, the role of the LMP is critical and its partnership approach with local bodies and organisations places it in a strategic position to deliver employment support in Ards and North Down. Given the relatively few local delivery providers (in the absence of ESF and the late delivery of SPF) it is crucial that the LMP focus on service delivery for the most disadvantaged and those most at risk of being adversely impacted by a lack of support such as that delivered by the LMP.

In the past, provision across Northern Ireland (Ards & North Down would be no different) has been criticised for low performance as measured by getting people into jobs. How performance can be improved is a key question for which there are few easy or quick answers. Programmes in NI and GB have tried a mix of measurements and incentives for which there is a mix of evidence.

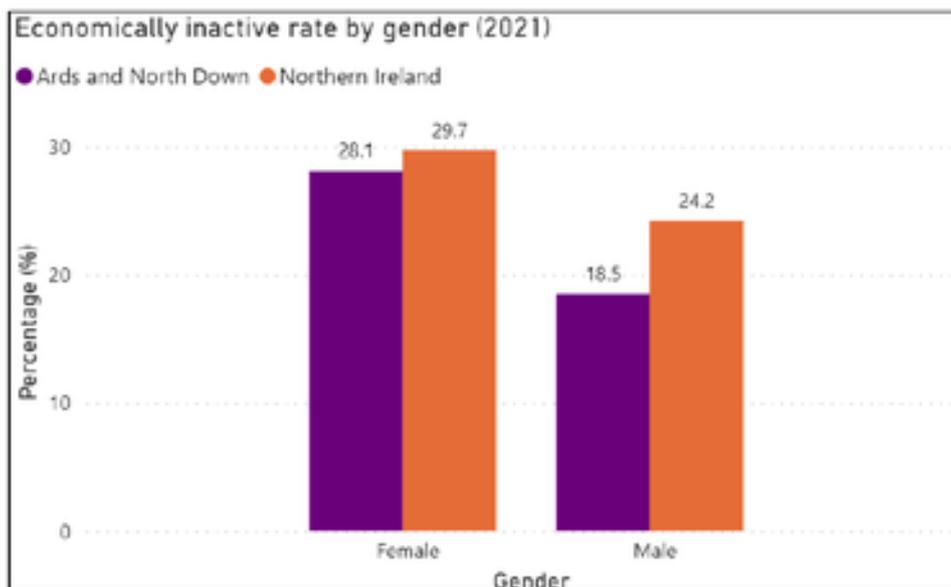
The LMP is intended to be a key driver to bring improvements, and as such it should continue to facilitate discussions with key stakeholders and providers about the practical steps that can be taken to ensure that all sections of the community, and especially those at a disadvantage in the Ards and North Down Area, are not further adversely affected and prevented from accessing employment and training opportunities to achieve their full life-long potential.

### Relevant sets of data/ needs and issues for the Ards and North Down Borough Council area not specifically highlighted in the EQIA

#### Economic Inactivity affecting men and women, people of all ages and people with or without dependants in Ards and North Down.

In 2021 in AND, the economic inactivity rate for female was 28.1%, higher compared to male (18.5%). The trend was similar compared to NI, but the gender gap in AND was higher. This coincides with the finding of "Women in Northern Ireland 2020" publication, which stated that in NI, approximately 60% of employed women with dependent children worked full-time, compared to 95% of employed males with dependent children. The report also stated that in NI, the most common reason for inactivity among women was family and home commitments.

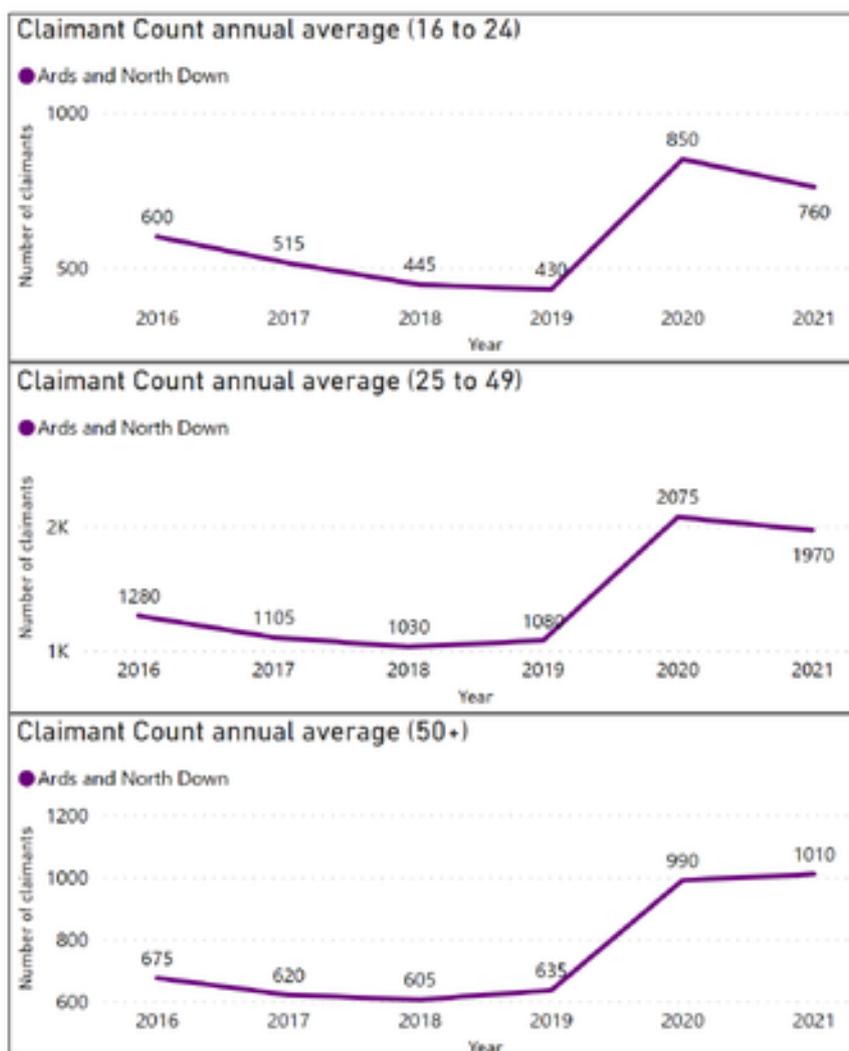
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(Source: Labour Force Survey, NISRA)

Youth unemployment Data for the Ards and North Down Borough Council area was not included in the EQiA. However, the following set of data shows that a worrying trend was observed for claimant among people aged 16 to 24 (**people of different ages**). In 2020, the number of claimants increased in all age groups (16 to 24, 25 to 49 and 50+). However, in AND, the increase in 16-24 age group was the highest (98%) compared to population between 25 to 49 (92%) and population over 50 (56%).

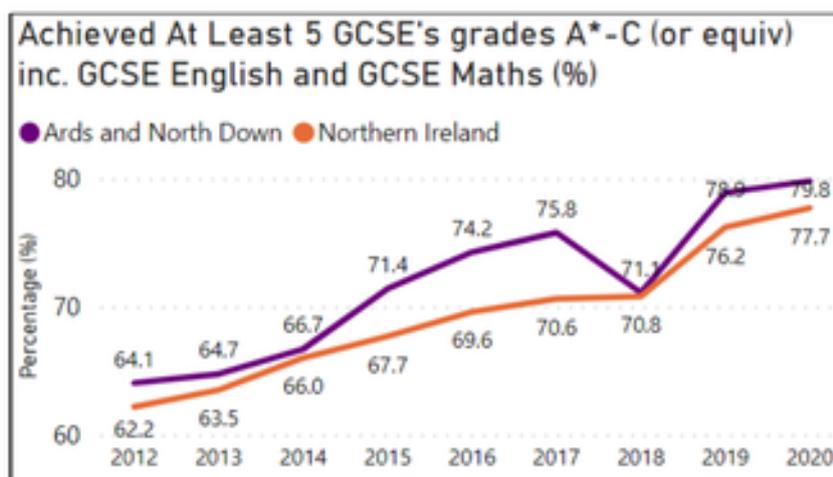
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(Source: NISRA)

Also, youth unemployment is now one of the greatest challenges in NI, and this is reflected in AND. Underachievement in schools means the youths are likely to face a hostile labour market as they don't have suitable qualifications. Graphs below show the proportion of school pupils who achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A\*-C. In 2020, 79.8% of school pupils or leavers achieved at least 5 GCSE's grade A\*- C (or equiv.) including GCSE English and Math. However, two DEAs in AND had lower achievement in this category compared to NI average (77.7%), which were Ards Peninsula DEA (74.3%) and Newtownards DEA (74.2%).

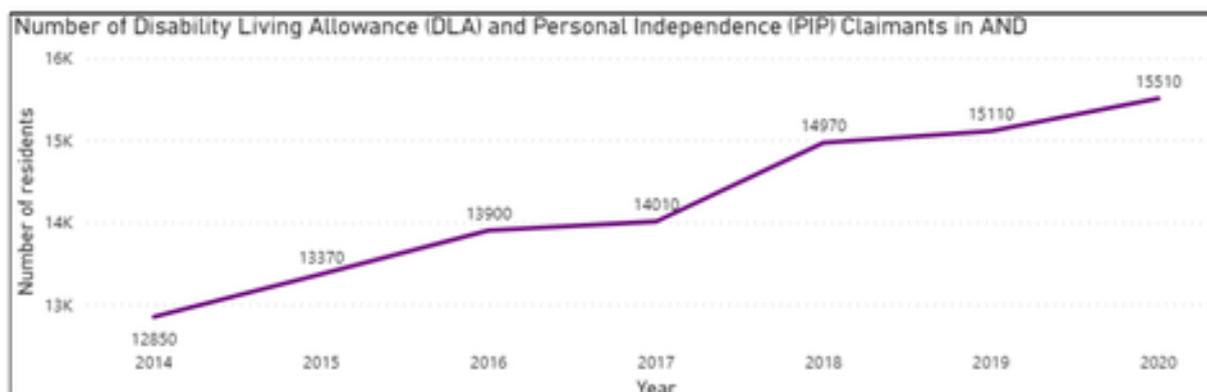
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(Source: Analytical Services Unit, Department of Education)

This set of data specific to the Ards and North Down Borough Council area needs to be taken into consideration as it affects the four section 75 groups referred to in this response.

**In terms of Disability** recent data in 2020 showed that there were 15,510 Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claimants and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claimants. There was a steady increase of claimants in AND area.

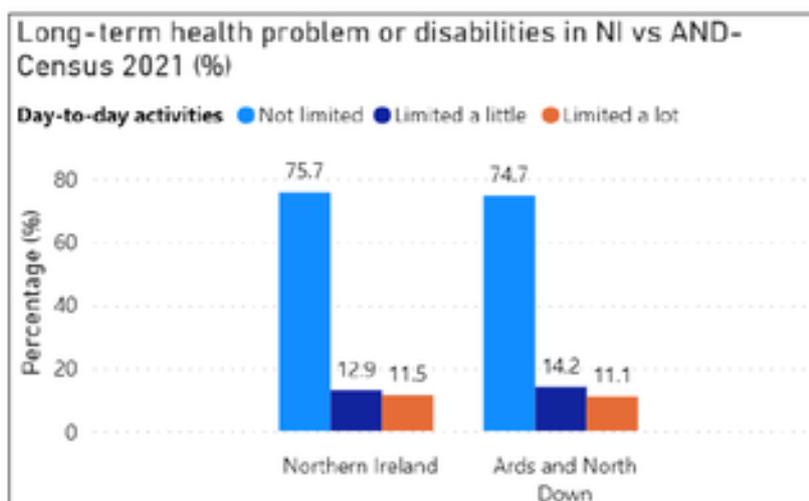


(Source: Department for Communities)

Census 2021 results showed that, on Census Day 2021, around 1 person in 4 (25.3%) in AND had a limited long-term health problem or disability (41,344 people). Looking in more detail, nearly one person in every nine (11.1%) in AND had a long-term health problem or disability which limited their day-to-day activities a lot (18,092 people). Over half of the population aged 65 or more (52.5% or 19,018 people) had a limiting long-term health problem or disability. In contrast, this falls to just 8.3% of those aged 0 to 14. The data also shows clear age gradient for the types of

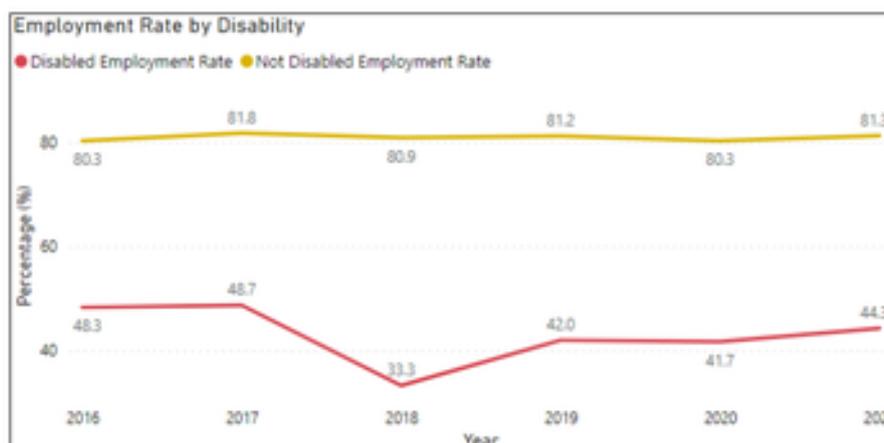
## ANDBC Response to EQiA on DfC Budget for 2023-24

limitation. The percentage of people whose day-to-day activities were limited a lot rose from 3.0% of those aged 0 to 14 years to 23.7% of those aged 65 years or more, while the percentage of people whose day-to-day activities were limited a little rose from 5.3% to 28.8%.



(Source: Census 2021, NISRA)

Data showed that only 44.3% of people with disability were employed in 2021 compared to the 81.3% of average employment rate in AND. People with disability or mental health issues are most likely to be viewed negatively as a work colleague or boss. This stigma and prejudice may impact on the sustainability of employment for people with disabilities.



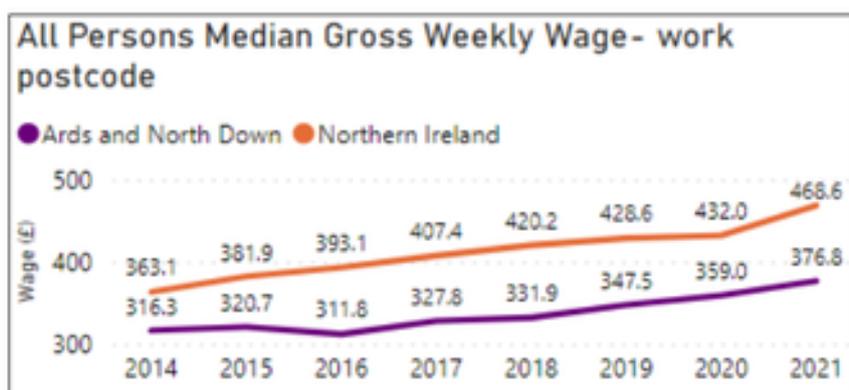
(Source: Labour Force Survey, NISRA)

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Programmes for people with disabilities are at the heart of the LMP's work programme and the above statistics demonstrate the need to deliver these initiatives with a view to ensure that the relevant groups highlighted in Section 75 are not adversely affected.

**Another set of data which is relevant to this consultation relates to the median gross salary of individuals in the Ards and North Down Borough Council area. What individuals earn is mostly related to their level of educational achievement.**

In 2021, the median gross weekly salary in NI was £468.60. However, the median weekly salary for jobs located in AND was much lower, which was £376.80. This highlights the job quality in AND, which will also link to job satisfaction. Having the right qualification and skills will benefit individuals through increased probability of being in employment and higher wages; the study showed individuals with higher levels of qualification tend to have higher wages.

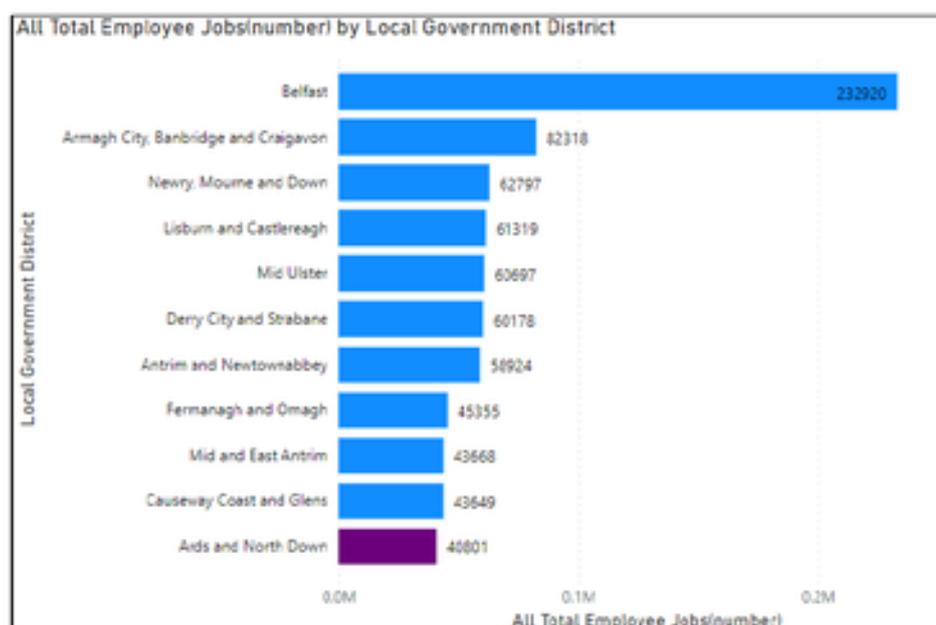


(Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, NISRA)

In 2021, there were 40,801 employee jobs in AND, this represents 0.4% increase compared to 2020. However, AND continues to have the lowest number employee jobs among all NI council areas. Around one in four (24%) of AND jobs were in public sector.

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(Source: Northern Ireland Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), NISRA)

This set of data demonstrate clearly that the intervention of the LMP through Skilled labour programmes delivered in the format of Academies can make a difference and has already made a different through the delivery of the 2022-23 action plan with individuals gaining new qualifications and gaining employment immediately after completion of these skilled labour academies.

### Potential adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q2:** Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in section 7 of the EQIA Consultation document?

*(Required – please answer only yes or no)*

**Answer: Yes**

**Q2a:** If yes was answered to Q2, what are they?

*(Please provide details below only if yes was answered to Q2. If no was answered to Q2, progress to Q3)*

**Answer:**

The response to question Q1a highlights clearly that some adverse impact in relation to the four groups referred to have not been identified (section 7 of the EQIA states: There will be adverse impacts across Section 75 groups, especially in the context of the removal of European Social Fund (ESF) funding.

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LMPs not only help those seeking work, but they are also a critical intervention to help people with a disability or health condition to remain in work.)

The ending of Step 2 Success converged with the Covid pandemic, furlough and subsequent economic and cost of living challenges currently hitting households and businesses across Northern Ireland. Ever since S2S finished European Social Fund had been available to support unemployed, economically inactive and disabled individuals within the Council area. However, these too closed on 31 March 2023.

In addition, the introduction of the UKSPF which was due to go live in April 2023 was expected to fill some of the void left by ESF; however, there are considerably less funds available, and it is suggested that there will be fewer but larger programmes delivered by regional bodies.

The Ards & North Down Council area has not been able to draw any significant funds yet from UK SPF and it is unlikely that any funds secured through that programme will hit the ground before the end of the year, leaving a significant gap in the nature and level of funding available to address the adverse impact that the cessation of the LMP activities would have in the Council area.

It has been demonstrated also through the previous section that the work of the LMP addresses issues such as economic inactivity especially for individuals between 16 and 24 years of age, the gender gap, education achievement, a better skilled labour supply, and offers opportunities for people who are under-employed and for people with a disability to upskill and contribute to the local economy.

Its work does not only allow people with disability to stay in work but to access work opportunities and to remain economically active in the long-term.

People who have been furthest removed from the labour market, and this concerns the four main groups referred to in this response, need a lot of hand-holding and mentoring which will not be delivered if the LMP does not proceed with its plans. This mentoring is crucial to these individuals to even get the confidence to start engaging with any work or skills-based opportunities.

The EQIA has mentioned young people, but not older people. Ards and North Down has the highest percentage in Northern Ireland of people aged over 65 at 22.1%. The EQIA therefore does not take into account the fact that these individuals, some of whom have consideration experience and knowledge, can contribute on a voluntary basis to some mentoring programmes aimed at helping younger people to reconnect with work and training. Additionally, there could be opportunities for these people to reskill and retrain and return to the work force, particularly in light of the cost of living crisis.

The EQIA does not address the section Men and Women and has failed to comment on the adverse effect that the proposal to withdraw funding to the LMP would have on women and single parents or people with caring responsibilities. The programmes run by the LMP, such as Academies, provide a "Barrier Removal" element which can be

## ANDBC Response to EQiA on DFC Budget for 2023-24

used by women and people with caring responsibilities to access training and employment, knowing that their dependants are being cared for professionally, freeing time for them to work or learn.

The EQiA does not address Ethnic minority groups such as newcomers from outside of Northern Ireland. In the current geo-political situation, newcomers have arrived in Northern Ireland seeking to contribute to the local community and economy. The LMP, through its work, is a vehicle to engage with potential employers and organisation to facilitate integration in the local economy.

### Potential action to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts

**Q3:** Please state what action you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts in the allocation of the Department's budget?

*Answer:*

The proposal to pause the activities of the LMPs is, as demonstrated, detrimental to mostly four groups under section 75. The LMP is a key service which protect equality of opportunities and the most vulnerable people in our Borough.

The LMP is the only body of its kind created in a true partnership spirit to support local gaps in the provision of employment support for people who are already facing disadvantage, poverty and barriers to employment and training. This is the only programme which is truly able to identify individual in all section 75 groups because of its local knowledge and insight.

The budget allocated to the LMPs in Northern Ireland represents a very small proportion of the savings that the Department proposes to make as it only represents £5 million, which is the equivalent amount for running the NHS for 2 days.

The benefit that we have noted on the ground in terms of delivery speaks for itself and proves that a very small amount of funding can have a significant effect in terms of improving and positively influencing the lives of people, especially the most vulnerable people in our Borough.

As an example, the summary of outcomes from the 22-23 LMP Plan in Ards and North Down Borough Council can be summarises as follows:

Activities	Nos. of attendees/participants
Events such as mini job fairs and the main job fair	261
Participants in activities and programmes	263 (220 completers – 84%)
Employers engaged with across all programmes	148 (target exceeded)
Work placements (part of the disability Academy)	33
Post-primary career videos produced	10
Employment	26 (12%)
New qualification	129 (59%)

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The new plan which the Ards and North Down LMP was proposing was aiming to achieve the following:

Activities	Nos. of participants/attendees
Events	270
Participants in activities and programmes including Disability academies, HGV and transport Academies, Rapid response Academies, upskilling programmes etc.	291 (231 completers)
Employers engaged with across all programmes	55
Employment	79 to gain employment or to progress in better positions
New Qualification	175

**It is therefore considered critical that the Department reviews its proposal to pause all funding which was earmarked to LMPs and allows at least a reasonable proportion of the original lower budget to be awarded to the LMP to deliver a reduced operational programme aimed at the people who would be most adversely affected, namely:**

- People of different ages (16-24)
- Men and women generally (lack of funding to break barriers to unemployment and economic inactivity)
- People with or without a disability (barriers facing people with disability when wanting to access work or training)
- People with or without dependants (Parents and Single parents, women, men seeking employment or training/upskill)

### Any further comments

**Q4:** Are there any other comments you would like to make with regard to this pro forma or the consultation process generally?

**Answer:** *Incorporated into above responses*

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### Response in relation to: Social Housing

#### Data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q1:** Are there any data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 equality categories that have not been identified in Section 6 of the EQiA consultation document?

*(Required – please answer only yes or no)*

**Answer: YES**

#### Potential adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q2:** Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in section 7 of the EQiA Consultation document?

*(Required – please answer only yes or no)*

**Answer: YES**

**Q2a:** If yes was answered to Q2, what are they?

*(Please provide details below only if yes was answered to Q2. If no was answered to Q2, progress to Q3)*

**Answer:** *The Department published its Intermediate Rent Policy in March 2023. Paragraph 21 of the policy document states, "The Department for Communities intends to separately provide financial support towards the development and letting of Intermediate Rent homes."*

*However, there is no mention of funding for Intermediate Rent homes in the EqIA consultation document. Co-ownership is the only intermediate housing product mentioned in the document. To row back from funding Intermediate Rent homes would adversely impact many across the Section 75 groups, just as the budgetary pressures exacerbate the financial situations of many, thereby raising demand for affordable housing options.*

#### Potential action to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts

**Q3:** Please state what action you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts in the allocation of the Department's budget?

**Answer:** *Affordable Housing Policies set out in Councils' Local Development Plans (LDP) offer greater opportunity to provide a mechanism for delivery of affordable housing units (social and intermediate). However, social housing starts are set to*

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*reduce under the 2023-2024 budget. It is uncertain how cuts to the DfC budget will impact upon the funding available to developers to develop social housing.*

*Legislative changes to allow Registered Housing Associations to develop and rent Intermediate Rented homes may assist in increasing the affordable housing stock without requiring the same degree of capital spend from the Department.*

### **Any further comments**

**Q4:** Are there any other comments you would like to make with regard to this pro forma or the consultation process generally?

**Answer:** *The format of consulting solely on the equality impacts constrains wider comment on how cuts will exacerbate inequality and disproportionately affect the most vulnerable in society across the board.*

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### Response in relation to: Arms Length Bodies

#### Data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q1:** Are there any data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 equality categories that have not been identified in Section 6 of the EQiA consultation document?

*(Required – please answer only yes or no)*

**Answer: Yes**

#### Potential adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q2:** Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in section 7 of the EQiA Consultation document?

*(Required – please answer only yes or no)*

**Answer: Yes**

**Q2a:** If yes was answered to Q2, what are they?

*(Please provide details below only if yes was answered to Q2. If no was answered to Q2, progress to Q3)*

**Answer:**

*Although Section 75 categories are noted, there is no direct reference to types of service users beyond individuals.*

*Businesses will be impacted by the reduction in support to third parties via reductions in budget to ALBs such as Arts Council NI, National Museums NI and USEL.*

*Direct impacts within ANDBC are relevant to the 'knock on' impact of Festivals such as Open House, the Ulster Folk Museum and the Ulster Transport Museum and the operating model currently in place with the delivery of ancillary café/visitor facilities provided by USEL via a SLA at Ballycopeland Windmill (a recently regenerated visitor/heritage attraction to stimulate the visitor economy in the Ards Peninsula).*

*If all or some of the above have budgets cut the development and progress to encourage visitors into the area, alongside providing cultural and heritage benefits locally (volunteering as a sustainable support mechanism as added benefit to community) will be diminished. Regenerative tourism will be hindered – a policy currently in development in another Department (DfE).*

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### Potential action to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts

**Q3:** Please state what action you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts in the allocation of the Department's budget?

*Answer:*

*Prioritise budgets in line with investment/success/outputs delivered and projected.*

### Any further comments

**Q4:** Are there any other comments you would like to make with regard to this pro forma or the consultation process generally?

*Answer: No*



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**Budget 2023-24**  
**Equality Impact Assessment**  
**Public Consultation**

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May 2023

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## 1. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

1.1 Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 requires the Department of Infrastructure (hereinafter referred to as 'the Department'), in carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- people with different religious beliefs;
- people from different racial groups;
- people of different ages;
- people with different marital status;
- people with different sexual orientations;
- men and women generally;
- people with or without a disability;
- people with or without dependants; and
- people with different political opinions.

1.2 In addition, but without prejudice to the duty above, the Department should also have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people with different religious beliefs, different political opinions or from different racial groups.

1.3 The Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006, which came into effect on 1 January 2007, introduced new duties requiring all public authorities in carrying out their functions having due regard to the need to:

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

1.4 Equality scheme commitments require public authorities to determine if there are any impacts on equality of opportunity and if there are opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity between people within the Section 75 equality categories. Where screening would not be an adequate means of gathering the information that is needed to assess the relevant equality impacts or opportunities, the public authority should proceed to do an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA).

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1.5 In light of this, an equality impact assessment will be carried out on the 2023-24 Resource Budget, given the level of decisions required to seek to manage within the budget provided, and the Department's lack of robust data to determine impacts on the S75 groups. This document is therefore the prepared draft EQIA.

1.6 The purpose of this document is to record the findings of the EQIA and invite comments.

1.7 The DfI Budget 2023-24 screening document and other relevant screening documents will be available on the website shortly.

1.8 To request an alternative format please contact:

Financial Planning & Management Team  
Department for Infrastructure  
12-18 Adelaide Street  
BELFAST  
BT2 8GB  
Telephone: 028 90540472  
Email: [budget@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:budget@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

## 2. Equality Impact Assessment

2.1 The process of setting Budgets can in some cases have an unintentionally greater impact on some specific Section 75 groups than others, for example, on males, females, young or older people, etc. In distributing the resource budget, the Department aims to avoid any adverse impacts and where possible, action will be taken to mitigate against specific adverse impacts.

2.2 To comply with its Section 75 obligations, the Department, following an equality screening, is carrying out an EQIA on the Department's Resource Budget 2023-24 provided to the Department by the Secretary of State.

2.3 The primary function of an EQIA is to assess whether policy proposals would have a differential impact and, an adverse differential impact on the categories of persons listed in Section 75, and any subgroups within those categories.

2.4 When conducting an EQIA, the Department acts in accordance with the guidance published by the Equality Commission in April 2001 (revised 2005) which recommends that there should be seven steps in the EQIA process:

**Step 1** Defining the aims of the policy.

**Step 2** Consideration of available data and research.

**Step 3** Assessment of impacts.

**Step 4** Consideration of measures which may mitigate any adverse impact and alternative policies which may better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity.

**Step 5** Formal consultation.

**Step 6** Decision and publication of the EQIA results.

**Step 7** Monitoring for adverse impact.

2.5 In response to this, the Department has examined a number of potential scenarios for its 2023-24 Budget allocation and, given potential for adverse impacts across Section 75 groups, has prepared a draft EQIA for consultation, in order to collate

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views from interested stakeholders. This document is the draft of the EQIA prior to incorporating the outcomes of a public consultation.

2.6 As the capital budget will not likely lead to decisions to stop services, only delaying or pausing schemes for future years, an equality screening is not yet required.

### 3. Policy Aim

#### Resource Budget 2023-24

3.1 The Secretary of State provided NI Departments with 2023-24 budgets on 27 April 2023, through his Written Ministerial Statement – see link provided below.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-04-27/hcws748>

3.2 The budget set by the Secretary of State is presented at an overall departmental outcome level. Therefore, it is for each Department to allocate its budget across its spending areas. In the absence of a Minister, the Permanent Secretary will make budget decisions which are within their power to make under the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation Etc) Act 2022, which can be viewed at:

[Northern Ireland \(Executive Formation etc\) Act 2022 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/12/section/1)

3.3 Following budget decisions these will be implemented by: business areas within the Department; Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs); and other Arms Length Bodies (ALBs).

3.4 Departments are required to screen proposed budget decisions in line with Equality Commission Northern Ireland guidance and should an EQIA be required, this will be published to support the consultation process.

3.5 The purpose of this paper is to set out the Department's initial assessment of the equality impacts of the 2023-24 Resource Budget on its public services.

#### The Department for Infrastructure

3.6 The Department for Infrastructure is responsible for the maintenance, development and planning of critical infrastructure in Northern Ireland. Through its focus on water, transport and planning, the Department is seeking to manage and protect over £30 bn of public assets that improve people's quality of life, reduce our impact on the planet by living sustainability and decarbonising key services, and building prosperity by driving inclusive productivity.

3.7 The Department has an extensive and wide-ranging remit. Its responsibilities are grouped into three key service delivery areas: Water; Transport; and Planning.

## Water

- 3.8 Having access to good water and wastewater infrastructure is essential for citizens across Northern Ireland who need a reliable supply of clean and safe drinking water and to be able to live and work in areas where flood risk is appropriately managed.
- 3.9 Manufacturing, farming, tourism and recreation need fit for purpose water and wastewater infrastructure to operate and grow and our homes, schools, hospitals and businesses need this to function properly and more sustainably. The Department is responsible for water, wastewater and drainage policy across Northern Ireland as well as the sponsorship of Northern Ireland Water (NIW).
- 3.10 NIW is the statutory water and sewerage undertaker for Northern Ireland. It is an arm's length body (ALB) of the Department and a Government Company under the Companies Act 2006 with the Department as sole shareholder.
- 3.11 Delivery of safe, clean drinking water underpins the public health and economy of Northern Ireland. It costs around £680m each year to deliver these water services in Northern Ireland. NIW is funded through government subsidy, revenue raised by NIW through non-domestic charging and through borrowing. NIW provides 605m litres of drinking water every day to 900k households and businesses and recycles wastewater from homes and businesses before safely returning it to the rivers and sea. NIW is committed to a more sustainable approach to wastewater treatment and has deployed a number of innovative approaches such as lower energy technologies and nature-based solutions.
- 3.12 The Department is also responsible for the management of flood risk which includes the maintenance of our river and sea defences, construction of flood alleviation schemes, informing development decisions and developing flood maps. Approximately 5% of properties (45,000) here are in areas at risk from flooding, which is set to increase by 33% to 59,800 when 2080 climate change projections are taken into consideration. Given the growing risk to public safety from flooding, the Department is seeking to accelerate investment in our flood risk management infrastructure and expertise to, amongst other requirements,

bring approximately 95 km of failing flood defence assets up to required standards whilst also developing new flood alleviation schemes.

3.13 As the lead government department for the strategic co-ordination of the emergency response to severe weather events; including flooding, emergency planning and processes are developed in conjunction with our multi-agency partners.

3.14 The Department also sponsors Waterways Ireland, one of six North-South Implementation Bodies, to promote the recreational and navigational use of our waterways. Waterways Ireland is responsible for the management, maintenance, development and restoration of inland navigable waterways primarily for recreational purposes.

### **Transport**

3.15 The Department is responsible for the oversight and facilitation of surface transport in Northern Ireland. The main tools available for the delivery of the Department's transport vision are the development of Transport Policy, the management of the Road Network Asset (including the promotion of road safety) and providing funding and sponsorship of Translink which delivers the vast majority of the public transport network under a Public Service Agreement.

3.16 The Department is developing a new Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) which will set out the Department's vision for the transport system in Northern Ireland, placing climate change and connecting people at its heart. The RTS will signal the future direction of transport, provide the context in which decisions, within and beyond government, will be made and set out the strategic framework for future transport investment decisions. It will recognise the different needs of our cities, towns, remote and rural areas and consider why we travel and how those trips are made.

3.17 The RTS will form the basis for the first Transport Sectoral Plan required by the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 which is one of the primary drivers of the strategy. Delivering a net-zero transport sector will require policies, investment and

delivery interventions focusing on reducing journeys, delivering modal shift and switching to zero carbon fuels.

3.18 We are responsible for the management and maintenance of our road network asset, which is worth over £30bn and includes over 26,000km of roads; 9,700km of footways; 5,800 bridges; 290,000 streetlights. Management and maintenance work is heavily safety focussed and includes frontline services such as gritting, pothole repair, ensuring that gullies are kept clear of debris, as well as bridge and traffic signal repair.

3.19 The Department also sponsors the NI Transport Holding Company (NITHC) which is the parent company of Northern Ireland's only publicly owned bus and rail company, Translink. We are responsible for ensuring the delivery of the Strangford ferry and the management of the Rathlin ferry. The Department also supports a range of community transport services in rural and urban areas and administers the Commercial Bus Service Permit scheme. The Department also has responsibility for some aspects of the governance of Trust Ports and has limited involvement in the development of airports.

3.20 The Department has a number of key responsibilities to provide access to safe and accessible travel. For this to happen we have a statutory responsibility to promote good road safety, reduce road fatalities and people being injured on our roads. We also have a responsibility to expand our Active Travel infrastructure to support active and sustainable modes of travel like walking and cycling.

3.21 Another key part of our work in relation to public safety for road users is delivered through the Department's only agency - the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) which contributes to road safety, law enforcement and a cleaner environment by promoting compliance of drivers, vehicles and transport operators through testing, licensing, enforcement and education.

### **Planning**

3.22 Planning services provided by the Department and through Local Government seek to shape how Northern Ireland looks and functions, both now and for future generations. The Department's role is to guide the planning system, working with its partners in local government which is responsible for 99% of planning

decisions. Planning policies provide the context for enabling people to live, work and play in inclusive, well-planned communities, whilst ensuring that our planet is protected and that any development taking place is modern and sustainable and allows us to create jobs and grow our economy.

3.23 We are responsible for setting the strategic direction of the planning system and production of regional policy for land use planning. We also develop planning legislation and process a small number of regionally significant planning applications and those applications which may be 'called in', along with having a statutory consultee role for roads and rivers, to provide specialist advice in relation to the consideration of planning applications by councils.

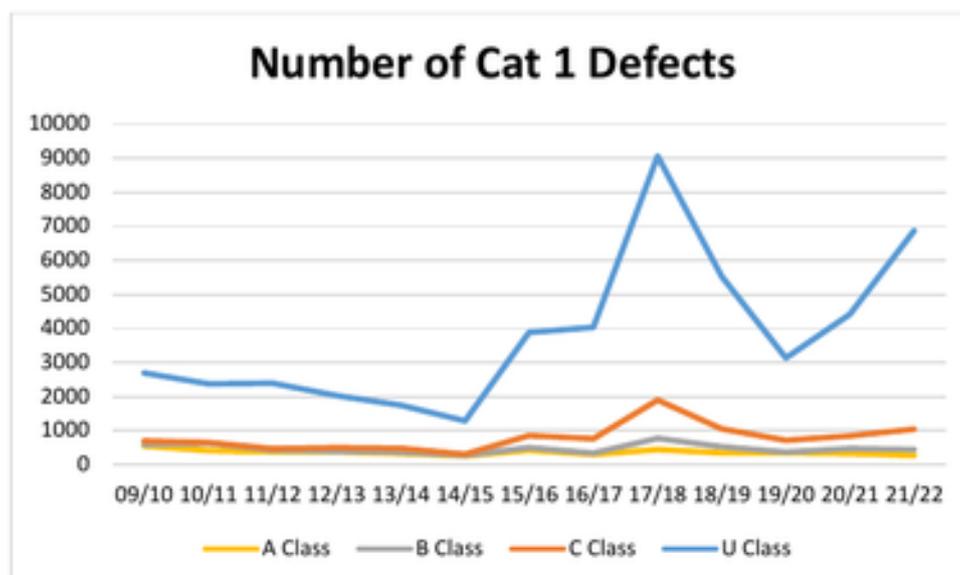
3.24 The Department works together with the councils in managing the two-tier planning system and has a statutory consultee and an oversight role in the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDPs) which set out councils' long-term visions, objectives and growth over the plan period. The Department, with local government and stakeholders, is also taking forward an important Planning Improvement Programme. An interim Regional Planning Commission has been established to provide advice and support to that work. The programme for change and improvement focuses on work areas including legislation, planning policy, performance and process improvements in Local Government and for regional applications.

3.25 We also have a regeneration role in relation to the Crumlin Road Gaol, Belfast and have ownership of lands at the former St Lucia Barracks, Omagh.

## 4. Resource Budget 2023-24

### Background

- 4.1 The Department is responsible for 26,000km of roads, 10,000km of footways, 5,800 bridges, 290,000 streetlights, 100km of fluvial (river) and 26km of coastal flood defences, 364km of culverts and associated infrastructure. This equates to over £30bn of vital public assets that need to be managed and maintained. There has been a historic reliance on in-year funding through monitoring rounds to provide essential public services in relation to water, transport and planning as the opening baseline budget has historically been insufficient to meet a basic level of service before any 'discretionary' activity can be undertaken.
- 4.2 This means that important areas of work are not progressed as they should be, such as bridge, road and rivers inspections, adoption of new housing developments, remedial works and safety improvements. Investment in new infrastructure projects, including those that provide more opportunities for active travel and for modal shift away from private cars, is also constrained. In recent years, the impact of construction inflation and other new costs for the delivery of services, including for water and wastewater treatment and public transport, has created further challenge to the available budget.
- 4.3 Core public services of essential road maintenance (potholes, gully emptying, road markings, etc), and public transport have been particularly impacted by funding reductions for several years. By way of example, road maintenance has been underfunded since August 2014 and as a result, the Department has had to operate a 'limited service', meaning only the highest priority defects are currently being repaired. This has led to a general and continuing deterioration of the road network, which brings with it a greater risk to the safety of road users. The graph below demonstrates the increase in category 1 road defects since the introduction of a limited service in 2015.



Note: The decrease in 2018-19 and 2019-20 was due to a change in the Department's repair policy moving from DEM 160/17 to DEM 160/18, which included Cat 2 defects being repaired, decreasing the number of outstanding defects for a period.

- 4.4 The impact of the budget provided to the Department to provide public services, particularly in 2022-23 as a result of energy costs and inflation has also led to significant financial pressures for Translink, the main public transport provider. In 2022-23, Translink maintained the public transport network at its current level by drawing on reserves but there is now no capacity for this to continue into 2023-24.
- 4.5 The Executive's current policy is to provide subsidy in lieu of domestic water charges. In previous years, there was chronic underfunding for water and wastewater services, with funding levels below the levels determined independently by the Utility Regulator as necessary to ensure an efficient and affordable delivery of water and sewerage services. In 2021-22, the Executive agreed to fund NI Water to the level recommended by the Regulator as set out in the PC21 Final Determination which was based on 2018-19 prices. Since the Final Determination was agreed, the financial outlook has changed considerably due to the unprecedented increase in energy costs and inflation.
- 4.6 The Department has identified a resource requirement of £690.9m for 2023-24 to provide its public services to a standard level. This is a significant increase from the 2022-23 budget of £521.2m, which is largely due to the use of Translink's reserves as a one-off action which cannot be repeated in 2023-24, along with continued high energy prices and inflation, and implementing a standard

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maintenance programme for essential road asset maintenance and flood risk management. Therefore, even with a protected baseline position, there would have to be substantial reductions in core public services.

4.7 The Department's forecast 2023-24 resource requirements are detailed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: 2023-24 Forecasted Resource Requirements**

	<b>£m</b>
<b>ALBs:</b>	
NI Water	218.5
Translink	150.9
DVA	5.8
Waterways Ireland	4.5
<b>Department:</b>	
Transport and Road Asset Management	234
Climate, Planning and Public Transport	30.6
Water and Departmental Delivery	46.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>690.9</b>

4.8 The 2023-24 resource budget provided to the Department, £523.4m, when comparing to the 2022-23 resource budget shows at face value a 0.4% increase. However, the 2023-24 allocation to DfI does not recognise the necessary steps taken in 2022-23 to balance a budget, including the one-off decision to use Translink's reserves to help maintain services. Taking that into account means DfI is now facing a 14% cut in its resource budget compared on a like for like basis with last year. This is before the additional funding which is needed to meet energy and inflation costs to front line services in 2023-24. Therefore, when set against the Department's 2023-24 forecast requirements £167m of savings are required to seek to manage within the resource budget provided.

4.9 In light of the extremely challenging financial position the department has already taken decisions to reduce expenditure and raise revenue, including:

- Increasing Translink fares;
- Increasing on-street car park charges in Belfast, Lisburn and Newry;
- Increasing non-domestic water and sewerage charges (approved by the Utility Regulator);

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- Increasing Rathlin Ferry fares;
- Continuing to deliver limited essential road maintenance service (meaning only the highest priority defects get repaired – for example the deepest pot holes or issues on more highly trafficked roads) and flood management services (which includes clearing blockages in rivers);
- Reducing expenditure on day to day administrative costs;
- Reducing 'discretionary' spend in a number of areas including road safety programmes;
- Significant staff vacancy control; and
- Additional savings being delivered by Translink and NIW.

Following these decisions the Department is left with a remaining funding gap of £112m.

4.10 Given this funding position, the Permanent Secretary is considering further actions, including; reducing already limited day to day expenditure across the Department; ceasing road safety advertising and other road safety schemes for the second year; ceasing the Active School Travel programme; ceasing support for planning advice that is provided through a grant to Community Places, and reducing maintenance at Crumlin Road Gaol.

4.11 The Department's Arm's Length Bodies, including NI Water and Translink will also be required to make significant cuts to live within their budget allocations and the Department will be working closely with them on the service impacts.

4.12 Whilst final decisions have yet to be taken, over the course of the year the options available to the department to reduce the remaining resource spend involve scenarios that include:

- A reduction in Public transport provision;
- Impacts on water and wastewater services;
- Road maintenance and flood risk management operational activities are reduced to emergency-only services;
- Community transport services not funded;
- Streetlights switched off; and

- No road gritting service provided this winter.

4.13 These remaining options are not within the power of the Permanent Secretary to take under the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation Etc.) Act 2022. While the Department is still considering equality implications through the screening process, the relevant screening forms relating to potential service reductions will be published on the Department's website in the coming weeks. Early indications are that these proposals may have negative impacts on older and disabled people in particular.

## 5. Consideration of Available Data and Research

5.1 In assessing the impact of the 2023-24 Resource Budget policy against obligation under Section 75 of the 1998 Act the Department concludes that there is evidence of some differential impact in respect of some Section 75 categories.

5.2 Impacts have been considered against the backdrop of available data, as derived from:

- 2011 and 2021 Census;
- NISRA statistics;
- Number of SmartPass holders;
- Community Transport data;
- PSNI road traffic statistics;
- Continuous Household Survey; and
- Travel Survey 2017 – 2019, 2020 and 2021.

However, the Department also concluded that there is not enough sufficient robust data to determine significant and adverse impact on all S75 groups.

5.3 The services provided by the Department are generally universal in nature and provide benefit to all citizens across Northern Ireland. It is therefore difficult to assess how significant and adverse the impact of service reductions on Section 75 groups. The Department will seek to gather further information on potential impacts through this consultation.

## 6. Assessment of Impacts

6.1 As the services provided by the Department are generally universal in nature and are for the benefit of all citizens in Northern Ireland it is difficult to assess the significant and adverse impact of potential service reductions for each Section 75 group. Potential adverse equality impacts are unknown as there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment. It is therefore considered appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them.

### Religious Belief

6.2 Whilst the Department has no specific data to determine the impact of the overall budget on this group the 2021 Census breakdown of religious belief in NI showed that 44% of the population are Protestant, 46% Catholic, 1% other religions and 9% no religion.

6.3 Data from the 2016-2018 Travel Survey for Northern Ireland shows there are no differences between Protestants and Catholics when considering the percentage of journeys by walking, cycling or public transport. Those who are other/none/refused to answer were more likely to make journeys using those travel modes.

In the absence of more robust data outside of that above it is difficult to determine the impact(s) on this group of the Department's 2023-24 budget allocation.

### Political Opinion

6.4 Whilst the Department has no specific data to determine the impact of the overall budget on this group, there has been a historical tendency for voting preferences to closely reflect the religious affiliations of the population. NISRA statistics for first preference votes in the 2022 NI Assembly Election showed 42% unionist, 42% nationalist and 16% other. This implies that any issues and differentials identified in relation to people of different religion may also impact on people of different political opinion.

6.5 In Census 2021, 814,600 people (42.8%) living here identified solely or along with other national identities as 'British'. This is down from 876,600 people (48.4%) in 2011. The Census also found, 634,600 people (33.3%) living here identified solely or along with other national identities as 'Irish'. This is up from 513,400 people

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(28.4%) in 2011. In Census 2021, 598,800 people (31.5%) living here identified solely or along with other national identities as 'Northern Irish'. This is up from 533,100 people (29.4%) in 2011. In the absence of more robust data outside of that above it is difficult to determine the impact(s) on this group of the Department's 2023-24 budget allocation.

### Racial Group

6.6 Whilst the Department has no specific data to determine the impact of the overall budget on this group, the 2021 Census recorded that 3.5% (66,600) people were from ethnic minority groups. There is no robust data to determine impact on this group.

### Age

6.7 The Department provides benefit to all citizens across NI. The 2021 census indicated that 17% of the 1.9m people resident in Northern Ireland are aged 65 and over. The 2021 Census indicated that the population aged 60 and over was 439,600 persons. Based on this, 40% of those aged 60+ were actively using their SmartPass in 2022-23, which has decreased significantly from 2019-20 when 53% of those aged 60+ actively used their SmartPass.

6.8 In a normal year, older people make up approximately 20% of Metro passengers, 16% of NIR passengers and 13% of Ulsterbus passengers which equates to an overall 16% of Translink's normal 84m annual passenger journeys. This evidence is based on the journeys taken by people over 60 years old who hold concessionary fare passes. This overall percentage is representative of the percentage of older people in Northern Ireland which is almost 17% of the population here based on NISRA population statistics.

6.9 Translink carries around 80k school children to school every day, representing just over 20% (16m journeys) of its total 2019-20 passenger journeys. This is comparable with NISRA population statistics indicating that those aged up to 15, make up almost 21% of the NI population.

- 6.10 The 2021 Travel Survey for Northern Ireland data also shows that young people (both 0-15 and 16-24) were more likely to make a higher percentage of journeys by walking, cycling or public transport than other age groups.
- 6.11 Older people are the main users of the grant funded Community Transport services in 2022-23, Dial-a-Lift (52%), the Disability Action Transport Scheme (46% of new members) and Shopmobility (47%). This highlights the importance of these services to those aged over 60.
- 6.12 Road fatalities for 2021-22 were 45 compared to 61 for 2022-23. In 2021 nearly half (48%) of all people killed or seriously injured in road collisions were aged 34 or under; therefore, cuts to road safety may impact disproportionately on younger people.
- 6.13 Major potential impacts have been identified as a result of potential reductions to public transport and community transport. Older people, who normally make up approximately 20% of Metro passengers, 16% of NIR passengers and 13% of Ulsterbus passengers, and 57% of community transport users, require a service level to meet their normal daily needs which may include access to shops, friends and community facilities as well access to health and care services.

### Marital Status

- 6.14 The Department provides benefit to all citizens across NI. Whilst the Department has no specific data to determine the impact of the overall budget on this group, in 2021 there were 7,921 marriages in Northern Ireland.
- 6.15 The 2016-2018 Travel Survey for Northern Ireland data shows that compared to those who are married or in a civil partnership, single people were likely to make a higher percentage of journeys by walking, cycling or public transport. Similarly, those who are divorced or widowed were also more likely to use these travel modes than married people.

### Sexual Orientation

6.16 The Department provides benefit to all citizens across NI. Whilst the Department has no specific data to determine the impact of the overall budget on this group, the Continuous Household Survey 2022 records 0.7% of participants as gay/lesbian, 0.6% bisexual, 0.3% Other, 1% undetermined and 97.3% heterosexual. There is no robust data to determine impact on this group.

### Men & Women generally

6.17 The Department provides benefit to all citizens across NI. Whilst the Department has no specific data to determine the impact of the overall budget on this group, of the responses to the Travel Survey 2017 – 2019 there were 5,266 respondents interviewed of which 2,462 (47%) were male and 2,805 (53%) female. Men tended to cycle more than women therefore active travel spend promoting cycling may benefit men more.

6.18 NISRA population statistics indicate that men and women make up roughly equal parts of NI's 1.9m population. The NISRA, 2019, Travel Survey for Northern Ireland In-depth Report 2016-2018 showed there is little difference in how frequently men and women use public transport, but like the rest of the UK, men tend to travel further distances than women on all forms of transport.

6.19 The Gender Equality Strategy Expert Advisory Panel Report also notes that greater dependence on public transport puts women at an economic disadvantage to men and highlights cost and availability of public transport services (in rural areas in particular) as a barrier to women's participation in society and civic life. The Department's Audit also highlights that safety and perceptions of safety against gender-based crime on public transport is more of a barrier to use of public transport for women than men. The Audit also notes that women are also more likely to have care-giving responsibilities that can necessitate multiple short journeys during a day. The Audit highlights that the typical "hub and spoke" design of public transport systems which may present

challenges to these travel patterns. This may also have implications for general affordability and development of suitable ticketing options.

6.20 Women tended to use grant funded Community Transport services in 2022-23 more than men, Dial-a-Lift (69%), the Disability Action Transport Scheme (61% of new members) and Shopmobility (58%). This highlights the importance of these services to women.

6.21 PSNI Road Fatalities statistics shows that of the 45 people killed on Northern Ireland's roads in 2021-22, 39 were male and 6 were female. Males tend to be more likely to hold a driving licence when compared to females.

### Disability

6.22 The 2021 Census indicates that nearly 45% of households in Northern Ireland with one or more people in the household with a disability (40% for 2011).

6.23 In the DfI Travel Survey, 19% of respondents said they had some difficulty with travel due to a physical disability or long-standing health problem. There was no real difference between males and females except in the 70+ age group: more women aged 70+ had difficulty with travel (48%) than men aged 70+ (36%). Difficulty with travel due to a physical disability or long-standing health problem increases with age: 6% of 16-29 year olds had difficulty with travel compared to 42% of those aged 70 and over.

6.24 NISRA statistics show that 21% of adults in Northern Ireland are classed as having a disability.

6.25 Any reductions to public transport would disproportionately impact on individuals with a disability as these are key users of these services. People with a disability are key users of the grant funded Community Transport services in 2022/23, and Shopmobility (100%). A key condition of membership of the Disability Action Transport Scheme is that an individual finds it difficult or impossible to use

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mainstream public transport. This highlights the importance of these services to those aged over 60.

Dependants

6.26 The Department provides benefit to all citizens across NI. There is no robust data to determine impact on this group.

## **7. Consideration of Mitigations / Alternative Policies**

- 7.1 The impact of the Resource Budget for 2023-24 on the Department is extremely challenging with the Department facing the most unpalatable decisions to seek to manage its spending.
- 7.2 In developing options to live within the 2023-24 resource budget allocation, consideration will be given to how any adverse impacts on Section 75 groups can be reduced. It would, however, be difficult to mitigate the potential adverse impacts anticipated, given the scale of funding the Department requires to deliver its public services. Where options for reductions have been identified, separate screenings are being completed and will be available on the Department's website in the coming weeks.
- 7.3 The Department is seeking comments on any potential equality implications arising from the Resource Budget for 2023-24 and will consider the need for any further mitigating actions in light of responses received during the consultation. Promotion of equality of opportunity and the protection of services to vulnerable groups will be a key consideration in the Department's final Budget decisions.

## 8. Consultation, Publication and Decision

- 8.1 The Department is committed to seeking the views of those who are affected by the decisions that it will make in relation to its budget reductions. We are keen to hear from individuals and organisations about their views on the equality implication of the decisions being made and about any mitigations that the Department could put in place to address what will undoubtedly be the adverse impacts of a reduction of this size.
- 8.2 Decisions around the budget reductions need to be made urgently. This is so they can be implemented in time to take effect over as much of the financial year as possible; and so that services that depend on our funding can make the necessary plans as soon as possible.
- 8.3 Therefore, given the urgent need to provide certainty of funding to business areas, ALBs, and organisations who depend on our funding, the Department will consult over a four-week period. Views received during this time will be used to inform the Department's allocation of funds to its business areas as well as any early mitigations that can be put in place. Any responses received between weeks 5 and 12 of this consultation will be used to consider further mitigation measures, to inform in-year budget reallocation processes if those are put in place during 2023-24, and to direct any additional funding (or further reductions) that emerge over the course of the financial year.
- 8.4 The Department would welcome your views on the equality impacts of the Department's 2023-24 Resource Budget. Initial screening assessments within the Department indicate that the following decisions require an Equality Impact Assessment and should be considered as part of this budget consultation:
- o Reduction/Cessation of wastewater treatment;
  - o Reduction of essential road maintenance to emergency response only;
  - o Streetlights are switched off (subject to a public consultation);
  - o Reduction to Concessionary Fares Scheme (subject to a public consultation); and

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- o Community transport (Rural 'Dial a Lift', Urban 'Disability Action Transport Service' and Shopmobility services) is not funded beyond 30 June.

All relevant screening documents will be available on the Department's website in the coming weeks.

8.5 The Department welcomes comment on any aspects of this document. Interested parties are encouraged to make responses by **12 June 2023**, which will be used to inform the Department's allocation of 2023-24 funds. Any further consultation responses received between 12 June 2023 to 7 August 2023 will be used to inform further mitigation measures and reallocation of any additional funding available during 2023-24.

8.6 Further consultations and equality screening will be considered, as appropriate, as plans to live within Budget 2023-24 allocation are considered during the year.

## 9. Monitoring

9.1 In keeping with this Department's commitments under its Equality Scheme, any adverse differential impact on equality of opportunity or good relations that may be identified through this consultation process will be taken into account in informing the Department's Resource Budget 2023-24 distribution for services. Any such findings will be used to inform further development of mitigations, revised Budget distributions and in-year bids.

## 10. Confidentiality

10.1 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public the right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided in response to this consultation, including information about identity, should be made public or treated as confidential.

10.2 This means that information provided in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature; and
- acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

10.3 For further information regarding confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office at:

Information Commissioner's Office – Northern Ireland

3rd Floor 14 Cromac Place

Belfast BT7 2JB

Telephone: 028 9027 8757 / 0303 123 1114

Email: [ni@ico.org.uk](mailto:ni@ico.org.uk)

Website: <http://www.ico.org.uk>

## 11. Consultation Questions

11.1 Given the constrained financial position and the growing demand, DfI public services are facing significant challenges going forward.

11.2 In consulting on the Department's 2023-24 Budget allocations views are welcomed on the following:

1. Are there any data needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 equality categories that have not been identified in Section 5 and 6 of the EQIA consultation document? If so, what are they? Please provide details?
2. Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in section 6 of the EQIA Consultation document? If so, what are they?
3. Please state what action you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts in seeking to manage the Department's resource budget?
4. Are there any other comments you would like to make in regard to the consultation process generally?

11.3 Comments on the DfI budget and equality impacts can be submitted via email to:

[Budget@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Budget@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

11.4 The Department welcomes comment on any aspects of this document. Interested parties are encouraged to make responses by **12 June 2023**, which will be used to inform the Department's allocation of 2023-24 funds. Any further consultation responses received between 12 June 2023 to 7 August 2023 will be used to inform further mitigation measures and reallocation of any additional funding available during 2023-24.

**The final deadline for responses is 7 August 2023.**

## ANDBC Response to EQiA on DfI Budget for 2023-24

168

### Response in relation to: Road maintenance and street lighting

#### Data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q1:** Are there any data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 equality categories that have not been identified in Section 6 of the EQIA consultation document?

**Answer:** Yes

#### Potential adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q2:** Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in section 7 of the EQIA Consultation document? *(Required – please answer only yes or no)*

**Answer:** Yes

**Q2a:** If yes was answered to Q2, what are they?

**Answer:**

*Although Section 75 categories are noted, there is no direct reference to types of service users beyond individuals. Reduction in road maintenance and street lighting will likely impact the 'quality' of offering available to not only citizens but also visitors. Regional dispersal is a requirement to grow the revenue generated by tourism in NI, poor road maintenance will slow the growth of any potential increase in this area, which is contrary to investment currently being made in the Regional City Deals.*

*Opportunities to lever new investment into rural areas will likely be diminished if good road infrastructure is not maintained/extended.*

*Poor or non-existent street lighting may potentially lead to 'unsafe' or inaccessible facilities for tourists - leading to reduction in spend and no growth in night time economy.*

#### Potential action to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts

**Q3:** Please state what action you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts in the allocation of the Department's budget?

**Answer:**

*Prioritise scheduling of road maintenance for urban to rural areas and gathering data on impacts of reductions on activity as mentioned on the economy – businesses and impacts.*

## ANDBC Response to EQiA on Dfl Budget for 2023-24

### Any further comments

**Q4:** Are there any other comments you would like to make with regard to this pro forma or the consultation process generally?

**Answer:** *No*

## ANDBC Response to EQiA on DfI Budget for 2023-24

170

### Response in relation to: Water

#### Data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q1:** Are there any data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 equality categories that have not been identified in Section 6 of the EQiA consultation document?

**Answer:** Yes

#### Potential adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q2:** Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in section 7 of the EQiA Consultation document? *(Required – please answer only yes or no)*

**Answer:** Yes

**Q2a:** If yes was answered to Q2, what are they?

**Answer:**

*Although Section 75 categories are noted, there is no direct reference to types of service users beyond individuals. Reduction in flood management and maintenance/impacts on water/waste services for either existing small or large tourism business will be apparent.*

*Flood management is a requirement to protect existing coastal tourism/visitor businesses and attractions. Rising water levels are a consideration in longer term planning and adaptations as well as mitigations are required to protect and preserve assets. e.g. Mount Stewart House and Gardens.*

*Small tourism businesses need good water and waste services to operate and compete.*

*Water and waste services are essential to protect coastal waters and ensure good water quality is available for all users e.g. popularity of outdoor water leisure pursuits and swimming.*

#### Potential action to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts

**Q3:** Please state what action you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts in the allocation of the Department's budget?

**Answer:**

*Prioritise scheduling of maintenance and preserve existing new in rural/coastal 'in need' areas and gather data on small/large business impacts.*

## ANDBC Response to EQiA on Dfl Budget for 2023-24

171

### Any further comments

**Q4:** Are there any other comments you would like to make with regard to this pro forma or the consultation process generally?

**Answer:** *No*

## ANDBC Response to EQiA on DfI Budget for 2023-24

172

### Response in relation to: Transport

#### Data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q1:** Are there any data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 equality categories that have not been identified in Section 6 of the EQIA consultation document?

**Answer: Yes**

EQIA should be 12 weeks at least (ECNI) public wide as impacts everyone in NI  
Using data from 2011 census out of date  
Major impact on age and Disability – young and old  
Consultation with IMTAC and all local Disability groups, Age Friendly, Local Government Staff Commission  
Major impact on those using rural transport – Rural needs impact needs completed to properly assess this.

#### Potential adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q2:** Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in section 7 of the EQIA Consultation document? *(Required – please answer only yes or no)*

**Answer: Yes**

**Q2a:** If yes was answered to Q2, what are they?

**Answer:**

*Although Section 75 categories are noted there is no direct reference to types of service users beyond individuals. Reduction in the public transport network will greatly impact the ability for tourists to move beyond Belfast. This does not meet the requirement to disperse visitors across the region, and especially into rural or more remote areas where some of NI's greatest tourism assets are located, or will be created in the near future under the Belfast Region City Deal.*

*This is not in line with growing sustainable tourism, encouraging sustainable transport, Active Travel Hubs or meet NI Climate objectives.*

*Go as you please and independent travellers are limited in their ability to access all areas of NI and specifically areas such as the Ards Peninsula or inner Strangford Lough due to more limited availability of public transport. Opportunities for travellers who wish to make their choice of holiday destination 'more sustainable' are likely to be decreased in NI if the public transport network is reduced further.*

## ANDBC Response to EQiA on DfI Budget for 2023-24

173

*There are major negative impacts on Age and Disability, this could filter out to religious belief e.g. asylum seekers/refugees and newcomers to Northern Ireland may not have access to transport (as they might not be legal to drive); possible impact on those with dependants (using prams, issue with footpaths and transport options and accessibility)*

*The adverse impacts have not been clearly identified – more consultation is required to have a clear view of exactly how this will impact each group. For example - reducing access to or taking away Rural Transport will impact on those with a disability accessing necessary services (health services - hospital appointments etc.) and whole life quality impacts.*

*Several Local Development Plan policies produced by Councils seek to improve connectivity and accessibility as well as improving the health of our citizens. Operational subject policies set out in LDP shall seek to deliver sustainable patterns of development which reduce the need for the private car and promote the use of public transport and active travel modes.*

### Potential action to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts

**Q3:** Please state what action you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts in the allocation of the Department's budget?

**Answer:**

*Maintain routes in areas where investment is already committed and retain routes that are secondary to those i.e. Belfast to Bangor and links to Peninsula, Portaferry and regular and reliable Ferry Service.*

*Possibly seek advice of each impact for each mitigation – for example, one possible mitigation method may not impact all categories.*

*Needs to be looked at not NI-wide but possibly district/borough-wide as some areas are more rural than others.*

### Any further comments

**Q4:** Are there any other comments you would like to make with regard to this pro forma or the consultation process generally?

**Answer: Yes**

*More information on Stats is required– this could be completed through Council e.g. ANDBC has Age Friendly, Disability, Good Relations as well as Economic Development – it is considered impossible to implement cuts without this data.*

## ANDBC Response to EQiA on DfI Budget for 2023-24

174

*The format of directing the consultation solely on the equality impacts constrains wider comment on how cuts will exacerbate inequality and disproportionately affect the most vulnerable in society.*

*In light of proposed measures in the EQiA, and constraints to investment in new infrastructure projects, including those that provide more opportunities for active travel and for modal shift away from private cars, this Council would seek assurance that the forthcoming DfI Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan will be deliverable.*

*There is a need to enhance the resilience and safety of the transport network to support the economy and meet the challenges of climate change.*

*It is questionable how measures to reduce unnecessary use of the private car shall be supported with proposed reduction in support to public transportation options. Public transport provision is a key factor to reduce climate change, air pollution and congestion, as well tackling social exclusion and economic disparity.*

*There are clearly disproportionate impacts likely on rural dwellers, those with disability and accessibility related issues and those seeking asylum and newcomers.*

## ANDBC Response to EQiA on DfI Budget for 2023-24

175

### Response in relation to: Planning/Infrastructure

#### Data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q1:** Are there any data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 equality categories that have not been identified in Section 6 of the EQiA consultation document?

**Answer: YES - Data requires updating rather than placing reliance on old census data.**

#### Potential adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 groups

**Q2:** Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in section 7 of the EQiA Consultation document? *(Required – please answer only yes or no)*

**Answer: No**

#### Potential action to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts

**Q3:** Please state what action you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts in the allocation of the Department's budget?

**Answer:**  
*Consideration of temporary solutions or the provision of on-site facilities.*

#### Any further comments

**Q4:** Are there any other comments you would like to make with regard to this pro forma or the consultation process generally?

**Answer – YES:**

*The format of directing the consultation solely on the equality impacts constrains wider comment on how cuts will impact all and exacerbate inequality and disproportionately affect the most vulnerable in society.*

*The Local Development Plan is one of the key spatial tools to shape a Council area through a sustainable approach that delivers the growth aspirations of the Council. The allocation of land and future development to deliver the growth strategy of the Borough will require maintenance, and new or enhanced infrastructure.*

*Underinvestment in the sewage network and ongoing issues in the network capacity and constraints to funding of Arms Length Bodies such as NI Water shall continue to impact on all of society.*

Equality Impact Assessment

# The Executive Office's Spending Plans for 2023–2024

May 2023

## Foreword

1. TEO's aim is wellbeing for all through improved relations, outcomes and governance. We do this by:
  - ensuring that the machinery of government works effectively;
  - developing overarching strategic policy frameworks, including the Programme for Government (PfG);
  - developing and delivering programmes which can support those frameworks, including those problems which need a cross-cutting response;
  - engaging internationally; and
  - ensuring we have effective contingency planning and delivery mechanisms.

Overall, we aim to make this a place where people thrive.

2. Tackling disadvantage and promoting equality of opportunity are core priorities for the Executive Office (TEO) and its arm's-length bodies. This Equality Impact Assessment (EQiA) reflects those priorities and the statutory equality duties that underpin them. Our priorities are also reflected in our responsibility for the Executive's Good Relations strategy, Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) and its funding programmes; in our co-ordinating responsibilities for equality and human rights and sponsorship of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland; in support for minority ethnic people and groups and, increasingly, co-ordination of the Executive's responsibilities for refugees and asylum seekers; and in trauma-informed policy development and practical support for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, victims of the Troubles / Conflict, and survivors of historical institutional abuse.
3. Executive Departments are collectively facing the most challenging budget in recent history, with pressures of over half a billion pounds in 2023/2024. Every Department will be affected. The budget allocation announced in the Written Ministerial Statement by the Secretary of State on 27 April 2023 shows that TEO

will have to cope with a reduction equating to £9.5m or around 11.1% of its projected baseline budget requirement of £85.2m. Earmarked funds including

HIA / Victims' Payments / Truth Recovery £98.9m;

Communities in Transition £3.3m;

Dedicated Mechanism £1.0m;

NI Protocol £0.1m; and

EU Peace Match Funding £2.7m

have been allocated to TEO but can be used only for their designated purposes and not at the discretion of the Department. While our primary efforts will be on reducing administrative costs, this could not (as explained further at paragraph 26) achieve the necessary level of savings, meaning that reductions to front-facing funding will be inevitable.

4. TEO will of course continue to seek to deliver its principal aims. But in some cases it will have to find different ways of doing so; using ways that are less reliant on funding, with implications for our delivery partners and for the range and scope of the projects we had hoped to fund. We recognise the impacts on employment, continuity of services, and wellbeing. (These impacts have been highlighted by TEO through the budget development processes.) TEO officials are acutely aware of the need to meet our statutory equality duties. In addition to fulfilling this purpose this EQIA, and your contributions to it, will help us to analyse how best we can structure our budget to ensure protection of the most vulnerable and to make the biggest impact we can with much more limited resources.
5. The creative thinking, collaboration and innovation required will, we hope, result in new approaches to how we do business – approaches which retain their value after the current financial year. It is a matter of very real regret to TEO, however, that the implications of this year's budget will be felt so keenly in our community.

## Introduction

6. The process of setting budgets can in some cases have an unintentionally greater impact on some specific Section 75 groups than others, for example, on males, females, young people or pensioners. In allocating budgets the Department aims to avoid any adverse impacts and, where possible, action will be taken to mitigate against specific adverse impacts. This paper examines potential options for potential reductions and the potential equality impacts of these options.
7. Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 requires the Department, in carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:
  - people with different religious beliefs;
  - people from different racial groups;
  - people of different ages;
  - people with different marital status;
  - people with different sexual orientations;
  - men and women generally;
  - people with or without a disability;
  - people with or without dependants; and
  - people with different political opinions.
8. In addition, but without prejudice to the duty above, the Department should also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people with different religious beliefs, different political opinions or from different racial groups.
9. The Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006, which came into effect on 1 January 2007, introduced new duties requiring all public authorities in carrying out their functions having due regard to the need to:

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
  - encourage participation by disabled people in public life.
10. Equality scheme commitments require public authorities to determine if there are any impacts on equality of opportunity and if there are opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity between people within the Section 75 equality categories. Where screening would not be an adequate means of gathering the information that is needed to assess the relevant equality impacts or opportunities, the public authority should proceed to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). It is for each Government Department and other public body to reach its own conclusions on screening in light of its particular circumstances.
  11. TEO has previously submitted an Equality Impact Assessment Screening document to DoF on 2 March 2023 for the purposes of a Budget Scenario Planning Exercise, in order to draw attention to the particular Section 75 groups where general funding reductions are likely to have an equality impact. This document attempted to outline mitigating actions where possible and examined budget scenario reductions of 10% and 15%, after allowances for 'earmarked' and EU Protocol related funding was protected. As a result of the EQIA screening, the budget allocation provided in the Written Ministerial Statement by Secretary of State on 27 April 2023 has been 'screened in' for a full Equality Impact Assessment process.
  12. The primary function of an EQIA is to assess whether policy proposals would have a differential impact and in particular, an adverse differential impact on the categories of persons listed in Section 75, and any subgroups within those categories. When conducting an EQIA, the Department acts in accordance with the guidance published by the Equality Commission in February 2005: ['Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment'](#), which recommends that there should be seven steps in the EQIA process:

Step 1 Defining the aims of the policy

- Step 2 Consideration of available data and research
- Step 3 Assessment of impacts
- Step 4 Consideration of measures which may mitigate any adverse impact and alternative policies which may better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity
- Step 5 Formal consultation
- Step 6 Decision and publication of the EQIA results
- Step 7 Monitoring for adverse impact

13. In response to this, the Department has examined a number of potential scenarios for the actions required to live within its budget allocation for the 2023/24 financial year, and, following a screening exercise, has decided to proceed with an EQIA and consultation, in order to collate views from interested stakeholders. This document is the draft of the EQIA prior to incorporating the outcomes of a public consultation.
14. In the absence of Executive Ministers, the Secretary of State has taken budget decisions and has indicated his intention to take a Budget Bill through Parliament. Given the particular urgency of making allocations between its respective budgets, TEO is proceeding to consult at this stage. In the event that in-year changes to the allocations result in a substantially different outcome from that set out in this document, further information will be circulated.
15. Details of how to respond to the EQIA are at the end of this document. To request it in an alternative format please contact:

Reference: 2023/2024 TEO Budget Consultation Responses  
Finance Branch  
The Executive Office  
Block B5  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
BELFAST BT4 3SR

Telephone: 028 9052 2568  
Email: [rff@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:rff@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)

16. Some of the decisions required by the budget will fall to the Permanent Secretary of the Executive Office under the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2022. Other decisions are of a kind normally reserved to a Minister. The guidance says (our emphasis):

“Some decisions should not be taken by civil servants without the direction of elected Ministers. NI departments should therefore first consider the public interest of having elected Ministers taking and guiding decisions. Any major policy decisions, such as the initiation of a new policy, programme or scheme, including new major public expenditure commitments, or a major change of an existing policy, programme or scheme, should normally be left for Ministers to decide or agree.

“When considering whether there is a public interest in taking a decision in the absence of NI Ministers, principles to be taken into account by senior officers in NI departments include:

- (a) The primary principle that departments must control and manage expenditure within the limits of the appropriations set out in Budget Acts, and as set out in the Secretary of State’s statement to Parliament of 24 November.

...”

17. Budget allocations may be revisited during the financial year, particularly during the Monitoring Round process. Funding may be reallocated to other priority areas depending on relative spend levels in each TEO business area. The EQIA and consultation responses will be used to inform such reallocations should the need arise.

## TEO's Financial Position

18. The overall total draft budget for TEO in the last financial year (2022/2023), as set out in the Budget 2022/25 consultative document and published in February 2022, was £210.7m. Around half of this was represented by ring-fenced resources required for Victims' Payments, Historical Institutional Abuse services and redress, work on supporting victims-survivors of Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries, and funding for Good Relations which was previously awarded under the Shared Future Agreement.
19. In the event, during 2022/23 actual spending plans changed following a review of expenditure on Victims' Payments which had been based on estimates, and issues with supply of new recruits which impacted on the speed of filling vacancies. The final budget outcome announced by Secretary of State on 24 November 2022 was £156.7m, while the final budget post December reductions was £153.7m.
20. The Department was proactive in returning funding to DoF centrally when there was a risk it would not be spent, and offered other easements to assist in addressing the overall pressures facing NICS Departments. Indeed, TEO offered up £10 million ahead of the 2023/2024 year. (This has not been offset against the baseline savings requirement for next year.)
21. In preparing for 2023/2024, DoF has worked with the NIO to produce a number of scenarios to model how allocations to Departments could be made in light of the reduced funding available to the Block as a result of repaying the Budget Resource Claim for 2022/23 to the Treasury. The allocation to TEO announced by the Secretary of State represents an amount equivalent to the final allocation for 2022/23 less reductions of 3.9% for non-ringfenced areas, together with a specific allocation for earmarked ringfenced schemes. The expectation is that ring-fenced funding (for Victims' Payments, HIA redress and services, Mother and Baby Homes, Communities in Transition, Homes for Ukraine, Peace+ and some smaller budget lines), will be adequate for our needs; indeed HIA costs and Victims' Payments are statutory requirements and there is Ministerial commitment to funding these areas. Capital allocations are also sufficient to

meet projected needs. The main focus of this consultation is therefore on the non-ringfenced, baseline spend areas.

22. A nominal 3.9% reduction on 2022/23 means a reduction from £78.8 million to £75.8 million in baseline resources. However, in the meantime, TEO's expenditure requirements had increased substantially, to £85.2m, for the reasons explored below. This excludes approximately £4m in respect of Shared Future/Good Relations programmes delivered in partnership with other Departments. Applying the above reduction results in a required reduction of some £9.5m (11.1%) against planned baseline requirements. This is an unprecedented reduction, and it is clear it will have significant implications for the outcomes delivered by this Department, if some of them are deliverable at all.

#### *Strategic Context for TEO Resource Pressures*

23. These additional savings requirements need to be seen in the context of existing baseline challenges, related to both loss of income sources and new spend commitments. Specifically TEO has seen reductions in funding in respect of:
  - (a) Financial Transactions Capital (FTC) interest spending power due to the repayment of these loans by the public sector debtors and loss of FTC interest;
  - (b) end of separate COVID-19 funding, even though TEO's responsibility now includes co-ordination the Executive's response to the Covid Inquiry;
  - (c) additionality of new business areas mandated by the Executive or by legislation including Ending Violence Against Women and Girls; the Truth Recovery Programme on Mother and Baby Institutions and Magdalene Laundries; responsibility for the free provision of period products across Northern Ireland; and specialists to support the NICS Transformation Programme.
24. Additional pressures for TEO have also materialised in 2022/2023 in respect of:

- (a) the Ukraine Refugee schemes instigated by the UK Government, and an increasing number of asylum seekers making their home here;
  - (b) the Covid Inquiry; and
  - (c) preparations for the establishment of three new ALBs mandated by the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022, introduced by the Secretary of State and passed by Parliament.
25. This context resulted in acute staffing pressures, which were so severe that a former Accounting Officer raised staffing as a governance concern in 2021/22. Addressing this governance concern meant increasing the pay bill. Vacancies filled progressively during 2022/2023 will result in a full 12 months of recurring costs in 2023/2024. In addition, TEO is (like other organisations) facing increases due to pay and price inflation. These will lead to further increases in costs in the year ahead.
26. Without stopping delivery and implementing a Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES), there is no opportunity to reduce these costs other than through natural churn. When ring-fenced funds are discounted, TEO's budget funds ALBs (37%, of which half is taken up with VSS and the services for Troubles victims and survivors it provides), staff costs (33%), programme and grant spend together with general administrative expenditure (total 17%), and Shared Future (13%). In the absence of a voluntary exit scheme, there are very few options open for internal administrative reductions and efficiencies. This means that, when actions for reducing the pay bill are taken into account, externally delivered programmes are the only alternative areas for consideration.

## Actions Taken to Date

27. Since last year, TEO has been achieving efficiencies in its approach to new areas of work in line with its commitment, in 2022/2023 budget bids, to agile policy development. Staffing for the free provision of period products across NI, support for the Covid Inquiry, and Green Growth, by way of example, have been resourced through redeployment from other areas of the Department's work. None of these new areas came with dedicated funding streams. This has required some standing down of other areas of work. Staff from the Ministerial Private Offices have also been redeployed on other priorities in the absence of Ministers.
  
28. In light of the urgency and the levels of the impact, the Department has already paused any recruitment and filling of vacancies, other than in instances of exceptional need. We estimate that this will save £2.9m in 2023/2024; impacting on 86 vacancies we had been intending to fill now that supply at key grades is again available. Further staffing savings would be dependent on a Voluntary Exit Scheme. All of these measures will place significant pressure on the Department and its staff, for whose wellbeing we are responsible, and it will be important to reprioritise work to match the resources available.

## Key Principles for TEO's Strategic Approach

29. By definition, TEO's functions are Executive priorities and typically there was a reason for Ministers choosing to locate them in a central Department. Living within budget will mean making very difficult decisions between areas of expenditure, all of which we should regard as important and necessary. TEO proposes to adopt the following key principles as it strives to achieve the necessary reductions in 2023/2024 and to focus the available funding on the areas of greatest priority. Specifically, TEO aims to:
- (a) meet its statutory and contractual requirements;
  - (b) promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing for the people who live here;
  - (c) protect the needs of the most vulnerable people who depend on our services and funding; and
  - (d) live within its budget.
30. Limited funding means that scarce financial resources will inevitably need to be prioritised. Feedback from the Departmental Board, TEO business areas, DoF where appropriate, and the EQiA consultation will be used to allocate funding between TEO activities. The EQiA will be re-visited during the financial year and updated to reflected changing priorities and any potential availability of reallocated funding.
31. Based on clarification from DoF, our assumption is that the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) from the Secretary of State has provided Departments with budget allocations on the same basis as the WMS of November 2022 (for 2022/23) and the interim indicative allocation provided in April 2023. This means that, for Shared Future programmes delivered in partnership with other Departments, the allocation for 2023/24 has been provided to those Departments through the WMS and is not a cost to TEO. This includes T:BUC Camps and Planned Interventions.

32. TEO has considered the general approach to reductions across the Department's business areas. Two options were identified:
  1. Apply a common reduction of 11.1% across all non-ringfenced business areas. This would include, for example, Good Relations and the Victims' budget, which funds VSS's work with victims and survivors and support for victims' groups (but not Victims' Payments).
  2. Use the EQIA to inform decisions on where cash releasing savings could be realised in a way that limited the impact on the most vulnerable people served by TEO.
  
33. TEO prefers Option 2 as being more in line with its equity ethos. Applying a fixed amount would have an adverse impact on disability, age and dependants Section 75 categories disproportionately.
  
34. Option 2 has therefore been chosen for further analysis. The remainder of this paper considers the impacts of this and the basis for decisions on where cash-releasing reductions should lie.

## Analysis of Impacts: Core Department

### *Consideration of Available Data and Research*

35. In assessing the impact of the budget against obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Department concludes that there is evidence of some differential impact in respect of some Section 75 categories. Impacts have been considered against the backdrop of available data and the stated policy intent to determine whether differential impacts identified are adverse. Where this is the case, consideration will be given to potential mitigating factors.
36. Impacts have been considered against the backdrop of available data, as derived from:
- 2021 Census;
  - Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency statistics;
  - Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) programme data;
  - Central Good Relations Fund (CGRF) data;
  - Business Consultancy Services (BCS) review of Minority Ethnic Development Fund (MEDF);
  - Crisis Fund data;
  - District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP) data;
  - Planned Interventions Programme (PIP) data;
  - Racial Equality Indicators Report: 2014 – 2021;
  - Good Relations Indicators Report 2020;
  - Refugee Integration Strategy EQIA;
  - NI Safe Community Survey 2019/20;
  - Draft EQIA screening – Victims and Survivors Strategy;
  - T:BUC headline actions data;
  - Draft Ending Violence against Women and Girls EQIA.
37. The analysis has focussed on those areas of substantial expenditure from which cash releasing savings could be made in 2023/2024. For this reason, areas

which are primarily based in staff and premises costs (eg Ministerial and Executive support, international relations, civil contingencies) have not been included. That is not to say, however, that we will not look for efficiencies in these areas: there is further detail in the conclusions and mitigations section.

- 38. Areas where there is a statutory requirement (eg meeting the Department’s obligations on equality or health and safety) have not been analysed, nor have those areas (eg HIA, Victims’ Payments for Permanent Disablement) for which ringfenced budget is received and which are unaffected by the current exercise. Data from Urban Villages was considered but comes from a variety of project types and cannot be broken down for this type of analysis.
- 39. TEO continues to work together along with its arm’s-length bodies to understand the impact of the budget for 2023-24 outcome on service delivery, the potential impacts of the policy on the various Section 75 groups and how any impacts could be mitigated. However, the Department has also concluded that there is not enough sufficient robust data to determine impact on all Section 75 groups. The services provided by the Department are generally universal in nature and provide benefit to all citizens across Northern Ireland. It is therefore difficult to assess the impact of service reductions on Section 75 groups. The Department will seek to gather further information on potential impacts through consultation.

*Assessment of Impacts*

Section 75 Category	Details of Impact
<b>Religious belief</b>	<p>An analysis of the information held by TEO indicates that a reduction in budget is likely to have a negative impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group as building relations between these groups is the key purpose of the funding programmes, T:BUC Strategy and District Councils Good Relations Programme.</p> <p>Figures indicate that a greater percentage of people who are Catholic benefit from participation in CGRF (48%/~20,000 participants CNR, 35%/~15,000 PUL) and Planned Interventions Programme (over 80% CNR) projects than might be expected based on the NI population. For the DCGRP, it is estimated that just under 40%/~40,000 of participants are from a PUL background with a further 40%/~40,000 from a CNR background.</p>

<b>Political opinion</b>	<p>It should be noted that religious belief / background can, in many instances, be considered a proxy guide to political opinion.</p> <p>An analysis of the information held by TEO indicates that a reduction in budget is likely to have a negative impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group as building relations between these groups is the key purpose of the funding programmes / T:BUC Strategy.</p>
<b>Racial group</b>	<p>An analysis of the information held by TEO indicates that a reduction in budget is likely to have a negative impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group as building relations between these groups is the key purpose of the funding programmes / T:BUC Strategy.</p> <p>The Central Good Relations Fund attracts a much larger percentage of participants from a minority ethnic background than would be reasonable to anticipate based on NI's demographic profile. In 2021/22 it is estimated around 4,000 participants came from an ethnic minority background.</p> <p>In 2021/22, data for the DCGRP suggests that 88% of participants were from a white background, indicating that a significant number of participants are from a minority ethnic background.</p> <p>The Minority Ethnic Development Fund (circa £1.2m per annum) provides support for voluntary and community organisations working with and representing minority ethnic people and groups. The Crisis Fund (circa £200k per annum) provides small sums of money at key moments for minority ethnic people and migrant workers, such as after losing work, reduced hours, or family breakdown to provide support for those at risk of destitution. Together they are the only direct funding schemes to support implementation of the Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland. Evidence shows that this section 75 category is growing rapidly. On Census Day 2021, 3.4% of the population, or 65,600 people, belonged to minority ethnic groups. This is around double the 2011 figure (1.8% – 32,400 people) and four times the 2001 figure (0.8% – 14,300 people). NB it is widely recognised that census figures undercount the minority ethnic group population.</p> <p>We are aware of specific risks to refugee and migrant women in relation to VAWG.</p>
<b>Age</b>	<p>The age profile of CGRF participants indicates that around two thirds were under 18. Across all areas of the programme, some 26,000-28,000 children and young people participated in 2021/22. Given the high proportion of CGRF funding that is allocated to projects that directly support children and young people, a cut to the CGRF would have a more significant and adverse impact on this S75 group than on others.</p> <p>The Planned Intervention Programme is for children and young people from 10 up to the age of 25 (circa 1,300 people), however</p>

	<p>the outcomes delivered by the programme impact on people of all ages by addressing anti-social behaviour and community tensions.</p> <p>A third of participants in the District Council Good Relations Programme are 18 or under (circa 35,000 people).</p> <p>Since the T:BUC Camps programme began in 2015/16, over 750 Camps have been delivered to over 26,000 young people between the ages of 11-19. Not funding the T:BUC Camps Programme would have an adverse impact on Children and Young People. The latest outcomes data shows that having taken part in a Camp:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 97% had made new friends with someone from a different religious/community background.</li> <li>• 87% felt more favourable towards people from a different religious/community background.</li> <li>• 86% felt more favourable towards people from a different ethnic background.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, 98% felt a personal benefit from taking part in the Camp e.g. increased confidence, new skills, participation which improves the wellbeing of the young people.</p> <p>There are currently 37 T:BUC Camps Good Relations Ambassadors who are midway through their Ambassadors Programme. Withdrawing funding would prevent them from completing their programme. They would be unable to complete the OCN qualification they are working towards.</p> <p>The EVAWG Strategy will consider risks identified as more prevalent among older and younger people from VAWG, including financial abuse of the elderly and online abuse of young people.</p> <p>Individuals accessing services through VSS are predominantly older, with victims and survivors over the age of 56 making up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75% of clients receiving Persistent Pain Framework support;</li> <li>• 66% of those accessing support through the Victims Support Programme or PEACE IV, and</li> <li>• 59% of those receiving support through the VSS Individual Needs Programme.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Marital status</b></p>	<p>At this time there is no evidence to indicate that the budget allocation would negatively impact this Section 75 category.</p>
<p><b>Sexual orientation</b></p>	<p>At this time there is no evidence to indicate that the budget allocation would negatively impact this Section 75 category.</p>
<p><b>Gender (men and women generally)</b></p>	<p>Expenditure on the development of the Equally Safe strategy has necessarily been largely on staff costs to date. Plans for 2023/2024 would have seen the beginning of an implementation programme and campaign. Gender violence is more prevalent and the impacts are more severe among women and girls – 79% of all victims of sexual offences recorded by PSNI were female (Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland), 68% of victims of domestic abuse crimes were female and a domestic abuse incident was reported to the PSNI every 16 minutes in 2021/22.. Reduction of</p>

	<p>funding to the EVAWG programme will result in negative impacts to women and girls. The programme has also been asked to act intersectionally, and impacts on women and girls in all other Section 75 groups have been identified and will be addressed within the programme.</p> <p>While the CGRF is open to people of any gender, data for 2021/22 indicates that females make up a substantially higher percentage of participants than males – out of 40,000 participants, circa 25,000 were female. For PIP, in 2021/22, 59% of participants were male. Latest figures show 58% of participants in the DCGRP were female.</p> <p>61% of victims and survivors receiving support for the Bereaved from VSS are females.</p>
<p><b>Disability (with or without)</b></p>	<p>People with a disability face significant challenges and are often within the most disadvantaged and excluded sections of society. Cuts to funding are likely to have a particularly adverse impact on this group who may benefit from participation in CGRF projects that provide opportunities for inclusion and to build relations with different others while promoting respect, tolerance, and inclusion. . In 2021/22, between 6,000-7,000 of CGRF participants had a disability or illness.</p> <p>The latest outcomes show 14% of participants in DCGRP have a disability. This is a substantial percentage when compared to other programmes and removal of the programme would have a negative effect on the general population, the impact on the disabled community could be disproportionately negative.</p> <p>The EVAWG Call for Views responses quoted rates of 1:2 D/deaf and disabled women suffering gender violence, including specific risks from carers.</p>
<p><b>Dependants (with or without)</b></p>	<p>The presence of children or other dependents can make it more difficult for women to leave a violent home.</p> <p>Transgenerational trauma has been highlighted for victims and survivors, but the Department’s supports for this are excluded from reductions by virtue of protection of the VSS budget and the ring-fenced nature of support for HIA and Truth Recovery Programme victims-survivors.</p>

## Analysis of impacts: Arm's-Length Bodies

40. Some 37% of TEO's budget is spent by its arm's-length or sponsored and analogous bodies (ALBs):

Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse  
 Commissioner for Victims and Survivors  
 Community Relations Council  
 Equality Commission for NI  
 Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board  
 Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation  
 North South Ministerial Council Joint Secretariat (North)  
 Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission  
 Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for NI  
 Office of the Attorney General for NI  
 Strategic Investment Board  
 Victims and Survivors Service  
 Victims' Payments Board

41. The following section provides a summary of major impacts which would be felt by the Department's ALBs. This was based on a request to model the impact of a 10% reduction in budget allocations. In the interests of clarity, a summary is given here, but more detailed information is available on request.

- The **Equality Commission** provides services across all Section 75 groups. While their service provision is open to all, uptake will often be by the groups most in need. It is the groups who more often face discrimination or key inequalities that in many cases will be differentially and more negatively impacted by cuts - people with disabilities, particularly learning disabilities, people from a range of minority ethnic groups; including Newcomers, older people, children, LGBT people, women and people with caring responsibilities. Across the equality grounds, people in or at risk of poverty are amongst those most impacted.

- There will also be examples of sub-groups within categories and in relation to particular areas, for example in education, pupils entitled to free schools meals, particularly boys, including those who are from a Protestant community background; carers; single parents - disproportionately female; women and girls who are the majority of those subject to violence and abuse. The Commission has identified Travellers as a significantly disadvantaged group across all areas of life and government service provision.
- ECNI's discrimination advice and support is more often sought on the grounds of disability (50% enquiries) and sex (20% enquiries), particularly harassment and pregnancy/maternity, but also on the grounds of race, religion and sexual orientation. Cuts would therefore have a disproportionate impact in these areas.
- ECNI's work to modernise and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the equality framework is currently centred on securing improved race equality law; protection from hate crime; and implementing gender pay reporting. In addition, ECNI's wide-ranging work to inform the development and delivery of a range of TEO equality and DfC social strategies and wider policy initiatives (NI Skills Strategy; DfC Disability Employment Strategy; Anti-bullying in schools etc) has particular benefits for people from across a range of minority ethnic groups. Cuts would therefore have a disproportionate impact in these areas.
- The **Community Relations Council** would be affected across all areas of its service delivery, including grants to front line work, an area that CRC has tried to protect as far as possible up until this point. A cut will need to be met by reducing the number, depth and scale of Good Relations projects supported to deliver the objectives of T:BUC impacting the capacity to achieve outcomes in the respect / shared space / reconciliation and other identified indicators in the Outcomes Delivery Plan and T:BUC strategy. The number of participants delivering on aims and objectives of the Together: Building a United Community within their local communities as a

direct result of these cuts will therefore be reduced at a time when the threat level has been increased. Some funding streams would be unable to operate, with particular impacts on the Media, Publications, and Pathfinder schemes, and some impact on the Small Grants Scheme.

- The cut will present a significant risk to an already small team in terms of capacity, service delivery, human resource management and other challenges.
- The Community Relations Council delivers a Core Funding Scheme that supports 62 jobs and core operating costs of groups engaged in Good Relations work. The Community Relations Council also delivers four other funding schemes to support Good Relations projects, these are the Community Relations/Cultural Diversity small grant scheme, Pathfinder scheme, Media scheme, and Publications Scheme. In addition, CRC administers the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme which also supports 19 jobs. This Programme is a Ministerial initiative that CRC has administered on behalf of TEO in recent years. In total these two schemes support 81 jobs, almost 200 projects and thousands of participants in programmes each year ranging from anti-sectarian and racism programmes, cultural diversity projects and programmes aimed at the reduction of interface conflict particularly at flash points during key times of the year. As far as possible CRC wishes to protect these posts from the worst impact of the cuts because they are the infrastructure on which future work can be built when the financial situation improves.
- CRC will require to reduce the depth and scale of its T:BUC Engagement activity.
- The **Commission for Victims and Survivors** serves victims and survivors in each of the 9 categories under Section 75 and, if not able to fulfil its statutory duties, all will be negatively affected. Likewise, impacts on workshops, audits and public appointments in general brought about by spending reductions in the **Office of the Commissioner for Public**

**Appointments** may impact all section 75 groups equally as appointment is based strictly on merit.

- A cut of 10% to the **Attorney General for NI** budget can only be made to salaries as GAE is for contractual payments. Reducing staffing levels will impact will on the Attorney's ability to deliver on her statutory functions and will have a read across all the Section 75 categories, eg impacting on the AG's ability to deliver on her protective function under the Mental Capacity Act (her power to refer deprivation of liberty cases to the Review Tribunal). The power conferred on the AG is a statutory measure designed to ensure equality of opportunity. If the AG is unable to consider cases thoroughly or speedily, the impact will predominantly be on people with disability and older people.
- At a 10% reduction in TEO funding, the **NI Judicial Appointments Commission**, after examining some non-recurring costs it might be able to bear in the short-term eg training and reactive maintenance, would still need to find approximately £109k to work within the TEO funding level. Given the fact 84% of NIJAC's costs (staff and Headline Building) are fixed, to find the remaining monies NIJAC would have to reduce the number of judicial recruitment schemes carried out from an annual average of 8 to 5; and rely on staff vacancies arising in 2023-24 equivalent to 1.7 WTE staff from a complement of 12.6 WTE (no vacancies currently exist).
- Failure to fill judicial vacancies to fill judicial vacancies will in turn will add to the post-COVID backlog of cases to be heard. This will impinge on the access to justice and in particular backlogs in tribunals will hit the most vulnerable in our community including those with a disability and with mental health issues.
- The principal aim of the **Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse** is to represent the interests of victims and survivors, advising on matters concerning their interests of victims and survivors; encouraging the provision and coordination of services and where

appropriate identifying gaps; monitoring specialist facilities for victims and survivors; and monitoring and publicising the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board.

- The budget allocation is 80% staffing and 20% other costs to include all other services. A 10% reduction would directly impact on staffing which would detrimentally effect services provided to victims and survivors. Early evidence has shown that contact to the office is predominately male callers. Many victims and survivors who would have been eligible for Redress have since passed due to old age and ill health. The remaining eligible cohort are estimated to be in general over sixty years of age.
- Due to the neglect and abuse suffered, many of the victims experience socio-economic challenges which have led to poor health, addictions, lack of employment and mental health problems, with implications for the incidence of disability.

## Consideration of Mitigations

42. The impact of the budget allocation for 2023/2024 on the Department is extremely challenging. The promotion of wellbeing for all its stakeholders is the key mission for TEO, and attempts will be made to mitigate the impact where possible, though funding reductions will inevitably have significant impacts on service delivery. The Department will seek to ensure that its proposed budget allocations mitigate the effect on service delivery and are applied as far as possible in a manner that reduces the disproportionate impact on one Section 75 category over another.
  
43. The Department has identified the following potential areas for mitigation:
  - a. seeking to protect the most vulnerable people with whom TEO works, including victims and survivors;
  - b. prioritising projects for funding where the safety of a group is at risk or there is risk of civic disorder;
  - c. protecting where possible funding which is matched or releases further resources, eg the Department's contribution to the Peace programmes;
  - d. where possible, staff will work to seek to mainstream implementation of the Department's policy aims in other Departments' strategies as part of good cross-Departmental working, so that the implementation of those strategies would incorporate TEO's principal outcomes. This would include seeking to ensure good relations is fully incorporated as an objective in other strategies; that people who have experienced trauma can obtain services reflective of their needs; and that the emerging findings of good practice on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls are promulgated and widely embedded;
  - e. protecting work, including through the Urban Villages Programme, that has the potential to lead to more effective ways of supporting TEO's aims in

- future, eg the Test and Learn work on support for vulnerable communities, while ensuring such areas are challenged to identify where savings are feasible;
- f. having regard to situations where there is a legitimate expectation of continuing funding;
  - g. carrying out a line-by-line review of the Department's expenditure to identify any further savings which could be transferred to front-line support;
  - h. taking into account that, in general, larger organisations are better able to sustain reductions than smaller;
  - i. taking into account timing of spend, eg where it is needed early in the year if it is to be effective, and therefore would not be mitigated by any further resources identified in-year. Payments (eg for self-directed assistance) to individual victims, and the first tranche of funding for groups supporting victims and survivors of the Troubles / Conflict, have therefore been released;
  - j. working with the Department's ALB Forum on the potential to reduce administration costs and duplication, to release funding for priority outcomes;
  - k. continuing to make the case to DoF, the Secretary of State, and Ministers for the Department's outcomes, especially in monitoring rounds, and using the EQIA to prioritise distribution of any additional resources obtained;
  - l. working with other organisations in the public, private, and voluntary sectors to identify alternative sources of support for groups impacted by the budget allocations.

## Conclusion

44. This document has set out an analysis of the Department's financial situation; information on the resulting equality impacts on which we will welcome comments and supplementary information; and the principles and mitigations we can apply in making what are extremely difficult decisions in a very challenging fiscal environment. The latter include seeking to protect the most vulnerable people with whom the Department works, doing all that the Department itself can do to reduce costs, and the extent to which TEO investment helps to leverage other funds.
45. Taking account of the impacts and mitigations identified and applying these to the Department's work areas, the Department's provisional analysis would lead to the following measures:
  1. continuing the moratorium on filling vacancies and new posts (other than in exceptional circumstances) – **£2.9m** (see para 28). In addition, we will take forward a series of actions on reviewing processes, challenging traditional ways of doing things, and other measures to reduce costs.
  2. 10% top-slicing of the Department and ALBs (other than VSS) – **£3.6m**;
  3. maintaining support for particularly vulnerable groups through the Victims and Survivors budget and VSS, and the Crisis Fund (supporting destitute people), and limiting impact on the Minority Ethnic Development Fund and the Urban Villages programme (which also releases a greater amount in capital funding) to the 10% top-slicing. However we will work with these areas to identify where savings could be identified without major impacts;
  4. reductions in Good Relations work, affecting the Central Good Relations Fund and District Council Good Relations Programme this year – **£3.5m**. This would mean significant reductions in these programmes. The allocation for Central Good Relations would be about half of that last year and would enable 38 projects. For District Council Good Relations, the

reduction would mean a TEO contribution of £1.6m would leverage about £0.5m of Council support, reducing delivery by 50% compared with last year.

46. This would leave a small balance of approximately £0.5m to support additional urgent work in priority areas.
47. **It is important to stress that these are not recommendations that would be made by officials under normal circumstances. Rather, they are actions required as a consequence of an extremely constrained budget allocation.**

## Consultation, Publication and Decision

48. The Department is committed to seeking the views of those who are affected by the decisions that it will make in relation to its budget reductions. We are keen to hear from individuals and organisations about their views on the equality implications of the decisions being made and about any mitigations that the Department could put in place to address what will undoubtedly be the adverse impacts of a reduction of this size.
49. TEO will consider the need for any further mitigating actions in light of responses received during the consultation. Promotion of equality of opportunity and the protection of services to vulnerable groups will be a key consideration in the Department's final Budget decisions.

### *Consultation Period*

50. Decisions around the budget reductions need to be made urgently. This is so they can be implemented in time to take effect over as much of the financial year as possible; and also so that business areas, arm's-length bodies (ALBs) and organisations who depend on our funding can make the necessary plans as soon as possible.
51. The Department has decided that it can best balance the challenges presented by the tight financial timescales, with its own desire to hold a meaningful consultation, by adopting a two-stage approach.
52. The Department will consult for a 12-week period. The Department will particularly encourage responses within the initial four weeks of the consultation period. Views received during this time will be used to inform the Department's initial allocation of funds to its business areas and ALBs as well as any early mitigations that can be put in place. Responses received between week 5 and week 12 of the consultation will be used to consider further mitigation measures, to inform in-year budget reallocation processes, and to direct any additional funding (or further reductions) that emerge over the course of the financial year.

### *Consultation Method*

53. The Department will publish this EQIA on its website, alerting its list of consultees of to the publication. The departmental consultation list has been brought up to date in advance of this exercise to ensure that it covers organisations that we are aware are active across the range of functions now performed by TEO. The Department will attempt to facilitate requests for alternative formats and for more direct stakeholder engagement where possible. A consultation questionnaire has been developed to encourage the expression of views across a few key areas. This can be accessed through Citizen Space at: [Consultation Questions for Public Input](#)

### *Consultation Questions*

1. Do you agree that TEO has gathered the necessary data to inform its decisions around the allocation of its budget?  
If not, what other sources of data should the Department consider?
2. Do you agree with TEO's assessment of the options for budget reductions?  
If not, what other areas of the Department's spend should be considered?
3. Do you agree with TEO's assessment of equality impacts of the options considered for budget reductions?  
If not, what other equality impacts does the Department need to take account of?
4. Do you agree that the TEO has correctly identified all relevant mitigations that could help reduce the adverse equality impacts of the budget reductions?  
If not, what additional mitigation measures should the Department consider?

5. Do you agree with TEO's overall assessment of the business areas where budget reductions will need to be made?

If not, which areas of the Department's business would be better able to withstand reductions?

6. Do you have any other comments you would like to add about this consultation – yes or no?

54. Replies should be sent by **7 June 2023** (for the first phase) and/or **2 August 2023** (for the second phase) to:

Reference: 2023/2024 TEO Budget Consultation Responses  
Finance Branch  
The Executive Office  
Block B5  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
BELFAST BT4 3SR

Telephone: 028 9052 2568

Email: [rff@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:rff@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)

55. In keeping with this Department's commitments under its Equality Scheme, any adverse differential impact on equality of opportunity or good relations that may be identified through this assessment process will be taken into account in informing the Department's final budget 2023/2024 allocations. Any such findings will be used to inform further development of mitigations, revised budget allocations and in-year bids.

#### *Confidentiality*

56. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public the right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided in response to this

consultation, including information about identity, should be made public or treated as confidential.

57. This means that information provided in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided; the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature; and acceptance by the Executive Office confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.
58. Personal addresses and telephone numbers will not be disclosed.
59. For further information regarding confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office at:

Information Commissioner's Office – Northern Ireland  
3rd Floor  
14 Cromac Place  
BELFAST  
BT7 2JB  
Telephone: 028 9027 8757 / 0303 123 1114  
Email: [ni@ico.org.uk](mailto:ni@ico.org.uk)  
Website: <http://www.ico.org.uk>

## ANDBC Response to EQiA on The Executive Office Budget for 23/24

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### Question 1

**Do you agree that TEO has gathered the necessary data to inform its decisions around the allocation of its budget?**

**Answer – NO:**

- *There has not been an assessment of any locally collected data which is readily available through the annual reviews of District Council Good Relations Action Plan (DCGRAP) statistics. ANDBC delivered 35 programmes to over 2300 participants, awarded grants to build the capacity of community organisations and operated a positive cultural expression programme. Programme participants included all section 75 groups.*
- *DCGRP is based on a needs analysis through the development of our local 3-year audit and strategy, and annual action plans that are approved by Local Government Elected Members with a mandate to represent local residents.*
- *There is no assessment of data related to hate crime or new-comer statistics. Nor references to increases in local migrant numbers. Therefore TEO has not evidenced taking into account the significant local increases in Hate crimes or the management of dispersal funding for migrants.*
- *EqIA references mitigation to protected groups and groups that generate an income. DCGRP generates match funding through Council and external partners which may be unusable, or at least be much less impactful. This match funding has not been taken into account.*

### Question 2

**Do you agree with TEO's assessment of the options for budget reductions?**

**Answer – NO:**

- *Match funding or in kind contributions have not been included in considerations.*
- *Valid rationale in regard to protected groups however disproportionate cut across ALBs and DCGRP/Central Good Relations (GR).*
  - *Is there an opportunity to review ALB and or consolidate delivery / methods?*
  - *Is there a balanced spread of delivery by ALB across NI Council Areas?*
- *Other department cuts range from 5-15% - why is there a proposal to cut resources for the DCGRP by 47%? This is disproportional.*
- *Council is already working within constrained budgets alongside the 'cost of living crisis'.*
- *CGRF, Task Force, T:BUC Camps and Planned Interventions programmes all rely heavily on Good Relations as the consistent element for relationships and groups and to encourage uptake of funding. There will be Immense negative impact if that is lost due to cuts.*

## ANDBC Response to EQiA on The Executive Office Budget for 23/24

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### Question 3

**Do you agree with TEO's assessment of equality impacts of the options considered for budget reductions?**

**Answer – NO:**

- *Equality impact is not fully included with the report.*
- *There is a limited response on some Section 75 groups targeted through DCGRP, and other categories of service users including the following.*
  - *young people*
  - *older people*
  - *interface areas*
  - *refugees*
  - *Asylum seekers*
  - *most vulnerable in communities*
  - *rural communities*
- *There is no reference to any analysis of other TEO programmes reaching individuals across other NI Council areas?*
- *With the reduction in DCGRP are individuals within Council areas with a low uptake of other TEO funding programmes at a greater disadvantage due to this reduction?*
- *ANDBC GR has targeted over 2300 individuals during 2022-23 from all Section 75 areas. This will now not be possible*
- *Isolation targeted through online programmes often seen as a lifeline for some.*
- *Unseen intervention work by GR not recognised by TEO.*

### Question 4

**Do you agree that TEO has correctly identified all relevant mitigations that could help reduce the adverse equality impacts of the budget reductions?**

**Answer – NO:**

- *TEO retaining £500k as emergency response budget;*
  - *how will this be used?*
  - *DCGRP responsive in nature would be best placed to utilise this funding locally.*
- *DCGRP is a TEO programme which is based on 3-yearly audits through local engagement with residents and stakeholders that is locally agreed, accountable and based on local need. Therefore it has a strong mandate on these fronts to be protected.*
- *There has not been an assessment of any locally collected data which is readily available through the annual reviews of District Council Good Relations Action Plan (DCGRAP) statistics. ANDBC delivered 35 programmes to over 2300 participants, awarded grants to build the capacity of community organisations and operated a positive cultural expression programme. Programme participants included all section 75 groups.*
- *GR has excellent reporting outcomes which are not given consideration.*

**ANDBC Response to EQiA on The Executive Office Budget for 23/24**

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**Question 5**

**Do you agree with TEO's overall assessment of the business areas where budget reductions will need to be made?**

**Answer – NO:**

- *There will be varying impacts depending on the particular Council area;*
- *Arts & Culture, Leisure impacts are not assessed.*
- *The Impact of loss of opportunities has not been assessed*
- *DCGRP is a TEO programme which is based on 3-yearly audits through local engagement with residents and stakeholders that is locally agreed, accountable and based on local need. Therefore it has a strong mandate on these fronts to be protected.*

**Question 6**

**Do you have any other comments you would like to add about this consultation?**

**Answer – YES:**

- *There is a Lack of evidence provided to support the budget reductions*
- *No reference to the statutory obligations to promote Good Relations*
- *Timing of notifications of consultation – days before an Election*
- *Impact of the disparity of cuts on delivery relationships with other agencies / ALB*
- *Anger about the disregard for DCGRP throughout EqIA, very little information / evidence included*
- *Loss of long term relationships – long term damage*
- *Loss of GR knowledge for the delivery of other funders e.g. PEACE Plus.*
- *Cuts when sectarianism at a local high*
- *Increase in Hate crime statistics*
- *Ignored the statutory duty of GR*
- *GR deal with contentious issues no one else wants*
- *Consultation shows a lack of consideration for GR work*

Unclassified

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## ITEM 10

**Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	12 June 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Community and Wellbeing
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Community & Culture
Date of Report	22 May 2023
File Reference	CD27
Legislation	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Retrospective approval Community Development Grant funding
Attachments	None

**Community groups – running costs.**

Council approval was granted in March 2023 for the provision of community development running costs to 45 community groups with a total budget of £87,320.50.

Ballygowan and District Community Association contacted Community Development staff to request an update on their application. Following investigation, it was confirmed that the application had been received on time but the e mail had been overlooked due to the large volume of applications for a number of different streams of funding open at the same time.

The application was scored on 26 April 2023 by a panel consisting of a Community Development Officer, Grants and Funding Co-Ordinator, Neighbourhood Renewal Officer and Community Arts Development Officer.

The application scored a total of 55% which deemed it eligible for funding of £950.00.

Unclassified

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Retrospective approval is sought for running costs for Ballygowan and District Community Association for 2023/24 of £950.00.

**Coronation grants**

Community Development staff were contacted on 8 March 2023 by Ms Jo Scott on behalf of Millisle Youth Forum. Ms Scott requested an update in relation to an application for a Coronation grant.

Following investigation, it was confirmed that an application had been received before the closing date. The application was scored on 9 March 2023 by a panel consisting of a Community Development Officer, the Grants and Funding Co-Ordinator and the Neighbourhood Renewal Officer and it obtained a total score of 14 out of a possible 20 marks. This was a score of 70% which deemed it eligible for funding of £500.00. The application had been omitted in error from the original Council report.

Retrospective approval is sought for a Coronation Grant 2023/24 for Millisle Youth Forum of £500.00.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council retrospectively approve the following.

1. £950.00 for running costs for Ballygowan and District Community Association, and
2. £500.00 Coronation grant funding for Millisle Youth Forum.

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**ITEM 11****Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	12 June 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism
Date of Report	15 May 2023
File Reference	TO/TD/11
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below: Not applicable
Subject	Columban Charter of Partnership - additional Information
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Columban Charter of Partnership Appendix 2 - Friends of Columbanus Objects

**Background**

As reported to the April Council meeting, a request has been received, via the Chief Executive's Office, from the Friends of Columbanus Bangor, for Ards and North Down Borough Council and Councillors, to sign up to a new 'Columban Charter of Partnership', see Appendix 1 at end of report.

At April's Council meeting Alderman McIlveen asked, "*if the works referred to were religious*" and sought further clarity in respect of the religious aspect. It was agreed that a report be brought back to Council in June to clarify aspects of the request for support.

The following is provided by way of clarification:

- Support for the Charter has been sought from Councils, bodies, and individuals across Europe, to both support the development of the Columban Way as a European walking route and to further develop the relationships between the

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nations where Columbanus had a lasting influence. This includes ROI, NI, France, Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Italy.

- In this instance, the request for support has been received from the Friends of Columbanus, Bangor. 'Friends of Columbanus' Bangor has confirmed that the group is not a religious organisation. It is a cross community, inclusive, charitable organisation that was formed in 2013 to commemorate the 1400th anniversary of Columbanus. The objectives of Friends of Columbanus Bangor are clearly stated in its constitution as per appendix 2: Friends of Columbanus Objects.
- Relationships developed to date during Columban Way work cover a range of fields as follows:
  - **Sport** - a twinning arrangement between Ballyholme Yacht Club and Andora Yacht Club each of whom now include a 'Columbanus Cup' race in their annual regattas and travel to compete in each other's events. Bangor and Imperia Rugby Club, likewise a twinning arrangement. In May 2023, an event was held to mark the first 'Tri Nations Columbanus Cup' held between clubs from NI, Italy and France with 30 children and 40 adults travelling to compete with future hosting planned to alternate between nations.
  - **Music** - Bangor Ladies and Bangor Abbey Choirs and Ards CCE, have undertaken annual exchanges to Europe with return visits from European Choirs to AND.
  - **Education** - (NB: on a European context educational activity is denoted by the heading "scientific activities"), this has included exchanges, such as Ballyholme Primary School and Columbanus College with both teachers and students exchanging and Bangor also hosting international university conferences.
  - **Walking** - various interdenominational and non-denominational trips to European legs of the Columban Way, both outward and inward bound, for both heritage and pilgrimage have taken place through relationships developed to date. All the above, aids development across the areas concerned within tourism, community engagement, cultural and heritage education.
  - **Cultural** - Over the past nine years, Friends of Columbanus Bangor have welcomed many visitors from Europe and in September 2023 will welcome 40 French from Brittany and are working with a similar group currently planning for 2024.
- Support of the Charter, by way of signature, does not bind ANDBC or individuals to any costs or future roles. Signature is an act of support for the development of the European Walking Route and associated activities, as well as the development of relationships that Council has previously supported in recent years. This has included welcoming visiting groups, the approval by Council in February 2021 of the development of the heritage trail Columban Way route from Comber to Bangor and the recently secured funding with other Local Authorities for the development of a Feasibility Study for an All Island Columban Way (currently a work in progress).
- Members, if they so wish, can sign up to support the Charter on an individual basis, an online link can be provided on request. However, 'Friends of Columbanus' Bangor considers that having the support of the full Council will demonstrate to

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other regions that Bangor continues to be one of the most important places to visit on the Columban Way.

- Individual members of the public and associations are being invited to show support by way of sign up with the aim of the NI group collecting over 1000 signatures to be presented at the official launch of the Columban Charter of Partnership on 7 July 2023 in St Gallen, Switzerland.
- Support for the Charter will, it is hoped, ultimately play a part in the Columban Way European Route becoming recognised by the European Cultural Routes Association as a European Cultural Route and with it international recognition and the potential economic benefits that could bring.
- 'Friends of Columbanus' has confirmed, "the Columban Charter of Partnership is not a religious organisation. The primary objective of the Columban Charter for Partnership is to *'help support and promote pilgrimage, cultural and scientific activities'* relating to Columbanus and his followers. The concept of 'pilgrimage' may have been misunderstood. It may historically have been a purely religious activity, but the modern understanding is much broader and includes travelling on a wide variety of routes pursuing many types of cultural and environmental interests, often associated with personal development and well-being.
- Nowhere does the Charter suggest promotion of 'religion' as such. The words, 'spiritual' and 'spirituality' do appear, but as part of a very much wider context where 'Spirituality' is has a much broader concept than 'religion'. The essential element of the Charter is, *'to work in a spirit of openness, tolerance and respect'*. The final sentence of the Charter emphasises *'each member of the partnership maintaining their full independence of freedom and action'*.
- Columbanus was a monk who studied at Bangor Abbey and whose legacy was the spread of Irish Monasticism across much of Europe and in that sense, there is a historical religious connotation. However, as highlighted above, the Columban Way and Charter are more far reaching with activities such as interdenominational walks, culture, heritage, sport, and education being the key building blocks linking the countries involved.

### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council approves this request for the Mayor of Ards and North Down to sign the 'Columban Charter of Partnership' on behalf of Ards and North Down Borough Council, with individual Councillors opting to sign in addition of their own choosing.

## **Appendix 1: Columban Charter of Partnership**

We, the undersigned, declare our intention to help support and promote pilgrimage, cultural and scientific activities relating to Saint Columbanus and to his travels and those of his followers, including Saint Gall, in all regions and countries where their memory remains alive. In particular, we commit to the following aims and purpose:

To develop and promote the pilgrimage routes that link the territories that celebrate Columbanus, Gall and their followers and that broadly follow the many journeys they took, in particular through, Ireland, Britain, France, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Liechtenstein, and Italy. Many of these pilgrimage routes are mapped out in the Via Columbani website.

To promote cultural activities that relate to these themes or are in support of the project, on an interregional and international level. To encourage cultural, educational, spiritual, and scientific exchanges of all kinds between these territories, for people of all ages and origins.

To work with scientists, scholars and teachers, to have a broader understanding of the life, historical context, work, heritage and spirituality of Columbanus, Gall and their disciples, and more generally of the Irish monastic movement in Europe.

In all of the above, to work in a spirit of openness, tolerance and respect, following the example of Columbanus and his disciples, who cherished the natural world, all creatures that inhabit it and all people, whatever their origins and beliefs. Also, to encourage partnership, peace and reconciliation between all territories, organisations and peoples.

To develop and maintain relations with European Union institutions, in particular with the Council of Europe, with the goal, in due course, of requesting certification of the Columban Way/Via Columbani as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe. In addition, to foster dialogue and exchange of good practices with other Cultural Routes on all subjects mentioned above.

### **The Context**

In the sixth to eighth centuries of our era, a time of upheaval throughout continental Europe, the monastic communities of Ireland were a haven of stability, promoting literacy and learning. These centres sent monks to mainland Europe, to found or develop communities that were later to become the great monasteries of the Middle Ages. This period is known by historians as that of the Irish Monastic Movement.

Among the first to travel across Europe were Saints Columbanus and Gall, to whom we owe the great monasteries of Luxeuil, Saint-Gallen, Bregenz and Bobbio, and the convent of Jouarre, still operating today. Many other centres were founded by their followers and disciples.

Columbanus was also a poet and writer of letters and sermons, a number of which have survived. His values were founded on peace and tolerance. He was the first to give voice to the concept of 'Europe' as a single united entity, overcoming ethnic and cultural barriers.

1400 years later, the memory of these journeys and of these teachings is still alive wherever Columbanus and Gall travelled and settled. From Columbanus' birthplace in



## **Appendix 2: Friends of Columbanus Objects**

### **3.OBJECTS**

The Society is established to advance public education and raise awareness among the general public in Northern Ireland ('the area of benefit') and to encourage appreciation of the life and work of Columbanus and his disciples and knowledge of their historical and cultural heritage.

Nowhere in the constitution is there any reference to religion save in paragraph 5 which expressly excludes any discrimination on the grounds of religion or politics:

### **5. MEMBERSHIP**

a) Membership of the Society shall be open to the following, irrespective of age, gender, ethnic identity, nationality, sexual orientation, race, religion or political opinion:

Individuals whose applications are accepted by the Committee, and who pay the annual subscription fee fixed by the Society may be admitted as Members. Members shall have the power to vote at General Meetings, and those aged 18 or over shall have the right to be nominated for election to the Committee. The Committee shall not unreasonably reject any application for membership.

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**ITEM 12****Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	12 June 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism & Head of Community and Culture
Date of Report	06 June 2023
File Reference	TO/EV105 and CD27
Legislation	
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Ards and North Down Events and Festivals Fund 23/24 - Scoring Recommendation Update
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Blank Application Form Appendix 2 - Guidance Notes to Applicants

**Background for Members**

In November 2020, the Council approved the Borough Events Strategic Direction 2021-2026 (BESD). Within the BESD, it acknowledges that local festivals and events play a key part in delivering social, cultural and economic outcomes. Council services provide grants to support festivals and events, including Community Development and Tourism.

A recommendation of the BESD is that Council should continue to support the development of the local events sector through strategic funding, training and development and advice. The Strategy recommended that this support should be better structured for event organisers, and progression routes are made available for event organisers to help run their events safely, or for those who want their events to grow. In addition, the BESD recommended combining the two Council grant budgets that supported events and festivals i.e. the Tourism Events Grant Scheme and the Community Festivals Fund.

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In October 2022 Council agreed this new fund, the "Ards and North Down Events and Festivals Fund". Through the estimates process £175,000 has been secured for 2023/24 and this amount includes match-funding from Department for Communities (DfC) estimated at £31,400.

In line with the Strategy recommendations, the Council agreed that the Fund would follow a 4-tier model, detailed in Table 1 below to include the festival/event type, criteria, allocated budget and the minimum and maximum grants for each tier.

**Table 1: Four Tier Model**

Tranche	Festival/Event	No. attending	Budget	Min-Max Grant
1	Large	Min 2,000	£98,437.50	£10,001 - £20,000
1	Medium	Min 1,001	£38,281.25	£4001 - £10,000
2	Neighbourhood	Up to 1,000	£16,406.25	£1001- £4000
2	Local	Up to 500	£21,875.00	Up to £1,000

### Department for Communities (DfC) Funding

It was reported to April's Council that DfC's matched funding was at risk due to the uncertainties around the Executive budgets, and as such only 82.06% of any approved award would be issued until such time as DfC confirmed its matched funding.

### The Application Process

Following information workshops for potential applicants held in January 2023, Tranche 1 and 2 of the Events and Festivals Fund opened for applications earlier in the year. All applications received were assessed by a panel comprised of the Community Development Manager, Events Manager, Community Development Officer, and Events Officer and assessed against an agreed scoring matrix.

Applicants were required to indicate the primary purpose of their festival or event i.e. they determined that their event outputs were primarily for economic benefit to the borough or social benefit for the community. Whilst not scored, this question assists the Tourism and Community Development Teams in providing the appropriate support for the successful event organisers.

### Reconsideration of Bangor District Loyal Orange Lodge and Comber District Loyal Orange Lodge Applications

Also included within April's report to Council was an update on the above two applications, previously reported as ineligible, which Members had requested officers to review in respect of eligibility against the published criteria of:

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*“Applications will not be accepted for the following activity: Any event/festival that is perceived to support or promote any religious or political dimension”.*

That report detailed that officers had reviewed both applications and determined that both remained considered as ineligible, and recommendation 2 of that report to Council was:

*“That the Tranche 1 applications received from Bangor and Comber Loyal Orange Lodges are ineligible for assessment”.*

At the meeting, Council agreed the following:

*‘That the Council agrees to recommendations 1 and 3 as per the report. In relation to recommendation 2 that the Council recognises the cultural significance of the Twelfth of July celebrations and scores both applications from Bangor District Loyal Orange Lodge and Comber District Loyal Orange Lodge for tranche 1 funding, bringing back the decision at the earliest opportunity.’*

### **Scoring of the Applications**

A scoring panel was convened on 4 May 2023 and both applications were scored against the agreed scoring matrix and the pass mark of 55%. The responses to the following questions were scored from 0 – 5 on the basis of 0 reflecting a failure to provide requisite detail, and 5 reflecting an excellent response, with a total overall score available of 55:

- How the event/festival achieves its aim (determined by the applicant as either Economic or Social benefit)
- How the event can be developed (including audience development) and attract attendees
- The project description
- Safety and welfare measures
- Opportunities for and supporting volunteers
- Environmental management
- Financial breakdown including income and financial sustainability
- Attendees and participant numbers and encourage local spend in the Borough
- Marketing and promotion to attract attendees

### **Bangor District LOL 18 – Boyne Anniversary – 12 July 2023**

Bangor District LOL 18’s application is for a ‘Boyne Anniversary’ event on 12 July in Ward Park, Bangor, and seeking £12,050. The Panel scored the application against the agreed scoring matrix. The application scored 38.2% therefore failed to meet the required pass mark set of 55%.

### **Comber District LOL 15 – Celebration of Orange Culture – 10-12 July 2023**

Comber District LOL 15’s application is for a ‘Celebration of Orange Culture’ event from 10 – 12 July in Park Way Playing Fields, Comber, and seeking £5,500. The

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Panel scored the application against the agreed scoring matrix. The application scored 40% therefore failed to meet the required pass mark set of 55%.

A copy of each of the blank Application Form and associated Guidance provided to applicants is attached to this report.

The Council has an Appeals Procedure and unsuccessful applicants can apply within the designated timeframe.

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council notes this report.

# ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL EVENTS AND FESTIVALS FUND 2023/2024

TRANCHE 1

## APPLICATION FORM

FOR LARGE AND MEDIUM EVENTS AND FESTIVALS  
taking place from 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

This application form should only be completed by those who are applying for either a large or medium scale event/festival

Event/Festival	Criteria	Support available
Medium	Attracts a minimum of 1,001 attendees and participants	From £4,001 - £10,000
Large	Attracts a minimum of 2,000 attendees and participants	From £10,001 - £20,000

**YOU AND YOUR ORGANISATION**

Name of your Organisation, as it appears on your governing document or set of rules.

Please indicate your organisation type

**Constituted Community Group (Please see Guidelines for a definition)**

**Limited Company**

**Charity**

Please give Company/Charity Registration No.

**Main Contact for your Organisation** (this should be the person who can answer questions on your event/application form)

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Position in Organisation</b>	
<b>Contact Address for correspondence</b>	
<b>Telephone Number</b>	
<b>E-mail address</b>	
<b>Website address for your organisation</b>	

**SECTION 1A: YOUR EVENT - INFORMATION**

**Event/Festival Name and Proposed Dates**

<b>What is the name of your event/festival?</b>	
<b>Start date [day/month/year]</b>	
<b>End date [day/month/year]</b>	
<b>Venue and Location of event/festival</b>	

**Have you confirmed this event will not coincide with a Council delivered event**  
 Yes  No

**Will your event require the use of Council Land?** Yes  No

**If yes, please detail where** \_\_\_\_\_

Please note that a separate booking **must** be completed to hire the Council Land via the Compliance Section of Ards and North Down Borough Council. Please see details in Guidance Notes.

**Is the event open to the general public (please tick)** Yes  No

**Is this a new event to Ards and North Down?** Yes  No

**Is your event free, ticketed or has elements of both?** Free  Ticketed  Both

**Which band of funding are you applying for?**

<b>Event/Festival</b>	<b>Funding available</b>	
Medium	From £4,001 - £10,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
Large	From £10,001 - £20,000	<input type="checkbox"/>

**SECTION 1B – YOUR EVENT – THE DETAIL****1.1. What is the primary aim of your event/festival (please tick only one)**

- To encourage attendees to the event/festival and enhance local economic benefit or  
 To promote community cohesion/social inclusion

**1.2 How does running your event/festival achieve this aim?**

*Max word count: 400 words*

**1.3 Please provide a description of your event/festival, i.e. the programme**

*Max word count 300 words*

**1.4 Outline the measures you have taken for the safety and welfare of attendees and participants e.g facilities at the location, toilets, food/first aid provision, car parking. (Please include your event management plan and risk assessment. If you don't have one available and are successful, officers will assist with preparation)**

*Max word count 300 words*

**1.5 Please detail how your event/festival can be developed in future years in terms of audience growth and activities for attendees**  
**OR If this is a first-time or one-off event, what do you think will attract attendees?**  
*Max word count 300 words*

**1.6 Does your event provide any opportunities for volunteers?**  
**If yes, please include what roles are available and if there are capacity building and/or training opportunities for these volunteers**  
*Max word count 300 words*

**1.7 Please detail what measures you will take to protect the environment during your event/festival. For example, consider waste, hazardous substances, travel to and from your event/festival. Please see Guidance Notes for further information on Environmental Sustainability.**  
*Max word count 300 words*



**2.3 If your event/festival is recurring, how do you plan to become more financially independent in future years? Eg securing other sources of funding, fundraising, donations, ticket sales etc**

**SECTION 3: ATTENDEES AND PARTICIPANTS**

**3.1 What is the projected number of attendees and participants at your event? Please enter figures from within and outside of the Borough.**

**Table 3.1**

	from Within the Borough	From Outside the Borough
Attendees (spectators to event)		
Participants (those who run or are part of the event)		
<b>Total</b>		

**3.2 Please provide a clear justification of how you have arrived at your projected overall attendee and participants figure above.** For example, by reference to previous years' attendance, similar events, previous tickets sold, clicker/PSNI counts.

**OR If your event is a first time or one-off event, please indicate how you will attract these totals (Max 250 words).**

**3.3 Please provide list of participant roles and a number for each role.**

For example, 5 performers/competitors, 8 volunteers, 10 stall holders etc people involved in delivering the event.

**3.4 How does your event encourage local spend within the Borough e.g spending local, partnerships with local businesses, transport, use of local suppliers, overnight stays? *Max word count 300 words***

**SECTION 4: MARKETING**

Support from Ards and North Down Borough Council must be acknowledged.

Please refer to Guidance Notes for details of the types of proof that are accepted to demonstrate delivery of your marketing.

PLEASE ADD ADDITIONAL LINES WHERE NECESSARY.

**Table 4.1**

Item/ Activity	Quantity/ Channel/ Publication	Reach (Within the Borough, NI, ROI, GB, EUROPE, REST OF WORLD)	Paid for or Not Paid for
<i>E.g. Event Facebook page</i>	<i>Six posts on the event</i>	<i>Borough wide 1,200 likes/followers</i>	<i>Free – not paid</i>
<i>TV Advertising</i>	<i>ITV</i>	<i>NI wide</i>	<i>Paid (see expenditure in table 2.1)</i>
<i>Flyers</i>	<i>5000 copies</i>	<i>Borough wide</i>	<i>Paid (see expenditure in table 2.1)</i>

Please include an estimated budget, showing a breakdown of all Marketing costs.

Please add more lines if required

**Table 4.2**

Printed Materials	£
Advertising Activity	£
Online Activity (paid for)	£
<b>Overall estimated marketing budget:</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Budget % as part of overall estimated event/festival budget</b>	<b>%</b>

**DECLARATION**

**GOVERNMENT FUNDING DATABASE**

Please refer to Guidance Notes for information on the Government Funding Database

Have you previously uploaded the following on the Funders Passport? If yes please provide your Unique Reference Number (URN) and ensure your most recent documents have been uploaded to the GFD \_\_\_\_\_

**We require all applicants to enclose the following documents with your application. If not included the application will not progress.**

**Essential documentation**

- Copy of Constitution or Memorandum of Association
- Most recent AGM Minutes / Inaugural minutes
- List of Office Bearers
- Copy of most recent audited Annual Accounts
- Most recent Bank Statement

**Please tick to confirm that you have the following insurances/policies and procedures in place. If your application is successful, we will require evidence of these.**

- Details of relevant Insurance relating to the event/festival (where appropriate)
- Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy/ Statement

We hereby agree that the above documents will be:

- (i) held on the Government Funding Database (GFD) and are the most up to date and fit for purpose for this application period; **Y/N**
- (ii) made available to other public sector funders via the GFD. **Y/N**

**Fundraising Declaration**

As per Ards and North Down Grants Policy, provision of funds to organisations to host fundraising / donation-led events is not permitted. Therefore, if your event would not go ahead without the collection of donations intended for retention by your organisation or distribution to third parties, you should not accept any grant offered.

I confirm the event/festival applied for is not a fundraising event as defined in the guidelines.

### Freedom of Information

Ards and North Down Borough Council is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This Act came into operation on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005. Applicants should be aware that the information provided in the completed application document could be disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

The Council will proceed on the basis of disclosure unless an appropriate exemption applies. No information provided by applicants will be accepted "in confidence" and Ards and North Down Borough Council will not accept liability for loss as a result of any information disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

Ards and North Down Borough Council does not have a discretion regarding whether or not to disclose information in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act, unless an exemption applies. Decisions in relation to disclosure will be taken by appropriate individuals in Ards and North Down Borough Council having due regard to the exemptions available and the Public Interest. Applicants should be aware that despite the availability of some exemptions, information may still be disclosed if the Public Interest in its disclosure outweighs the Public Interest in maintaining the exemption. Applicants are required to highlight information included in the application documents which they consider to be commercially sensitive or confidential in nature, and should state the precise reasons, why that view is taken. In particular, issues concerning trade secrets and commercial sensitivity should be highlighted. Applicants are advised against recording unnecessary information.

In accordance with the Lord Chancellors Code of Practice on the discharge of public functions, Ards and North Down Borough Council will **not** accept any contractual term that purports to restrict the disclosure of information held by the Council in respect of the contract or grant process save as permitted by the Freedom of Information Act. The decision whether to disclose information rests solely with Ards and North Down Borough Council.

Ards and North Down Borough Council will consult with applicants, where it is considered appropriate, in relation to the release of controversial information.

### Data Protection

Ards and North Down Borough Council values your right to personal privacy. We collect this information solely for the purposes of this application and do not share it with anyone. We comply with the DPA (Data Protection Act) 2018 and UK GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), ensuring that information is collected fairly and lawfully, is accurate, adequate, secure, up to date and not held any longer than necessary.

For further information our Privacy Statement can be viewed at <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/privacy-and-cookies>

### Equality of Opportunity, Section 75 and Good Relations.

Ards and North Down Borough Council is required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- men and women generally

- persons with a disability or without
- persons with dependants or without.

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, Council is required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Council is committed to fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties across all functions (including service provision, employment and procurement)

**Please tick the box to confirm you have read the Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Equality statements above**

**We declare that this application is made with the authority and consent of the above organisation and that the information provided is true, accurate and complete.**

Name (in capitals):

Position held:

Signature (on behalf of the applicant):

Date:

Name (in capitals):

Position held:

Signature (on behalf of the applicant):

Date:

**Completed application forms and supporting documentation should be forwarded by no later than: 4.00pm on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023. Please submit your application as a PDF document.**

Please note: **Late or Incomplete applications will not be considered**

**Applications will not be reviewed by the Grants Team until after the closing date and time.**

**Return to**

Email (preferable) [eventsandfestivalsgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:eventsandfestivalsgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

By post to: **Visitor Information Centre, Tower House, 34 Quay Street, Bangor, BT20 5ED.**

**ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL  
EVENTS AND FESTIVALS FUND 2023/2024**

**TRANCHE 1**

**GUIDANCE NOTES**

**FOR LARGE AND MEDIUM EVENTS AND FESTIVALS  
taking place from 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024**

These guidance notes are for those who are applying for either a large or medium scale event/festival

Event/Festival	Criteria	Funding available
Medium	Attracts a minimum of 1,001 attendees and participants	From £4,001 - £10,000
Large	Attracts a minimum of 2,000 attendees and participants	From £10,001 - £20,000

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**Ards and North Down Borough Council Events and Festivals Fund 2023-2024****Closing Date**                      **Wednesday 1 February at 4pm****PLEASE NOTE LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.****Aim of the Events and Festivals Fund**

The aim of the fund is to provide grant aid for events and festivals which can demonstrate a positive economic and/or social impact within the Borough of Ards and North Down.

**Background**

The Events and Festivals Fund is a new grant scheme replacing the AND Tourism Event Scheme and the Community Festivals Fund.

There will be two Tranches of the Fund (subject to budget from rates setting process):

Tranche 1, for medium and large events and festivals. Opening annually in January  
Tranche 2, for small and neighbourhood events and festivals. Opening annually in February.

This application form is for Tranche 1, medium and large-scale events and festivals, which attract the attendee/participant numbers in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

<b>Event/Festival</b>	<b>Application Criteria</b>	<b>Budget available</b>
Medium	Attracts a minimum of 1,001 attendees and participants	From £4,001 - £10,000
Large	Attracts a minimum of 2,000 attendees and participants	From £10,001 - £20,000

**Eligibility Criteria**

Applicants must deliver an event or festival that meets the necessary criteria below.

An event or festival is defined as a **one-off event or festival, or a series of related events delivered over a defined time period** e.g delivered over multiple weekends.

Organisations/groups can only apply for funding from **one** Tranche and band, for **one** event. This is a competitive grants scheme and applications will be determined on the basis of merit.

- The Events and Festivals Fund is open for applications from appropriately constituted not for profit organisations, including Limited Companies and Charities.
- Applicants must deliver an event or festival in the Borough of Ards and North Down, between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

An event/festival must:

- Demonstrate either a positive economic or social impact within the borough (or both);
- Encourage tourism and local investment by attracting attendees and participants, including those from outside the Borough (for medium and large events and festivals);
- Enable communities to celebrate and encourage cultural expression, enhance community relations and promote community cohesion and social inclusion.
- Support the development and capacity of the local events/community sectors
- Enhance community pride and wellbeing during a period of austerity.

### **Ineligible Applications**

Applications will **not** be accepted from the following:

- Individuals or sole traders;
- Trade or professional conferences/conventions;
- Organisations not legally established in the UK;
- Events and festivals run on the same date as a Council run event and require the use of Council equipment/assets, are not eligible.

And for the following activity:

- Ongoing operational costs
- Retrospective activity (events/festivals which have already taken place or where expenditure was incurred before a grant award was confirmed);
- Any event/festival that is perceived to support or promote any religious or political dimension
- Events/festivals that are substantially fundraising vehicles, whether for the event organisation itself or to raise funds for transmission to a third party.

### **General principles which apply to the Events and Festivals Fund**

- Applications to this fund will be open to all events and festivals that can meet the general principles and criteria of the fund, irrespective of whether they are established or emerging events/festivals.
- Event/Festivals will be required to demonstrate a positive and measurable impact on the local community and/or economy.
- Events/Festivals are encouraged to apply to other sources of support or if appropriate, maximise income through ticket sales and sponsorship to add value to the festival. They should develop a plan to improve their sustainability and reduce reliance on public funding.
- Events/Festivals should contribute to the promotion of a positive image of the Borough and organisers must take steps to avert anti-social behaviour.
- Organisations in receipt of public funding must comply with all statutory obligations regarding the safe delivery of and access to their events/festivals
- It is a prime responsibility of Government to ensure the proper and efficient use of and the accountability of public monies. To this end, festivals will be required to provide relevant supporting information when applying for funding.

## THE APPLICATION PROCESS - GUIDANCE

Ards and North Down Borough Council wish to support quality, unique events and festivals that can demonstrate a positive economic and/or social impact.

The following guidance will assist completion of the application form. It is not enough to repeat what is written in the guidance within the answers of your application. It is important to be realistic and open in your responses as, if successful, some conditions within your Letter of Offer will be based on information in your application

### SECTION 1A: YOUR EVENT - INFORMATION

Please answer this section fully and provide accurate details about your event to include festival/event title, start and end date venue and location (including any specific event dates during the event festival period).

Events and Festivals run on the same date as a Council run event and require the use of Council equipment/assets, are not eligible. Check the dates and times of Council run events here by contacting [eventsandfestivalsgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:eventsandfestivalsgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk) . You are asked to confirm this will be the case by ticking the box.

If your event requires use of Council land, this must be booked at least 3 months in advance of your event to enable approval by Council. To apply for permission please contact the Compliance Section, [landrequests@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:landrequests@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk) or telephone 028 91824075.

#### **Road Closures**

You should be aware that if a road is to be closed as part of your festival, that appropriate permission must be applied for. To seek further advice and apply for Road Closure permission please contact the Licensing and Regulatory Services Section, [david.brown@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:david.brown@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk) or telephone 0300 013 3333

### SECTION 1B: YOUR EVENT - THE DETAIL

#### **1.1 Please indicate the primary aim of your event/festival, is it**

- **To encourage attendees to the event/festival and enhance local economic benefit**
- **To promote community cohesion/social inclusion**

Whilst some events/festivals may demonstrate they meet both aims, you must only tick one as your primary aim.

#### **1.2 How does running your event/festival achieve this aim? (scored 1-5)**

How does the event/festival encourage attendees and generate local economic benefit for the Borough? What opportunities there will be for attendees to spend money e.g. spending local by attendees or the delivery of the event, partnerships with local businesses, transport, use of local suppliers or overnight stays? Have you engaged with local shops/businesses, or considered an arrangement with local

shops/accommodation provider e.g., you show your event ticket to get a discount? Will the event promote the Borough bringing additional attendees/participants and spend.

OR

How your event promotes community cohesion/social inclusion e.g. equality and target poverty and social exclusion. Outline how your festival will enable communities to celebrate and encourage cultural expression whilst enhancing community relations and provide equality of opportunity.

**1.3 Please provide a description of your event/festival, i.e the programme (scored 1-5)**

What will an attendee see/experience? Does the event/festival have a Unique Selling Point (USP) e.g. does it use performers from the Borough? Is it unique to the area? Does the event/festival utilise the natural and cultural assets of the Borough or tell a story about local historical or heritage sites. Can attendees get involved in the event/festival in terms of learning new skills or engaging in arts and crafts or a leisure activity? Does the theme/subject of the event/festival support positive community involvement or mental and physical health?

**1.4 Outline the measures you have taken for the safety and welfare of attendees and participants at your event e.g facilities at the location, toilets, food/first aid provision, car parking. (Please include your event management plan and risk assessment. If you don't have one available and are successful, officers will assist with preparation) (scored 1-5)**

Where appropriate, the provision of toilets, seating and standing areas, a selection of food providers, ease and location of car parking etc. How have you ensured all section 75 groups are able to attend your event/festival?

**1.5 Please detail how your event/festival can be developed in future years in terms of audience growth and activities for attendees**

**OR If this is a first-time or one-off event, what do you think will attract attendees? (scored 1-5)**

How do you intend to attract a new audience. Have you added new elements to your event? Have you extended days, perhaps marketed to further afield to develop your audience?

OR

How will you market your event to your target audience?

If you have an audience development plan, please include this with the application.

**1.6 Does your event provide any opportunities for volunteers?**

**If yes, please include what roles are available and if there are capacity building and/or training opportunities for these volunteers (scored 1-5)**

What are your volunteer roles and what training will be provided e.g. marshalling, first aid, Welcome Host training? How many volunteers will be recruited and how do you aim to do this?

**1.7 Please detail what measures you will take to protect the environment during your event/festival. For example, consider waste, hazardous substances, travel to and from your event/festival. (Please include your Environmental Management Plan, if you have one) (scored 1-5)**

For example, environmental sustainability, waste, how does your event/festival promote sustainable transport such as bike parks, any partnership with Translink, park and ride services etc, encourage the use of public transport? How are you managing waste disposal/storage and recycling?

## SECTION 2: FINANCE (scored 1-5, weighted x2)

### Table 2.1

Please provide a realistic budget breakdown for your event, to include:

- Itemised Event/Festival Expenditure e.g. Marketing and advertising costs, performers fees, road closure fees etc.
- Expenditure and Income – please be as accurate as possible.
- Where is your Income coming from - Please indicate where you intend to secure your income from e.g. this application to Council, your own funds, sponsorship, other grant (N.B. other Council funding cannot be used in conjunction with this application) income from ticket sales, in kind support etc.
- Offered/Awaiting Confirmation – for each source of income please advise if the funding is secured, awarded or if you are awaiting confirmation and if so when do you expect confirmation.

### Table 2.2

Please detail

- total cost and income for your event i.e. Total expenditure/income in Table 2.1.
- The Total Grant sought from Council is the total amount of funding sought from Council as detailed in Table 2.1 above

The table below lists eligible and ineligible costs. Please note this list is not exhaustive

Eligible Costs	Ineligible Costs
Event Costs (including entertainment/performer costs, equipment hire, venue hire/ security / Health and Safety/First Aid	Bank Fees/Bank Charges/ Interest Charges/ Bank Commission / Tax and VAT Payments /Accountancy Fees /Corporation Tax

Marketing– Advertising / PR Activities / Advertising Promotional Material/ Media Monitoring / Promoter fee / Market Research/Event Evaluation	Staff salaries / freelance fees / consultancy fees
Judges' Fees/Accommodation/Travel	Hospitality – The cost of alcohol cannot be claimed in any context/circumstance.
Road closures (including licence, stewarding/traffic management costs)	Capital Repayments /Capital Expenditure e.g. equipment such as cameras or computers etc
Bidding Costs (for clarification, please contact the Grants Team)	Hospitality (such as sponsors dinners etc) Alcohol cannot be claimed in any context.
Prize Awards and Trophies (NOT cash prizes)	Cash Payments/Transactions including Petty Cash
Administration Costs (excluding wages)	Legal Fees
Event/Festival Insurance	Membership Fees
Participants and volunteers catering (NO alcohol)	Charitable Donations
	Liquor Licences
	Prize Fund - Cash
	Event Management Fees
	Rates/ Fuel /Electricity/Rent / Phone Bills

### 2.3 If your event/festival is recurring, how do you plan to become more financially independent in future years? Eg securing other sources of funding, fundraising, donations, ticket sales etc

Tell us how you intend to attract other sources of income to become increasingly finally independent?

## SECTION 3: ATTENDEES AND PARTICIPANTS

### 3.1 Projected attendee and participant numbers

Please enter your attendee and participant numbers in table 3.1.

### 3.2 Please provide a clear justification of how you have arrived at your projected attendee and participants figures above. (scored 1-5)

For events/festivals that have taken place before, draw on past years to provide the justification for your estimates, for example:

- have you measured attendance at your event in the past, via ticket sales (don't forget complimentary tickets) competition giveaways or police counts, clickers/drone footage?
- did you conduct surveys at previous events/festivals (please mention sample size, when survey took place etc)?

**OR If your event is a first time or one-off event, please indicate how you will attract these totals** If your event is a first time or a one-off event, you could benchmark against similar events/festivals to gauge the potential attendance for your event. Take into consideration the capacity of the event venue/site.

**3.3 Participant numbers and roles and a number for each role**

A participant is someone who is there to run the event/festival or is part of the event/festival. Participants may include: performers/competitors, marshals, media/journalists, crew, production staff, volunteers

Please provide us with a list of expected participants and the roles they will take in the event/festival.

**3.4 How does your event encourage local spend within the Borough (scored 1-5)**

This could include encouraging attendees and participants to **spend locally**, including **partnerships with local businesses**, transport, use of **local suppliers**, overnight stays resulting in **bednights**. You must clearly state how you hope to achieve this and give specific examples and data as available or relevant. Please list all relevant to your event/festival and explain how the event does this. If bednights will be achieved, please clarify if these are attendees/and or participant bednights and how this will be achieved.

**SECTION 4: MARKETING**

In **Section 4**, we ask how you intend to market your event/festival, within and outside of the Borough. **(scored 1-5)**

**Table 4.1**

Please complete table 4.1 with details of how you plan to market your event/festivals, examples have been provided in the table and below.

**Item/Activity**

<p><b>Print Opportunities, such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flyers</li> <li>• Brochures</li> <li>• Billboards</li> <li>• Adshels</li> <li>• Telephone box advertising</li> <li>• Bus advertising</li> </ul>	<p><b>Paid for Advertising Opportunities, such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Press advertising</li> <li>• Magazine advertising</li> <li>• Television advertising</li> <li>• Radio advertising</li> <li>• Online advertising</li> </ul>
<p><b>PR Opportunities, such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Press releases in newspapers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Online Opportunities, such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facebook advertising</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photo opportunities</li> <li>• Speaking at launch events</li> <li>• Press releases in magazines</li> <li>• Radio interview</li> <li>• Television interview</li> <li>• Television coverage/programmes</li> <li>• Outside broadcasts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Twitter posts</li> <li>• Facebook posts</li> <li>• Blogs</li> <li>• Ezines</li> <li>• Website listing / banners</li> </ul>
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**Quantity/Channel/Publication**

If you are providing print materials such as flyers, posters etc, please indicate the quantity you will be printing.

For advertising, please let us know the publication/radio station/TV station etc. For example, press ad in the Chronicle, 20 second radio ad on Q Radio running over 2 weeks, TV ad on UTV over 2 weeks

**Reach**

This is the amount of people that will see/hear the advertising indicated and where. For example, a press ad in the Chronicle for 1 week, the reach could be 200,000 weekly readers throughout the Borough. Or Facebook posts for 3 weeks leading up to the event, the reach could be 3,000 followers.

**Paid for or NOT Paid for**

Examples of Paid For marketing could be adverts on the radio/TV, sponsored Facebook posts, press ads.

Examples of Not Paid For marketing could include a press release that is sent to a number of publications, Facebook posts on the event/festival Facebook page, mentions on sponsors websites, adverts in free publications.

**Table 4.2 Please include an estimated budget showing the breakdown of the event Marketing costs. We would expect that a minimum of 10% be spent on marketing and PR.**

Printed Materials	£5,000
Advertising Activity	£5,000
Online Activity (paid for)	£2,000
<b>Overall estimated marketing budget:</b>	<b>£12,000</b>
<b>Budget % as part of overall estimated event budget</b>	<b>10%</b>

**SCORING**

The answers to each of the questions above will be given a score out of 5 using the matrix detailed in the Table below. NB no weighting will be applied.

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Score</b>
Excellent response that fully answers the question. Indicates an excellent response with detailed supporting evidence and no weaknesses.	5
A good response to the question with good supporting evidence.	4
Meets Requirements. The response generally answers the question but lacks sufficient detail to warrant a higher mark.	3
A response with reservations. Lacks convincing detail to demonstrate that the proposed response answers the question	2
An unacceptable response with serious reservations. Very limited detail to demonstrate that the proposed response answers the question.	1
The applicant failed to address the question.	0

**DEADLINE**

The Events and Festivals Fund will close at on **Wednesday 1 February 2023 at 4pm** Incomplete applications or those received after this time will NOT be considered.

**Return to**

Email (preferable) [eventsandfestivalsgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:eventsandfestivalsgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

By post to: **Visitor Information Centre, Tower House, 34 Quay Street, Bangor, BT20 5ED.**

**TIMETABLE**

<b>Closing Date</b>	<b>Wed 1 Feb 2023 at 4pm</b>
<b>Acknowledgement of completed Application</b>	<b>Within one week of the closing date</b>
<b>Assessment by Grants Panel</b>	<b>w/c 6 February 2023</b>
<b>Ratification of awards by Council</b>	<b>w/c 27 March 2023</b>
<b>Notification of Grant Award (subject to normal rates setting process)</b>	<b>w/c 3 April 2023</b>

**WHAT HAPPENS NEXT**

If your application is unsuccessful, you will be notified via email with reasons why. You will be sent a copy of Council appeal procedure which you should follow if you feel you disagree with the outcome of the assessment.

If your Application is successful, we will:

- arrange a meeting with Council officers to discuss and agree the proposed **Letter of Offer (LoO)** conditions and our requirements for the evaluation of your event/festival. Evaluation expectations will be in line with the level of your grant award.
- send you a LoO confirming the amount of the award and detailing the conditions attached to the award. The Form of Acceptance within the LoO must be signed and returned within 4 weeks of the date printed on the LoO.
- You will be required to provide appropriate insurance, risk assessments and an event management plan (EMP) **at least 3 months** before the start of your event/festival, or as soon as possible after receiving confirmation of a grant (Council officers will provide a template for the EMP or your risk assessment if required).

You should expect a visit from a Council officer during the event who will observe/check that you are compliant with any relevant conditions within your LoO.

Additional information:

**GOVERNMENT FUNDING DATABASE (GFD)**

Ards and North Down Borough Council has adopted the Northern Ireland Executive's Best Practice Principles to reduce bureaucracy through the use of the Government Funding Database. The GFD requires the Council to input details of all successful applicants onto the database. The information entered on to the Government Funders Database can then be shared across funding organisations. All subsequent

fundere who wish to fund the same voluntary/community organisation can then access this information, rather than applicants providing multiple copies to each funder.

Please contact [eventsandfestivalsgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:eventsandfestivalsgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk) if you need any more information on the Government Funding Database.

## **SAFEGUARDING**

Individuals and organisations working with children, young people and/or adults who may be vulnerable must have an existing policy that ensures good practice guidelines are followed.

You can adopt the Council's Safeguarding policy if your organisation does not have a policy in place by signing and returning the **Confirmation of Safeguarding arrangements** form at Appendix 1 of the Council's Safeguarding Policy.

This is available to download at: [www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/about-the-Council/safeguarding](http://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/about-the-Council/safeguarding).

The signed form should be returned along with your acceptance of the LoO.

Ards and North Down Borough Council have developed a Toolkit to assist in organising a safe and successful event. The toolkit and other relevant templates can be accessed at

[Event Management Toolkit](#)

## **CONTACTS**

Email [eventsandfestivalsgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:eventsandfestivalsgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

By post to: **Visitor Information Centre, Tower House, 34 Quay Street, Bangor, BT20 5ED.**

Unclassified

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## ITEM 13

## Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council
Date of Meeting	12 June 2023
Responsible Director	Director of Environment
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Waste and Cleansing Services
Date of Report	26 April 2023
File Reference	47045
Legislation	Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Delegated Authority Request for Environment Committee
Attachments	None

Members will be aware that as part of the budget setting process for the current year, it was agreed to implement a new on-line based booking system for managing access of the Council's HRCs. Accordingly, officers have been working with the software service provider to develop and finalise the design and functionality of the system, and a report in this regard is scheduled for the meeting of the Environment Committee to be held on 14 June 2023. The current year's HRC waste management budget is predicated upon the implementation of the new arrangements.

In order to assist with meeting the target implementation date for the new access management system of Monday 4 September 2023 and maximise the time available to roll out an effective communications campaign in advance, delegated authority is sought for the Environment Committee to approve of the format and functionality of the new booking system – enabling commencement of the communications campaign to commence immediately thereafter.

Unclassified

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that delegated authority is granted to the Environment Committee to approve a report on the format and functionality of the new online booking system for HRC access management.

## **Engagement Exercise on the proposal to legislate for further six month extensions of the 'Live Links' provisions within Parts 1 and 2 of Schedule 27 of the Coronavirus Act 2020**

The Department is writing to seek your views and those of your colleagues/members within your organisation or profession on the proposal that the Department should continue to utilise the power provided at section 90(2) of the Coronavirus Act 2020 to extend the expiry date of the Act's provisions on live links, in September 2023 and beyond while we await the return of a Northern Ireland Executive, to support progression of court and tribunal business.

One of the Department's priorities is to maintain the delivery of public services as sustainably, effectively and efficiently as possible. The objective, if a further extension is made, is not only to optimise the benefit of the significant investment made on an enhanced digital court environment but to meet the needs of court users.

The Department carried out a public consultation on the use of 'live links' in 2022. Responses provided evidence of wide support to retain the use of live links relying upon the judiciary determining whether the use of live links was in the interests of justice for any particular case or participant.

The current provisions contained in section 90(2) of the Coronavirus Act 2020 are due to expire in September 2023. In the absence of a Minister, it will fall to the Department to consider whether any further extension of these live links provisions should be made.

Further information on the context for the Department's proposal is enclosed.

We invite you to express your view on any matters you consider relevant to the approach being undertaken in regard to this policy by completing the attached Question and Answer section and returning it to [maire.sheehan@justice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:maire.sheehan@justice-ni.gov.uk) by 4 July 2023.

Any queries about the process or the issues raised should be directed to Máire in the first instance.

### **Context of the Department's Proposal**

The improvement and modernisation of our courts and tribunals has been a key priority for the Department of Justice. You will be aware these provisions facilitate the wider use of audio and video conferencing within any court or statutory tribunal so that the judge if satisfied it is 'in the interests of justice' can conduct all or part of any proceedings using live links.

The facilitation for remote or hybrid hearings remains essential if matters suitable for remote attendance and the recognised benefits mentioned in the Lady Chief Justice's Guidance of May 2023 are to be retained. While in November 2021 the Department's estimate was there may be a need for at least 3 six month extensions, in the absence of Ministers and a functioning Assembly the Department must consider whether additional extensions are required.

Although there was overwhelming support within the recent public consultation to retain access to the wider use of live links as part of the courts and tribunals modernisation agenda, any future legislation to be introduced in the Northern Ireland Assembly will be determined by an incoming Minister. The timing or progression of any draft legislation within the Northern Ireland Assembly will be subject to the priorities established by an incoming Executive, Assembly Committee for Justice and Minister for Justice.

Even if a decision is taken to introduce legislation in the Assembly to make provision for live links to be used in the future there is likely to be a continuing need for the 2020 Act provisions to be retained until such times as the new provisions are in place.

The extension of these powers allows the continuation of improving access to justice in a proportionate way while making use of available resources including the use of new technologies and digital working. The alternative is not to make extension orders and return, in particular the criminal courts, to relying on in person hearings for most remands as well as any hearings, whether contests or pleas.

Any extended use of remote/hybrid court access has to take appropriate account of the section 75 equality duty and obligations as well as protecting the right to a fair trial. The Department continues to review periodically the equality screening assessment conducted on live links.

The Department considers there is risk of significant detriment to the provision of a public service should the access to these powers for remote or hybrid hearings be lost. There is loss of the benefits for those caught up in legal proceedings who may find remote attendance less intimidating than attending in court as well as improved safety for some lay parties, particularly in cases involving allegations of abuse, alongside the opportunity to realise an advantage for public finances and carbon reduction.

### **Evidence from and since the Public Consultation on Live Links**

An earlier engagement exercise conducted in November 2021 as well as the more recent public consultation in 2022 suggests there is nothing seriously contentious in regard to a policy of retaining the live links provisions within the 2020 Act until new

legislation could be put in place by a functioning Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive.

The 2022 public consultation on live links provided evidence of wide support from respondents to retain the use of live links relying upon the judiciary determining whether the use of live links was in the interests of justice for any particular case or participant.

Since the public consultation<sup>1</sup> launched in the summer of 2022 was completed, the Department published a summary of the responses<sup>2</sup> which included a precis of a report upon qualitative analysis research conducted by the independent Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA) on remote and hybrid hearings.

In summary participants to the NISRA project reported an overall positive experience 'conducting business' using remote technology. It was summarised as "feedback suggests some civil cases worked quite well remotely whilst, many family cases benefitted from a more hybrid approach. Criminal cases of a more serious nature tended to work better in a face to face environment". Participants also strongly felt there was a need for a consistent approach and expressed a perception that individual judges have different preferences towards remote hearings.

In addition, the recent Ministry of Justice (MoJ) report on "The impact of remote hearings<sup>3</sup> on the Crown Court" suggests there is "little meaningful differences found in efficiency or effectiveness" when remote/hybrid hearings are used. The MoJ research found that there were only small reductions in hearing durations with remote/hybrid hearings such as for Plea and Trial Preparation Hearings but little or no impact on total case duration or number of hearings required in a case. The analysis of trial case outcomes suggested there are no impacts on the wider outcomes. Hybrid/Remote plea hearings didn't impact the proportion of cases which required a trial. There was an insignificant difference associated with remote/hybrid plea hearings in that "slightly more guilty pleas were given and less dropped cases or no pleas entered". The analysis also found there was a very small, and therefore not likely to be meaningful, reduction in discharges for those cases going to trial but having a remote/hybrid plea hearing had no impact on convictions, acquittals or not guilty verdicts.

### **Further Developments for the Courts**

More recently, in May 2023, the Lady Chief Justice issued new Guidance titled "Guidance on Physical (In-Person), Remote and Hybrid Attendance". This replaces

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<sup>1</sup> July 2022 'Audio and Video links for Northern Ireland Court and Tribunal Hearings'

<sup>2</sup> [Audio and Video Links Live Links Consultation Responses | Department of Justice \(justice-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> It is clear that the remote hearings considered within this research would be viewed/described as "hybrid" in this jurisdiction given that remote encapsulated a court hearing "where at least one participant attends through audio or video rather than being in-person."

the earlier June 2022 Guidance. The May 2023 Guidance stresses that all should attend court in person unless a judge has decided they can attend remotely. There is general guidance indicating the type of hearings or court business where in person attendance is expected, in particular by counsel or solicitors.

The guidance is clear that in the absence of an application made in advance by email to attend remotely, the expectation is in person attendance. There is also guidance on matters which generally could be suitable for remote attendance. E-link below is provided to the guidance and hard copy can be provided on request.

The May 2023 Guidance was followed by revised Sightlink Guidance<sup>4</sup> issued by the Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service (NICTS) essentially to ensure all court users were informed of new operational arrangements for accessing court hearings remotely. The Department's understanding is that the new arrangements, as the earlier arrangements were, will be subject to review.

Increased use of technology for court and tribunal business not only forms part of the Department's plan but the Lady Chief Justice, Dame Siobhan Keegan KC, in her opening of term address in September 2022 identified as a key priority moving forward with modernisation of the system.<sup>5</sup> The May 2023 guidance records that it is essential the recognised benefits from the use of digital technology within the courts, for certain types of cases or evidence to be given, is retained while also maintaining the integrity and structure of the court.

There continues to be investment in improving the technology required to facilitate hearings using live links and this engagement exercise forms part of the continuing effort to collect evidence on the Northern Ireland experience of live links. We continue to monitor research emanating from neighbouring jurisdictions alongside any research conducted within Northern Ireland.

### **Extension of Live Links provisions past and future**

The first order<sup>6</sup> extending the live links provisions within the 2020 Act was made in January 2022 and approved by the Northern Ireland Assembly on 1 March 2022. The then Minister, in September 2022, made a further order<sup>7</sup> extending these provisions until late March 2023. The 2020 Act only allows the provisions to be extended for up to six months at a time. The Department considered and concluded

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<sup>4</sup> Remote/Hybrid Hearings– SightLink Technical Guidance – Updated May 2023

<sup>5</sup> The Judicial Modernisation Paper issued in autumn 2021 by the Lady Chief Justice established a shared view of the way forward across the inter-reliant areas of courts estate, service re-design, and digital transformation. It fed into the Vision 2030 project which is a shared commitment by the Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service, the Department of Justice and the judiciary to deliver a modernised, efficient and effective courts and tribunals system. [Judicial Modernisation Paper September 2021.pdf \(judiciaryni.uk\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Extension of Provisions Related to Courts, Tribunals and Inquests) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022; SR 2022 No 24

<sup>7</sup> The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Extension of Provisions Relating to Live Links for Courts and Tribunals) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022; 2022 No 227

there was a public interest in making a further order before the September 2022 extension expired. The alternative was not to make the extension order and return, in particular the criminal courts, to relying on in person hearings for most remands as well as any hearings, contested charges or pleas.

The Department, at that time, had taken account of the guidance issued by the Lady Chief Justice, in June 2022, which identified this digital tool accompanied by the increased digital experience of judges as providing a platform for wider reforms to improve access to justice. It observed how essential the retention of live links is as the justice system "moves towards and beyond recovery from the pandemic".

Former Justice Minister Long engaged with ministerial colleagues about the September 2022 extension and "a third extension order in March 2023". The extensions were put forward as a means of bridging the gap between the "public consultation, consideration of responses and legislating in the Assembly for use of live links in Northern Ireland". All indicated they were content for access to live links to be maintained.

Loss of remote disposal of court business may impact efforts to address the backlog caused by Covid 19. Any additional delay for the resolution of disputes or criminal trials has an adverse impact upon victims, witnesses and defendants as well as access to justice more generally.

In light of the budget for 2023/24 announced by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, all public services are operating against a background of budgetary restraint. Many stakeholders have identified savings of time in travel or from the removal of sitting around courts waiting to be called to provide evidence. This has increased flexibility in the allocation of resources previously lost when having to attend or accompany others to court.

Many of the concerns expressed in earlier years have been addressed partly or fully, whether by familiarity with the technology or the recent guidance on Remote, In-Person and Hybrid Hearings. The Department continues to liaise with operational colleagues to explore potential legislative or administrative solutions to some of the issues arising out of the public consultation responses. Operational colleagues are aware of the request for clearer guidance for participants on entering a court remotely.

Exploration of how the technology available can be improved to enhance the experience of the user continues while user feedback has been reflected in changes and enhancements introduced. NICTS continue to evaluate options to build on or replace the existing conferencing products to provide enhanced functionality. The monitoring of usage will continue to ensure any investment is justifiable.

## Engagement - Q & A

The Department of Justice supports an extension to ensure that courts and tribunals can continue to function as efficiently as possible in a way which does not impede access to Justice. The Department set out both in the November 2021 engagement and the 2022 public consultation our approach to the use of live links against the standards established under domestic and international obligations.

### Q.1

Which of the following best describes your view on the proposal to make further extensions of live links provisions? (indicate/tick as appropriate)	
I think the provisions for remote hearings should continue to be extended beyond September 2023.	
I think the provisions for remote hearings should be extended beyond September 2023 but not beyond March 2024.	
I do not think the provisions for remote hearings should be extended beyond September 2023.	
I am Unsure	
I have no view	

### Q.2

Can you indicate the business area/s which best describe the access or use of live links made by you or your organisation? (indicate/tick as appropriate including multiple areas where relevant)						
Criminal	Family	Commercial	Judicial Review	Personal Injury	Court of Appeal	Other/Tribunal (please state)
Can you indicate the court tier/s which best describe the access or use of live links made by you or your organisation? (indicate/tick as appropriate including multiple areas where relevant)						
Magistrates' Court	Crown Court	County Court	High Court	Court of Appeal Civil	Court of Appeal criminal	Other/Tribunal

Additional comments/observations

Please respond to the Department by 4 July 2023.

## Engagement- Q & A

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Magistrates' Court	Crown Court	County Court	High Court	Court of Appeal Civil	Court of Appeal criminal	Other/Tribunal

**Additional comments/observations**

Please respond to the Department by 4 July 2023.

Unclassified

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**ITEM 17****Ards and North Down Borough Council**

Report Classification	Unclassified
Council/Committee	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting	12 June 2023
Responsible Director	Chief Executive
Responsible Head of Service	
Date of Report	05 June 2023
File Reference	CG 12172
Legislation	Local Government Act (NI) 2014
Section 75 Compliant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If other, please add comment below:
Subject	Notice of Motion
Attachments	Notice of Motion Status Report

Please find attached a Status Report in respect of Notices of Motion.

This is a standing item on the Council agenda each month and its aim is to keep Members updated on the outcome of motions. Please note that as each motion is dealt with it will be removed from the report.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Council notes the report.

NOM REF	DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN	Officer Recommendation	Letter /Reminder prompt 4 weeks if no response received
	21/01/19	Shelter at slipway in Donaghadee	Councillor Brooks & Cllr Smith	Jan-19	Environment Committee	Agreed	TBC	Officers awaiting feedback from potential funder		
	10/05/21	That officers are tasked to bring back a Report on how the Council might approach a Climate Change Action Plan and perhaps including - but not limited to - a review of all Council long-term investment, a Borough-wide engagement via an Innovation Lab, a Conference of Ideas, and values-based recommendations for next steps.	Councillors Walker & Egan	Jun-21	Environment Committee – October 2021 (deferred from September Committee)	Agreed	TBC	Various strands of work taking place across different departments on development of Council Climate Action Plan - led within Corporate Services Directorate.		
	13.04.22	Environmental damage caused by modern day packaging	Councillors McRandal and Douglas	Apr-22	Environment Committee – June 2022	Agreed		Report to be brought back - TBC.		
	5.07.2022	That this Council changes the name of Queen's Parade to Queen's Platinum Jubilee Parade in honour and recognition of the 70th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne. *** Amendment Received from Councillor Cathcart - That this Council, in recognition of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and her conferment of City Status upon Bangor, agrees to name an appropriate place or building within Bangor in her honour and that future Council Bangor entrance signs make reference to Bangor being a Platinum Jubilee City.	Alderman Irvine & Keery	Jul-22	Environment Committee - September 2022	Amended and agreed		Sept 2022 - Recommendation to Council that item is referred to Corporate Services Committee and report to be brought to a future meeting		

NOM REF	DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN	Officer Recommendation	Letter /Reminder prompt 4 weeks if no response received
	22.08.22	Street Clutter Audit for the Borough	Councillor Dunlop and Councillor Douglas	Sep-22	Environment Committee – October 2022	Agreed	Reported to October 2022 EC Committee	Report to be brought back		
	19.09.22	Establishment of an Animal Abuse Register for the Borough and write to the DAERA Minister to ask for the introduction of Lucy's Law and Reggie's Law for Northern Ireland.	Councillor T Smith and Councillor Cooper Amendment received from Councillor Woods	Sep-22	Environment Committee October 2022	Agreed	Reported to October 2022 EC Committee	Report to be brought back –June 2023		
	21.09.22	Humane control of Pigeons in Conway Square, Newtownards	Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Sep-22	Environment Committee 2022	Agreed	Reported to October 2022 EC Committee	Signage has been erected in Conway Square		
	9.11.22	That Council task officers to work with The National Trust to source external funding to develop and regenerate the Car Park at both Glastry Clay Pits & Knockinelder Bay for the benefit of residents and tourists alike in seeking to deliver the Councils Tourism Strategy for the Ards Peninsula	Councillors Adair & Thompson	Nov-22	Environment Committee - December 2022 Heard at R&D Dec 2022	Agreed	Sept P&P Committee			

NOM REF	DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN	Officer Recommendation	Letter /Reminder prompt 4 weeks if no response received
	13.12.22	That this Council expresses concern with the number of residential and commercial bins left on public footways in the Borough long after the bin collection date. Bins left on public footways are not only unsightly, they can lead to hygiene and contamination issues, as well as safety concerns, forcing pedestrians onto the road due to the blocking of a footway. This Council notes its own lack of enforcement powers to tackle this issue and expresses concern at the Department for Infrastructure's reluctance to use its own enforcement powers. Accordingly, this Council agrees to write to the Department for Infrastructure asking the Department to engage with Councils with the aim of creating appropriate enforcement powers to tackle this issue. Council Officers, will in the meantime, bring back a report to the appropriate committee detailing action that the Council can take under current powers to try address the issue of bins left on public footways.	Councillors Cathcart and MacArthur	Dec-22	Environment Committee – January 2023	Agreed	June Committee	Report to be brought to June Committee		
		Building on the practice of other council areas, that this council tasks officers to liaise with DfI Roads as a matter of urgency to offer its assistance in providing self-service grit piles for residents and to post locations of such grit piles on the council website	Alderman McIlveen & Councillor Cathcart	Jan-23	Environment Committee – February 2023	Agreed	TBC	The Council has contacted the DfI and a report will be brought back to Council in due course		

NOM REF	DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN	Officer Recommendation	Letter /Reminder prompt 4 weeks if no response received
	18.01.2023	The prolonged cold weather spells just before Christmas and last week resulted in icy, slippery, and dangerous footpaths and car parks in the Borough's City and town centres. It is not acceptable that in such circumstances the Council does not have a plan or the resources or facilities to grit these areas to enable residents to walk safely to and from the main shopping areas or fall when they step out of their cars onto ice. It is proposed that officers bring back a report with costs to outline what steps can be taken to ensure that Council car parks and footpaths in the City and town centres are gritted when the weather is forecast to have heavy snowfall or prolonged freezing weather conditions.	Councillors Morgan and McRandal	Jan-23	Environment Committee – February 2023	Agreed	TBC	A report will be brought to a future meeting		

NOM REF	DATE RECEIVED	NOTICE	SUBMITTED BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE	COMMITTEE REFERRED TO	OUTCOME OF COMMITTEE WHERE NOM DEBATED	MONTH IT WILL BE REPORTED BACK TO COMMITTEE	OTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN	Officer Recommendation	Letter /Reminder prompt 4 weeks if no response received
	18.01.2023	That Council, subject to consultation with addressees on the road, considers changing the name of that stretch of the A21 in Newtownards which runs from Portaferry Road to the junction with upper Greenwell Street, Newtownards currently named New Road to Viscount Castlereagh Avenue as a mark of the life and legacy of Robert Stewart, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Marquess of Londonderry, who was known by the courtesy title of Viscount Castlereagh during most of his life, in the 200 <sup>th</sup> year of his passing.	Alderman McIlveen and Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Feb-23	Environment Committee March 2023	Agreed	TBC	Report to be brought to future meeting		

THIS STATEMENT IS ISSUED ON THE STRICT UNDERSTANDING THAT IT IS NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR BROADCAST BEFORE 00.01 hrs ON FRIDAY 5 MAY 2023

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# Media Release

## Pre-School Vaccinations in Northern Ireland



Northern Ireland's Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) has today (Friday 5 May 2023) published a report on Pre-School Vaccinations in Northern Ireland.

Dorinnia Carville's report considers outcomes of vaccination against 14 infectious diseases among pre-school children, and the benchmarking of vaccination coverage against the World Health Organisation's (WHO) target of 95 per cent, recommended to ensure population immunity.

The report finds overall vaccination coverage has steadily been declining for almost all diseases and increasing numbers of children have not received all the vaccinations available to maximise protection against harmful diseases. Across Northern Ireland, there are 15,000 children who have not been fully immunised against Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) over the last seven years. In addition, a total of 10,200 children have not received all the recommended doses of the Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) since 2015.

While this downward trend in coverage is reflected in other parts of the UK, the report notes that data reveals regional variation in the uptake of vaccinations, with particularly low levels in Belfast. Within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust area, 1 in 3 children have not been fully immunised against pneumococcal disease since 2015, and 1 in 7 have missed '6-in-1'<sup>1</sup> vaccine doses which protect against multiple diseases, over the last seven years.

More positively the report notes that vaccination rates in three of Northern Ireland's five health trusts were close to or above the WHO target.

Commenting on the report's findings, the C&AG said:

*"Vaccination against infectious disease remains one of the most successful and cost-effective ways to help manage the health of a population. However, as many vaccine-preventable diseases require a series of immunisations to be administered to infants and small children at pre-*

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<sup>1</sup> '6-in-1' vaccines protect against diphtheria; tetanus; pertussis; polio; Haemophilus influenza type b (Hib) and hepatitis B.

THIS STATEMENT IS ISSUED ON THE STRICT UNDERSTANDING THAT IT IS NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR BROADCAST BEFORE 00.01 hrs ON FRIDAY 5 MAY 2023

*determined intervals, overall effectiveness is heavily reliant on consistently high levels of participation.*

*"Whilst there is no single reason for the declining rates of vaccination coverage shown, workforce shortages and delivery capacity within GP practices in Northern Ireland are likely to have contributed to the overall trend. It is hugely important that there is a comprehensive plan of action to reverse the decline."*

ENDS

## **Notes for Editors**

1. The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) is Head of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (the Audit Office). She and the NIAO are totally independent of Government. The C&AG certifies the accounts of Government Departments and a range of other public sector bodies. She has statutory authority to report to the Assembly on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which departments and public bodies use their resources. Her reports are published as Assembly papers.
2. The report is available on the Audit Office website at [www.niauditoffice.gov.uk](http://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk). The report is embargoed until 00.01 hrs on Friday 5 May 2023.
3. Background briefing can be obtained from the Northern Ireland Audit Office by contacting Roger McCance (028 9025 4312).



Northern Ireland  
**Audit Office**

# Pre-School Vaccinations in Northern Ireland

**Report by the Comptroller  
and Auditor General**

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Published  
05 April 2023



This report has been prepared under Article 8 of the Audit (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 for presentation to the Northern Ireland Assembly in accordance with Article 11 of the Order.

The Comptroller and Auditor General is the head of the Northern Ireland Audit Office. She, and the Northern Ireland Audit Office are totally independent of Government. She certifies the accounts of all Government Departments and a wide range of other public sector bodies; and she has statutory authority to report to the Assembly on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which departments and other bodies have used their resources.

**Dorinnia Carville**

Comptroller and Auditor General

*Northern Ireland Audit Office*

*05 May 2023*

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# List of Abbreviations

<b>CHIS</b>	Child Health Information System
<b>COVER</b>	Cover of Vaccination Evaluated Rapidly (programme)
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>DHSC</b>	Department of Health and Social Care
<b>DoH</b>	Department of Health
<b>GMS</b>	General Medical Services (contract)
<b>GP</b>	General Practitioner
<b>Hib</b>	Haemophilus influenzae type B
<b>HSCT</b>	Health and Social Care Trust
<b>IMD</b>	Invasive Meningococcal Disease
<b>JCVI</b>	Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation
<b>Men B</b>	Meningococcal B disease
<b>Men C</b>	Meningococcal C disease
<b>MMR</b>	Measles, Mumps and Rubella
<b>NAO</b>	National Audit Office
<b>NHS</b>	National Health Service
<b>NI</b>	Northern Ireland
<b>NIAO</b>	Northern Ireland Audit Office
<b>NISRA</b>	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
<b>PCV</b>	Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine
<b>PHA</b>	Public Health Agency
<b>PHE</b>	Public Health England (to 30 September 2021)
<b>RSPH</b>	Royal Society for Public Health
<b>SARS-COV-2</b>	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UKHSA</b>	United Kingdom Health Security Agency (from 1 October 2021)
<b>VMS</b>	Vaccine Management System
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation

# Key Facts

## 95%

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended target for vaccination to ensure population immunity

## 14

The number of infectious diseases which pre-school children are vaccinated against

## 13

The number of pre-school vaccinations where rates of coverage have been falling

## 1 in 7

Children within the Belfast HSCT area who have not completed the full course of '6-in-1' vaccinations, over the last 7 years

## 10,200

The number of pre-school children who have not received all recommended doses of the Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV), since 2015

## 1 in 3

Children in the Belfast HSCT area who have missed doses of the PCV vaccine required for full protection, since 2015

## 15,000

The number of children who have not been fully immunised against Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR), over the last 7 years

## 45%

Pre-school children not vaccinated against seasonal flu during the 2020-21 season

# Executive Summary

## Background

1. Vaccination against infectious disease is one of the most successful and cost-effective ways to help manage the health of a population. However, its effectiveness relies heavily on consistently high levels of participation.
2. To maximise protection, many vaccine-preventable diseases require a series of immunisations to be administered at pre-determined intervals to infants and small children. This means that an incomplete course of vaccination for any given disease can not only leave an individual less well-protected, but may also decrease the benefit for the overall population, as reduced cumulative immunity promotes the chains of transmission.
3. Our study considered the outcomes of vaccination against 14 diseases<sup>1</sup> for pre-school children<sup>2</sup> across the United Kingdom (UK), by comparing the results in Northern Ireland over the last decade against those in England, Scotland, Wales and the UK a whole. We also examined the vaccination rates by Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) areas<sup>3</sup> in Northern Ireland.

## Findings

### For 13 of the 14 diseases which Northern Ireland's pre-school children are immunised against, vaccination rates have been steadily declining

4. There has been a downward trend in rates of vaccination coverage. In relation to the '6-in-1' vaccine, where initial protection against these diseases is attained at 12 months of age, uptake decreased from 97.6 per cent in 2012-13 to 93.5 per cent in 2021-22. By five years of age, vaccination coverage for full protection had also reduced (93.4 per cent in 2013-14 to 89.7 per cent in 2021-22).
5. Rates of immunisation against Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) are measured at two years of age and again at five years old. Since 2012-13, partial immunisation with a single dose of vaccine has exceeded 95 per cent of pre-school children at five years of age. However, full (two-dose) protection has been achieved by less than 93 per cent of five year-olds since 2016-17.
6. The seasonal flu vaccine has been administered to children between two and four years of age since 2013-14. For the 2019-20 season, a vaccination target of 60 per cent was set by the Department of Health (DoH) for this group. However, the coverage achieved was 48.5 per cent. Even with an improved uptake for the 2020-21 flu season (to 55.2 per cent), against a DoH ('highly aspirational') target set at 95 per cent, rates of coverage continue to be well below target.

### In recent years, many pre-school vaccination rates have fallen below the WHO target rate of 95 per cent

7. In 2018-19, the rates of '6-in-1', Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) and Meningococcal group B (Men B) vaccinations among Northern Ireland's pre-school children, measured at 12

1 The 14 diseases vaccinated against are organised into six vaccine groups. These are: (i) '5-in-1'/currently '6-in-1' vaccination [6 diseases]; (ii) the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) [1]; (iii) vaccination against Rotavirus [1]; (iv) Meningococcal group B and group C diseases [2]; (v) Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) [3]; and (vi) seasonal influenza [1].

2 The age range of pre-school children is defined as the years from birth to four years old.

3 Northern Ireland's five Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) areas are: Belfast; Northern; South Eastern; Southern; and Western.

months of age, fell below the World Health Organisation's (WHO) 95 per cent target<sup>4</sup> for the first time. A similar outcome was recorded for the single Meningococcal group C (Men C) vaccine in 2017-18, and has been the case with Rotavirus vaccination since 2015-16.

8. For MMR immunisations, the coverage achieved within Northern Ireland for a single dose of the vaccine, measured at two years of age, fell below 95 per cent for the first time in 2016-17. This has continued to decrease. The reductions are largely attributable to outcomes recorded in the Belfast HSCT area, as the remaining HSCT areas maintained levels close to, or in excess of, 95 per cent until 2018-19 (by which time the rate of coverage in Belfast was 87.4 per cent).

### **Levels of pre-school vaccination coverage within the Belfast HSCT area have been decreasing at a significant rate, over a number of years**

9. As with overall rates of vaccine coverage, GP practices in the Belfast HSCT area have been performing least well across all pre-school vaccinations, and the rates of coverage achieved have decreased significantly over time. For example, for '6-in-1' vaccination coverage measured at 12 months of age among children in the Belfast HSCT area, there was a 6.4 per cent percentage reduction, on average, in the numbers who received all the recommended vaccinations over a five-year period (from 93.4 per cent in 2017-18 to 87.4 per cent in 2021-22).
10. Given the time-limited vaccination opportunities associated with the rotavirus vaccine and decreased rates of coverage across Northern Ireland since 2016-17, a reduction of almost seven per cent within the Belfast HSCT area over the six-year period to 2021-22 is a particular concern.
11. Despite recording the lowest overall rates of vaccination coverage across the five HSCT areas, the Belfast area accounts for less than 19 per cent<sup>5</sup> of Northern Ireland's pre-school population, in comparison to the Northern and Southern HSCT areas, which each have larger proportions of pre-school children (24 and 23 per cent respectively) and significantly higher rates of coverage. Taking the single Men C vaccine as an example, the rate of coverage achieved in 2021-22 ranged from 94.5 per cent in the Northern area to 84.7 per cent for Belfast.

### **Rates of immunisation have been adversely affected by workforce shortages and delivery capacity within GP practices**

12. While shortages would present problems, we found no specific issues around the supply and delivery of childhood vaccinations to Northern Ireland's GP practices. However, our study did identify a number of difficulties with workforce availability and the capacity to administer vaccines within practices; failure by some practices to meet vaccine uptake targets set by the DoH; and incomplete records where vaccines had been administered.

<sup>4</sup> The World Health Organisation (WHO) works worldwide to promote health, which includes the elimination and eradication of high-impact communicable diseases. It currently recommends that, at the national (UK) level, at least 95 per cent of children are immunised against a number of vaccine-preventable diseases, including diphtheria and polio.

<sup>5</sup> Vaccination Coverage Statistics for Children in Northern Ireland, PHA, 2021-22 and 'Healthy Child, Healthy Future', Health Review Statistics for Northern Ireland 2018-19, Information Analysis Directorate, DoH and NISRA.

13. GP practices have responsibility for all routine vaccines administered to children. Over time, and with the expansion of vaccination programmes, local workforce arrangements and funding for vaccination had become increasingly complicated (with some health visitors being redirected from their primary duties to administer vaccines); was inequitable (with no additional funding to trusts for their practice-based staff) and required streamlining. The findings of a Working Group Review, accepted by the DoH in April 2019, centred around new funding arrangements linked to appropriate nursing staff support. The phased introduction of these is reliant on the implementation of an overarching policy framework and available funding and the Department has reported some progress in these areas.
14. The report of the Working Group Review also noted that each HSCT in Northern Ireland was operating its own version of the long-standing Child Health Information System (CHIS); not all GP practices were utilising the CHIS efficiently; and there were issues with the completeness and accuracy of vaccination records. This is exemplified by the results of a 2018-19 catch-up exercise to improve MMR immunisation rates involving the Public Health Agency (PHA) Immunisation Team, the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and practices in the Belfast HSCT area, which led to the vaccination of fewer than 200 additional school-age children. For a further 300 children, no immunisation was found to be necessary once the associated vaccination records were confirmed as being incomplete (and updated as required).
15. Recent PHA survey work on vaccination attitudes and influences among a "harder to reach" community group identified issues around improved communication and access. The PHA plans to undertake more targeted interventions with multi-disciplinary teams to improve vaccination uptake, where the necessary delivery arrangements can be made.

## Conclusions

16. The success of any large-scale vaccination programme will be dependent on addressing the issues identified during this study. These include:
  - the lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities which has arisen in relation to the administration of vaccinations provided through GP practices;
  - the fact that some GPs have not met vaccination coverage targets set by the DoH;
  - concerns raised around the completeness and accuracy of management information generated using vaccination records; and
  - the implications of vaccine hesitancy (a WHO 'global health risk') set against the need to maximise the effectiveness of any immunisation programme.
17. Where continuity of vaccine supplies is maintained, large-scale immunisation programmes rely on: the logistics to facilitate timely immunisation being in place and operating effectively; convincing sufficient numbers of individuals to participate through the use of clear and consistent messaging; and maintaining accurate vaccination records for patient safety reasons - these form the basis of our study recommendations.

## Recommendations

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### Recommendation 1

Primary care settings require access to an available workforce (scaled-up as necessary to meet immunisation delivery targets) with appropriate clinical training, in order to maintain standards of patient safety.

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### Recommendation 2

Clear, fact-based and consistently presented positive messaging is key to mitigating against genuine uncertainty around vaccination within the population and increasing rates of coverage.

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### Recommendation 3

Given the concerns around the completeness and accuracy of vaccination records, the Department of Health should ensure that remedial action is taken in order that existing information systems supporting vaccination are fit for purpose. Over the longer-term, maintaining the integrity of immunisation data will be necessary for its seamless inclusion within an electronic patient record system for Northern Ireland which was announced in late 2020.

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“The success of any large-scale vaccination programme will be dependent on addressing the issues identified during this study”.

**Northern Ireland Audit Office**

# Part One

# Introduction and Background

## Introduction

### Why is vaccination important?

- 1.1 The World Health Organisation (WHO)<sup>6</sup>, in its Global Vaccine Action Plan 2011-2020, stated that

***“there is overwhelming evidence to demonstrate the benefits of immunisation<sup>7</sup> as one of the most successful and cost-effective health interventions known”.***

This applies particularly to infants and young children, with vaccination programmes able to control and, in certain cases, eliminate life-threatening infectious diseases.

- 1.2 The effectiveness of any vaccination programme relies on a high proportion of those in the targeted population being vaccinated. If a sufficiently high level of coverage is achieved, it is possible for a population to attain immunity. This occurs by stopping the infectious organism responsible for a disease from being transmitted between individuals, which helps to reduce its spread<sup>8</sup>, including among the unvaccinated, due to the relatively small numbers of susceptible individuals left to form chains of transmission. Rates of vaccination coverage needed to achieve immunity within a population can vary by disease, for example, with measles, a 95 per cent rate is necessary to interrupt its transmission<sup>9</sup>.
- 1.3 The WHO currently recommends that, at the national (UK) level, at least 95 per cent of children are immunised against a number of vaccine-preventable diseases, including diphtheria and polio. Control and elimination of infectious disease is progressed by targeting eligible groups within the population, one of which is pre-school children.

### What is the rationale for routine childhood immunisations in the UK?

- 1.4 Vaccinations advocated by the WHO, along with others advised by the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI)<sup>10</sup>, form the basis of the routine childhood immunisation programme<sup>11</sup> which all four countries of the UK follow. Public Health England (PHE)<sup>12</sup> takes the lead on immunisation issues and there is an expectation that, across the UK, 95 per cent coverage should be achieved for each of the diseases vaccinated against under this programme. Although vaccination is free at the point of delivery, it is not compulsory.

6 The World Health Organisation (WHO) works worldwide to promote health, which includes the elimination and eradication of high-impact communicable diseases.

7 Immunisation – the process of becoming immune or resistant to infectious disease through the use of vaccines.

8 Immunity within a population only applies to diseases which spread through person-to-person contact. Diseases which are linked to environmental factors (such as bacteria, in the case of tetanus) are therefore excluded.

9 Durrheim, DN. Measles eradication – retreating is not an option. *Journal The Lancet Infectious Diseases*. 2020, Vol 20 Issue 6, e138 - e141.

10 The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) is an independent expert advisory committee which advises the UK Health Departments on immunisation.

11 As defined in 'Immunisation against infectious disease' (The Green Book).

12 Until 30 September 2021, Public Health England (PHE) was an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care in England, formed in 2013 to improve the nation's health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. Since 1 October 2021, the United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has assumed the lead role on immunisation issues.

## Why was this study undertaken?

- 1.5 Immunisation rates have been decreasing across the UK for several years, while at the same time, new sources of infection continue to emerge. Given the known susceptibility of infants and young children to infectious disease, this study provides a timely examination of the extent to which the routine vaccination levels recommended have been maintained within Northern Ireland's pre-school population, and those factors which have impacted on the outcomes reported.

## Background

### The Department of Health has responsibility for immunisation policy and strategy in Northern Ireland

- 1.6 The Department of Health (DoH) has lead responsibility for immunisation policy in Northern Ireland. In line with the rest of the UK, the DoH takes advice from the JCVI and, in implementing all its recommendations, offers vaccination programmes to population groupings based on age and/or risk status. As a result, pre-school children (between birth and four years of age) have access to a schedule of immunisations, with a view to maximising protection against 14 specified vaccine-preventable diseases. The Public Health Agency (PHA) within the DoH is involved in the day-to-day management of these vaccination programmes, which are delivered by General Practitioner (GP) practices.

## Scope of the Study

- 1.7 Our study examines rates of vaccination coverage, over time, within the Northern Ireland pre-school population, in terms of:
- the extent to which full protection has been maintained for the vaccine-preventable diseases immunised against, including seasonal influenza (**Part Two**); and
  - factors which have affected the reported outcomes and require remedial action to protect against established and emerging infectious diseases in the future (**Part Three**).

## Audit Methodology

- 1.8 This study was undertaken using the following audit methodologies:
- review of DoH and PHA documentation;
  - review and analysis of performance data published by the DoH, the PHA and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and comparative data outcomes by PHE; and
  - discussions with staff in the DoH and PHA.

“there is overwhelming evidence to demonstrate the benefits of immunisation as one of the most successful and cost-effective health interventions known”.

**World Health Organisation**  
*Global Vaccine Action Plan 2011-2020*

## Part Two

# Rates of Vaccination among Pre-School Children in Northern Ireland

## Introduction

- 2.1 A series of routine vaccinations is recommended for children during their pre-school years. In Northern Ireland these are administered<sup>13</sup> in the primary care setting of a GP practice. **Figure 1** sets out the immunisations offered and their timings.

**Figure 1. Children should receive a series of immunisations in their pre-school years**

When to immunise	Diseases protected against
<b>Two months old</b>	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) and hepatitis B (6 in 1) Rotavirus Meningococcal group B disease (MenB)
<b>Three months old</b>	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, Hib and hepatitis B (6 in 1) Pneumococcal disease Rotavirus
<b>Four months old</b>	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, Hib and hepatitis B (6 in 1) Meningococcal group B disease (MenB)
<b>Between 12 and 13 months old - within a month of the first birthday</b>	Measles, mumps and rubella (German measles) Pneumococcal disease Hib/Meningococcal group C disease (MenC) Meningococcal group B disease (MenB)
<b>Every year from two years old up to Year 8 in school</b>	Influenza (from September)
<b>Three years four months old or soon after</b>	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio Measles, mumps and rubella

Source: Northern Ireland Public Health Agency

- 2.2 This part of our report considers: the nature of the diseases against which immunisation is recommended; the timing of individual routine vaccinations and importance of observing these; and the trends established from recorded outcomes, some of which point to future health implications within the Northern Ireland population.

<sup>13</sup> The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) commissions primary care to deliver the pre-school childhood immunisation programme under additional services of the General Medical Services (GMS) Contract. The spend in 2018-19 was £4.802m.

- 2.3** Data on the levels of pre-school immunisation coverage is extracted from the Child Health Information System (CHIS)<sup>14</sup> and collated quarterly for publication. This data also contributes to national statistical reporting undertaken through the Cover of Vaccination Evaluated Rapidly (COVER)<sup>15</sup> programme. Calculations are based on the numbers of children in eligible age groups, with outcomes published for Northern Ireland as a whole and by Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) area - Belfast; South Eastern; Northern; Southern and Western.

## Rates of all Pre-School Immunisations (other than Seasonal Flu) have been steadily declining

### (1) '5-in-1' and '6-in-1' Vaccination (with a '4-in-1' booster)

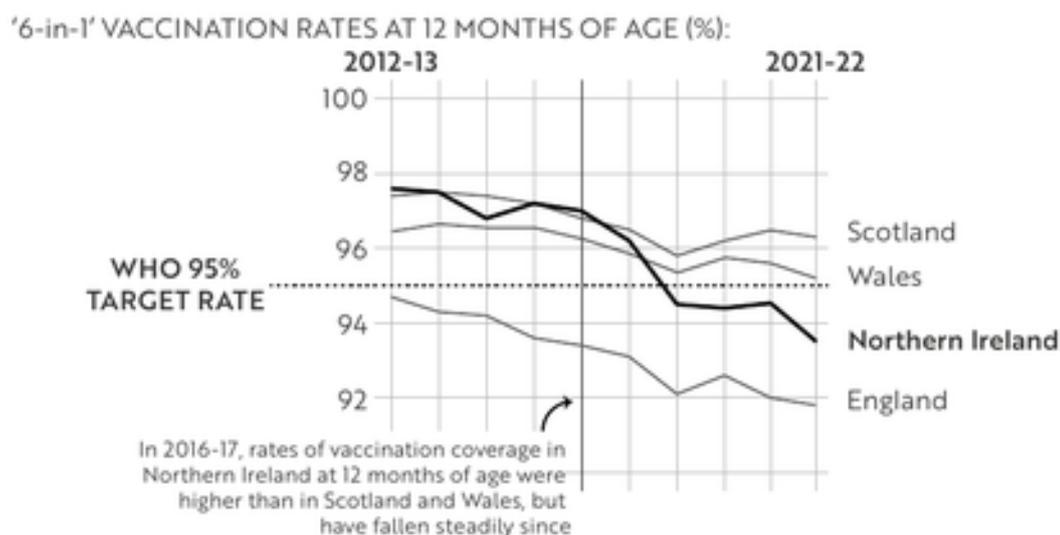
- 2.4** The '5-in-1' vaccination is offered to protect against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio and Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib). Since August 2017, the vaccine has become the '6-in-1' with additional protection against hepatitis B.
- 2.5** Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and Hib are infections caused by different strains of bacteria which can infect the throat/upper airways, produce a toxin which causes painful muscle contractions, result in a highly contagious respiratory tract infection and lead to bacterial pneumonia. Both polio and hepatitis B are contracted through viral infection, with polio invading the nervous system and hepatitis B causing chronic liver disease<sup>16</sup>.
- 2.6** The primary course of the '5-in-1'/'6-in-1' vaccine is three doses at two, three and four months of age, with a further dose of Hib offered as part of an immunisation against Meningococcal group C disease between 12 and 13 months. A '4-in-1' pre-school booster dose covering diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio is made available at three years and four months of age.
- 2.7** Vaccination coverage outcomes for Northern Ireland children are published annually by the PHA and by Public Health England (PHE) for each country within the UK. In 2021-22, 93.5 per cent of Northern Ireland children had been vaccinated with the '6-in-1' vaccine at 12 months of age. This was the fourth consecutive year in which the rate in Northern Ireland fell below the WHO target of 95 per cent (**Figure 2**).

14 The Child Health Information System (CHIS) has been in use in Northern Ireland since 1986-87.

15 The COVER (Cover of Vaccination Evaluated Rapidly) programme is a quarterly data collection used to evaluate childhood immunisation coverage across the UK.

16 Public Health Agency explanations.

**Figure 2. '6-in-1' vaccination coverage at 12 months of age has fallen below the WHO target rate in the last four years**



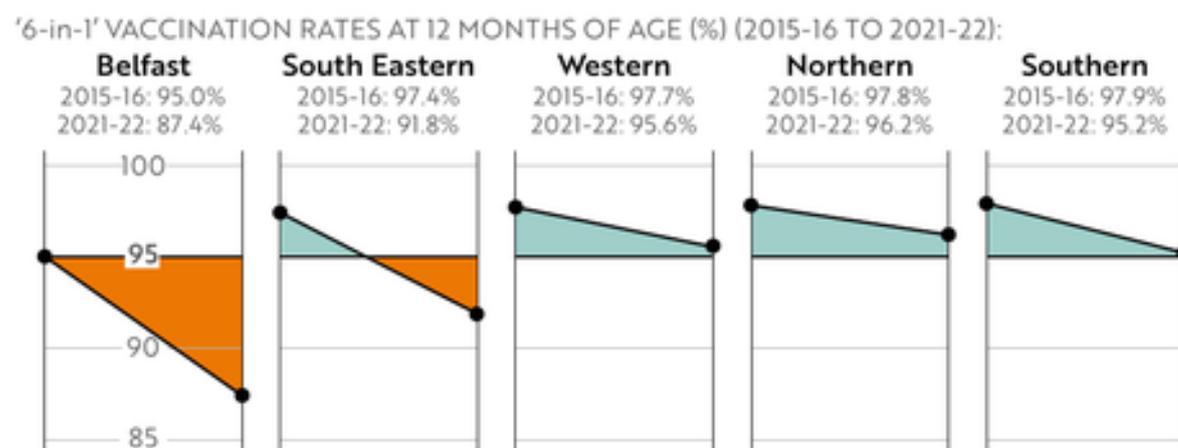
Source: NHS Digital/Public Health England: Childhood Vaccination Coverage Statistics

## 2.8

**Figure 2** also illustrates that, since 2012-13, '6-in-1' immunisation levels achieved at 12 months of age across Northern Ireland have fallen steadily from 97.6 per cent to 93.5 per cent by 2021-22 (although they remain relatively close to the WHO target). Of particular concern, however, is the 6.4 per cent reduction in coverage within the Belfast HSCT area over the past five years, most of which occurred in 2017-18 and 2018-19 (see **Figure 3**).

**Figure 3. Significant decreases in the '6-in-1' vaccination coverage at 12 months of age within the Belfast HSCT area have been the main driver of the decrease for Northern Ireland as a whole since 2015-16**

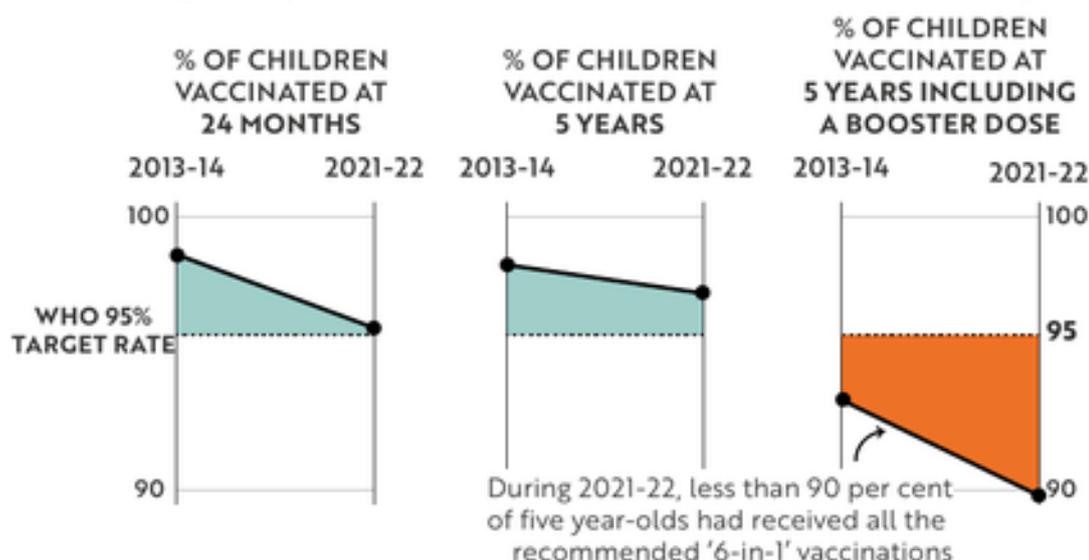
Coverage has fallen across all HSCT areas, but is below the WHO target in Belfast.



Source: PHA Annual Immunisation Reports, from quarterly COVER Programme returns (CHIS)

**2.9** In order to maximise protection, all '6-in-1' vaccination doses should be administered by the age of three years and four months. Rates of coverage are assessed continuously at 12 and 24 months and five years of age. In line with Scotland and Wales, outcomes for Northern Ireland show that the accumulated doses assessed at five years of age have exceeded the WHO target by two per cent, on average, over the last four years (see **Figure 4**). However, when these results were extended to include administration of the recommended booster dose (to provide full immunisation), the outcomes reflected reductions of between 4.2 and 7.0 per cent.

**Figure 4. In 2021-22, protection in children older than 12 months of age against diseases targeted by '6-in-1' vaccinations had fallen to its lowest in nine years**



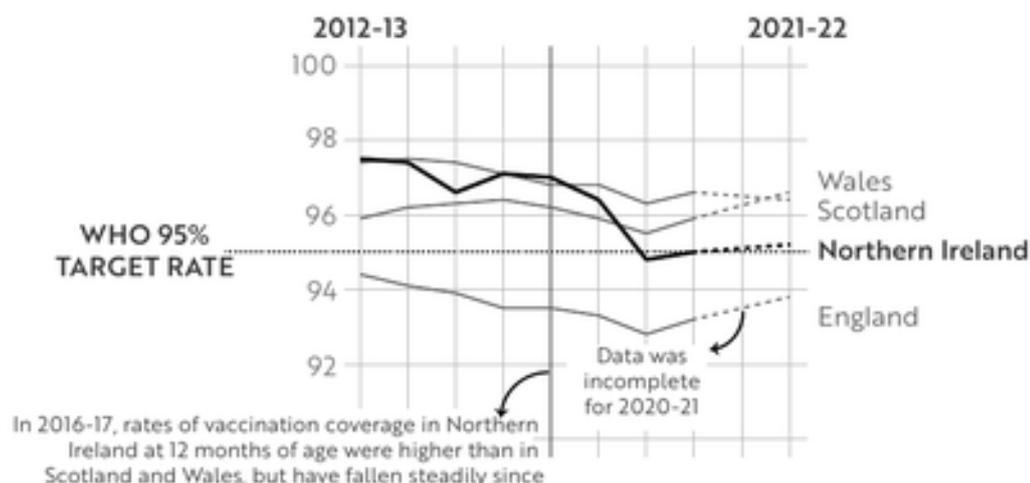
Source: NHS Digital/Public Health England: Childhood Vaccination Coverage Statistics

## (2) Vaccination against Pneumococcal Disease

- 2.10** The 'Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine' (PCV) is offered as a protection against pneumococcal disease, which is caused by a streptococcus bacterium. This disease can range in severity from an upper respiratory tract infection to pneumonia, septicaemia and meningitis.
- 2.11** The vaccination as currently administered is one dose at three months with a booster dose due around the age of one. This changed during 2020 from the previous regime of two doses at two and four months, followed by a booster dose at 12/13 months.
- 2.12** The rates of PCV immunisation coverage at 12 months of age in Northern Ireland were generally higher than those achieved by the other UK countries during the period 2012-13 to 2016-17. As a whole, UK coverage has consistently been below the 95 per cent WHO target since 2012-13 (2021-22: 94.1 per cent) - while this occurred in Northern Ireland for the first time in 2018-19, the rate of coverage achieved in 2021-22 was 95.2 per cent. **Figure 5** illustrates the trends in PCV coverage by UK country over the last decade.

**Figure 5. PCV vaccination coverage at 12 months of age has declined significantly since 2016-17, falling below the WHO target rate in Northern Ireland in 2018-19<sup>1</sup>**

PCV VACCINATION RATES AT 12 MONTHS OF AGE (%):



**NOTE**

<sup>1</sup>The Figure reflects the non-availability of data related to PCV vaccination coverage at 12 months for 2020-21. This occurred as the result of a change in the timing of the vaccination schedule for this age group from January 2020 onwards, which affected the accuracy of coverage over the full year. Subsequent PCV vaccination statistics are unaffected.

Source: NHS Digital/Public Health England: Childhood Vaccination Coverage Statistics

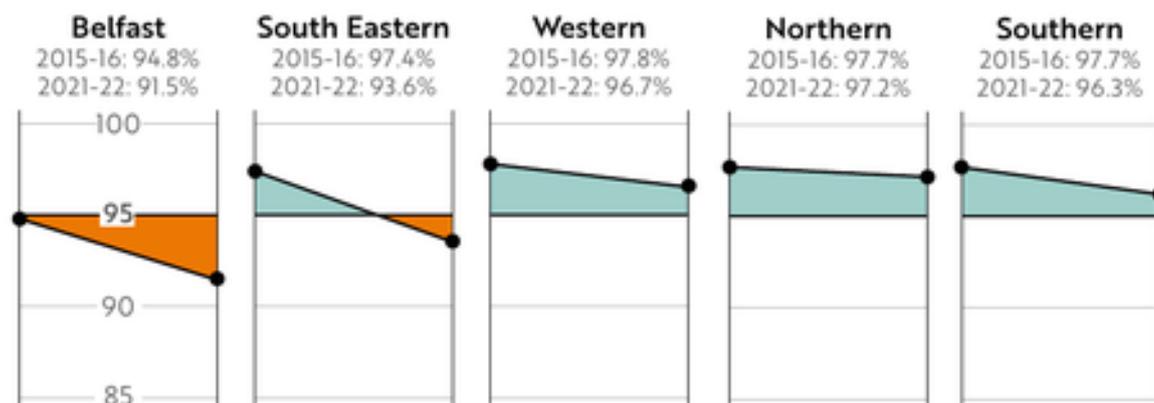
**2.13**

**Figure 6** provides a detailed breakdown of the PCV outcomes for Northern Ireland, assessed at 12 months of age over a seven-year period to 2021-22, by HSCT area (see NOTE<sup>1</sup> to **Figure 5**). While this shows some general reductions in the levels of coverage achieved, four of the five HSCT areas continued to maintain outcomes in excess of 95 per cent until 2019-20. However, there was a marked reduction in the coverage achieved within the Belfast HSCT area – down to 91.5 per cent during 2021-22, which represents a 3.48 per cent reduction over seven years.

**Figure 6. Since 2015-16, PCV vaccination coverage at 12 months of age has declined across all HSCT areas**

Belfast is the only HSCT area where vaccination coverage has consistently remained below the WHO target rate.

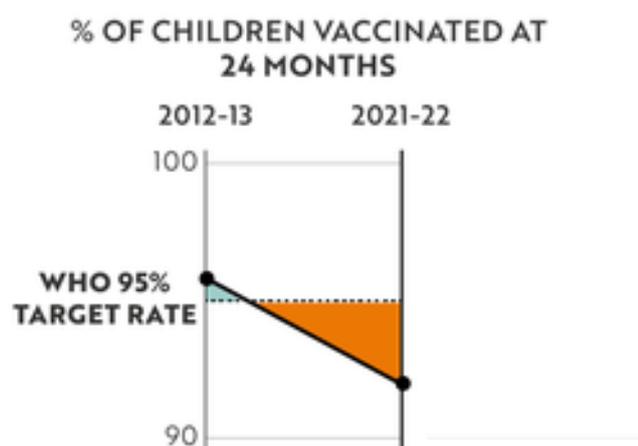
PCV VACCINATION RATES AT 12 MONTHS OF AGE (%) (2015-16 TO 2021-22):



Source: PHA Annual Immunisation Reports, from quarterly COVER Programme returns (CHIS)

- 2.14** PCV vaccination outcomes are also assessed at 24 months of age, with the results indicating the percentage of pre-school children fully immunised against the disease. **Figure 7** points to a general downward trend in rates of PCV coverage across Northern Ireland, which was most significant in the Belfast HSCT area, where an 8.4 per cent decrease in coverage was recorded between 2015-16 and 2021-22.

**Figure 7. In 2021-22, 92 per cent of children at 24 months of age were fully immunised against diseases targeted by PCV vaccinations, the lowest level in nine years**



Source: NHS Digital/Public Health England: Childhood Vaccination Coverage Statistics

### (3) Rotavirus Vaccination

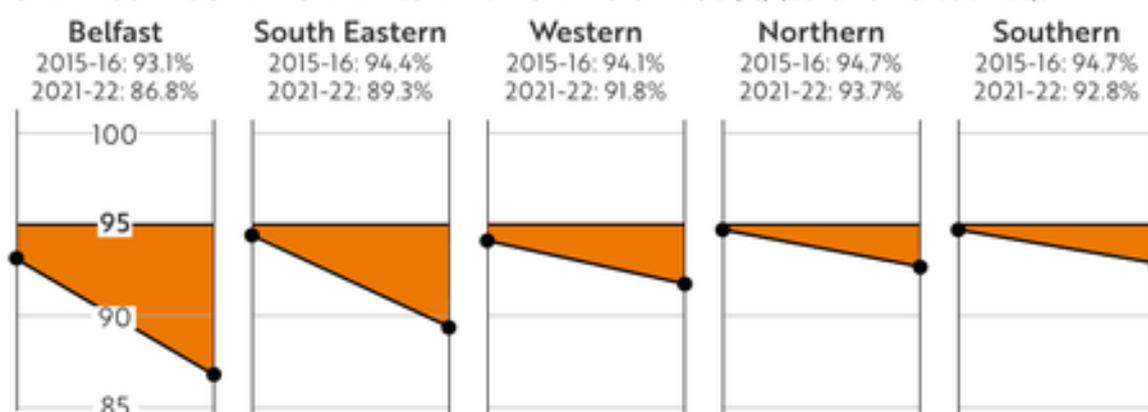
- 2.15** Rotavirus is a viral infection which can cause severe diarrhoea and vomiting, especially in babies and young children. Research published in 2007<sup>17</sup> (prior to the introduction of a rotavirus vaccine in 2013) concluded that this infection was imposing a significant burden on the National Health Service. In children under five with acute gastroenteritis symptoms requiring medical attention, rotavirus had been the likely cause attributable to 45 per cent of hospital admissions; 25 per cent of GP consultations and 20 per cent of Emergency Department attendances. Following the vaccine's introduction, rotavirus case numbers in Northern Ireland began to decrease steadily, from a baseline rate of 500-600 cases annually, to 300 in 2013-14 and fewer than 200 by 2014-15.
- 2.16** Immunisation against rotavirus requires two doses, offered at two and three months. As this vaccine, unlike others, cannot be administered beyond the age of six months<sup>18</sup>, there is a particular need to minimise missed vaccination opportunities as far as possible. In view of this, the recorded outcomes for rotavirus vaccination coverage set out in **Figure 8** are of concern, with a general decline across all HSCT areas since 2016-17 and, significantly within the Belfast HSCT area, a 6.9 per cent decrease in coverage over the six years to 2021-22.

<sup>17</sup> Harris JP, Jit M, Cooper D, Edmunds WJ. Evaluating rotavirus vaccination in England and Wales Part I. Estimating the burden of disease. *Journal of Vaccines*. 2007; 25:3962-70.

<sup>18</sup> Time limits associated with rotavirus vaccination are due to vaccine licensing restrictions, the increased likelihood that, over time, infants will already have contracted rotavirus and gain no additional benefit from vaccination, and the increased risk of medical complications known to occur in older infants with this vaccine.

**Figure 8. Since 2015-16, rotavirus vaccination coverage at 12 months of age has remained below the WHO target rate in four of the five HSCT areas<sup>1</sup>**

ROTAVIRUS VACCINATION RATES AT 12 MONTHS OF AGE (%) (2015-16 TO 2021-22):



**NOTE**

<sup>1</sup>Within the Northern HSCT, rotavirus vaccination coverage reached or exceeded the WHO's 95 per cent target rate in 2016-17 and 2017-18.

Source: PHA Annual Immunisation Reports, from quarterly COVER Programme returns (CHIS)

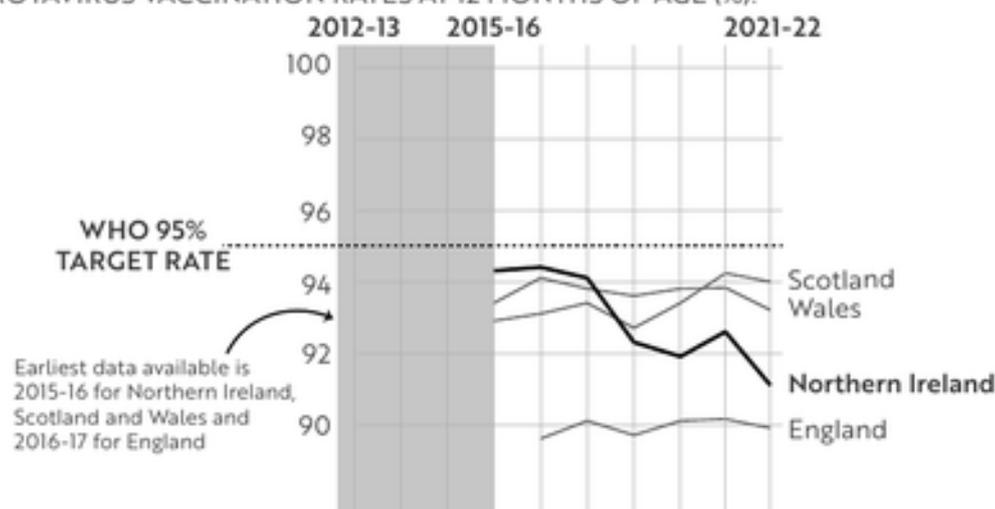
**2.17**

Until 2017-18, Northern Ireland as a whole remained within one per cent of the WHO's 95 per cent target for rotavirus vaccination coverage. However in 2018-19, the Northern Ireland outcomes were exceeded by 0.4 per cent in Scotland and 1.3 per cent in Wales. By 2019-20 these had increased further to 1.5 and 1.9 per cent respectively and, by 2021-22, had reached 2.9 and 2.1 per cent respectively (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Northern Ireland's rotavirus vaccination coverage at 12 months of age has declined since 2017-18**

Rates of vaccination coverage have seen Northern Ireland fall behind Scotland and Wales in the last four years.

ROTAVIRUS VACCINATION RATES AT 12 MONTHS OF AGE (%):



Source: NHS Digital/Public Health England: Childhood Vaccination Coverage Statistics

## (4) Vaccination against Invasive Meningococcal Disease

- 2.18** Invasive meningococcal disease (IMD), the result of bacterial infection, can lead to blood poisoning (septicaemia), meningitis and multi-organ failure. Protection for pre-school children is specifically against the group B and group C strains of the bacteria, with separate 'Men B' and 'Men C' vaccines.
- 2.19** As a notifiable disease<sup>19</sup> in the UK, enhanced surveillance of meningococcal disease began in 1999 to monitor the prevalence of known and suspected cases. Although the rate of IMD cases in Northern Ireland in 1999 (10.9 per 100,000 population) had decreased to 1.8 per 100,000 population by 2016, case numbers consistently showed that infants and young children were particularly susceptible to IMD.

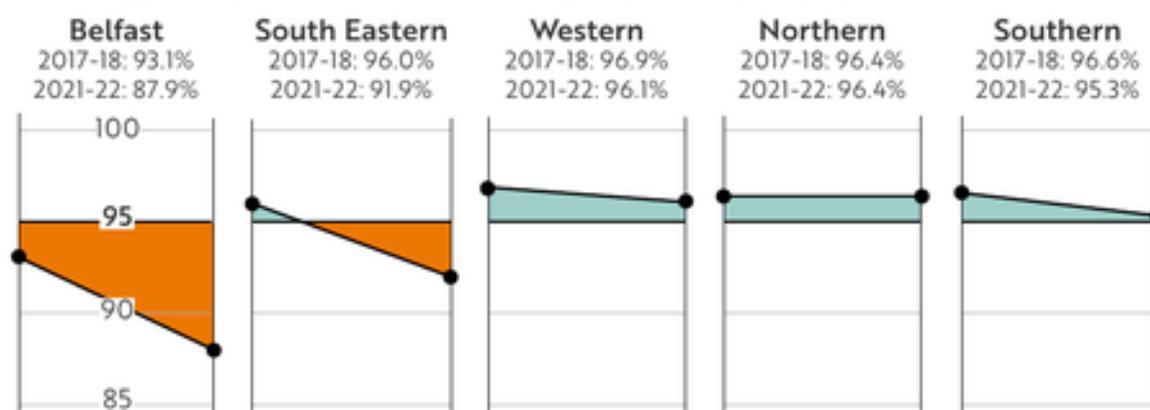
### (i) Meningococcal group B disease (Men B) vaccination

- 2.20** The Men B vaccine is administered in two doses at two and four months of age, with a booster dose between 12 and 13 months. It was introduced to the immunisation schedule in September 2015. The first complete dataset of vaccination coverage was for 2017-18, although the PHA<sup>20</sup> reported an uptake of 96 per cent, based on available data, for the 2016-17 year. Since then, Men B vaccination coverage at 12 months of age has been maintained at or above the WHO's 95 per cent target in three of the five HSCT areas. Coverage within the Belfast HSCT area decreased by 5.6 per cent over this period to 87.9 per cent in 2021-22. Within the South Eastern Trust area, a 4.27 per cent decrease occurred, to 91.9 per cent in 2021-22 (see Figure 10).

#### Figure 10. Since 2017-18, Men B vaccination coverage at 12 months of age has declined in the majority of HSCT areas<sup>1</sup>

Belfast is the only HSCT area where vaccination coverage has consistently remained below the WHO target rate.

MEN B VACCINATION RATES AT 12 MONTHS OF AGE (%) (2017-18 TO 2021-22):



#### NOTE

<sup>1</sup>In contrast to other vaccinations data by HSCT area presented in this report covering 2015-16 to 2021-22, a five-year reporting period for Men B vaccination outcomes reflects its introduction in 2015.

Source: PHA Annual Immunisation Reports, from quarterly COVER Programme returns (CHIS)

<sup>19</sup> There are 35 diseases currently classified as 'notifiable', including IMD. When a GP or other doctor in attendance suspects that a patient has contracted one of these, they are legally required to inform the Director of Public Health. Notification is primarily intended to detect possible outbreaks, initiate contact tracing and trigger rapid investigation, as necessary.

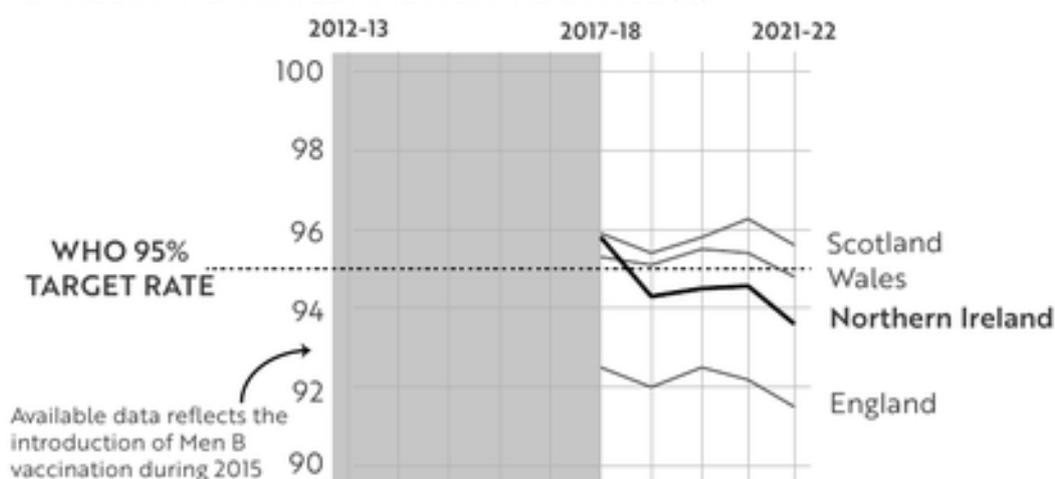
<sup>20</sup> Annual Immunisation and Vaccine Preventable Diseases Report for Northern Ireland 2016-17, PHA.

- 2.21** UK-wide rates of coverage have been less than 93 per cent since the Men B vaccination was introduced, with England failing to achieve the WHO's 95 per cent target since 2017-18 and Northern Ireland since 2018-19 (see Figure 11).

**Figure 11. Northern Ireland's Men B vaccination coverage at 12 months of age fell significantly in 2018-19 to below the WHO target rate**

Rates of vaccination coverage have seen Northern Ireland fall behind Scotland and Wales in the last four years.

MEN B VACCINATION RATES AT 12 MONTHS OF AGE (%):

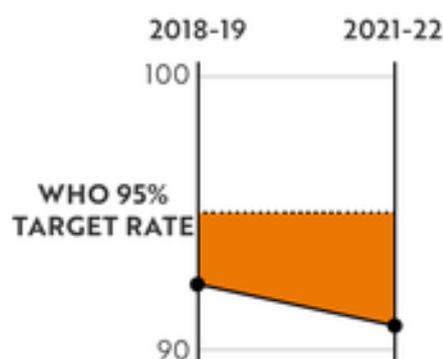


Source: NHS Digital/Public Health England: Childhood Vaccination Coverage Statistics

- 2.22** All vaccinations against Men B should be administered by 13 months of age, with the outcomes assessed at 24 months indicating the percentage of pre-school children who have been fully immunised. Figure 12 illustrates the decreasing level of Northern Ireland coverage to 90.9 per cent between 2018-19 and 2021-22. At 4.1 per cent below the WHO target, this rate was close to three per cent lower than the coverage recorded in both Scotland and Wales in 2021-22 (at 93.9 and 93.8 per cent respectively).

**Figure 12. In 2021-22, less than 91 per cent of children at 24 months of age were fully immunised against disease targeted by Men B vaccinations**

% OF CHILDREN VACCINATED AT 24 MONTHS INCLUDING A BOOSTER DOSE



Source: NHS Digital/Public Health England: Childhood Vaccination Coverage Statistics

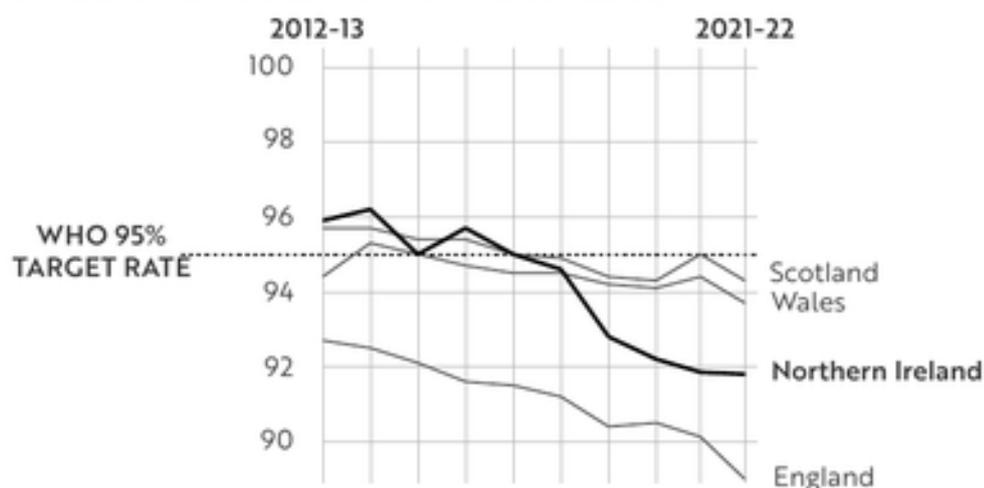
## (ii) Meningococcal group C disease (Men C) vaccination

**2.23** The scheduling of vaccination against Meningococcal group C disease, which was introduced in 1999, changed during 2016 and it is now offered between 12 and 13 months of age, as a single Men C vaccine (with a further scheduled dose of the Hib vaccine). As **Figure 13** shows, the level of vaccination coverage in Northern Ireland was maintained at or above 95 per cent until 2017-18 (94.6 per cent), decreasing further to 91.8 per cent in 2021-22. While reduced levels of coverage were also seen in Scotland and Wales over the same period, the rate of decrease was slower. However, a slight upturn in outcomes of 0.7 and 0.3 per cent respectively achieved in 2020-21 was reversed in 2021-22, with reductions of 0.7 per cent in both countries.

### Figure 13. Northern Ireland's Men C vaccination coverage at 24 months of age fell below the WHO target rate in 2017-18 and has continued to decrease significantly

Rates of vaccination coverage have seen Northern Ireland fall behind Scotland and Wales in the last four years.

MEN C VACCINATION RATES AT 24 MONTHS OF AGE (%):

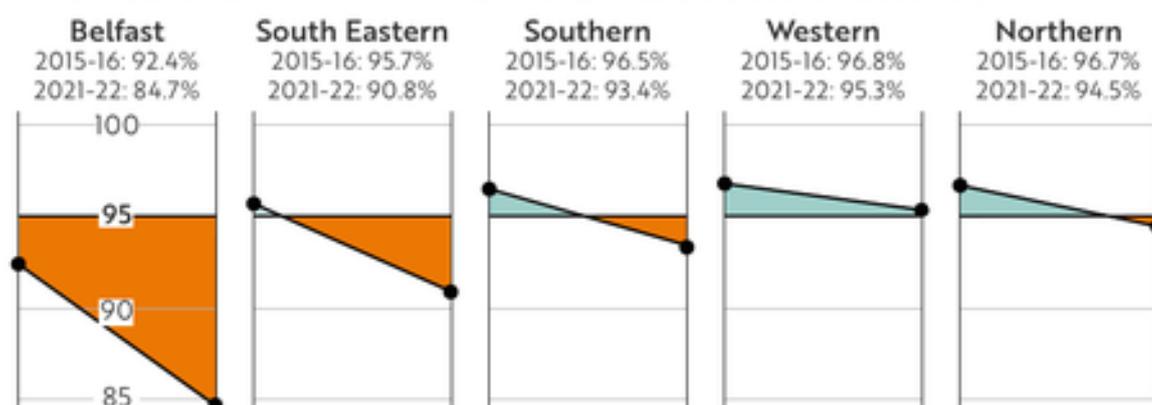


Source: NHS Digital/Public Health England: Childhood Vaccination Coverage Statistics

**2.24** Within Northern Ireland, the lowest rates of Men C vaccination coverage were recorded within the Belfast HSCT area each year between 2015-16 and 2021-22, as well as the most significant decrease of 8.3 per cent (compared to 1.5-5.1 per cent in the other HSCT areas), as **Figure 14** shows.

**Figure 14. Men C vaccination coverage at 24 months of age has fallen below the WHO target rate in four of the five HSCT areas since 2018-19**

MEN C VACCINATION RATES AT 24 MONTHS OF AGE (%) (2015-16 TO 2021-22):



Source: PHA Annual Immunisation Reports, from quarterly COVER Programme returns (CHIS)

## (5) Vaccination against Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)

**2.25** Measles, Mumps and Rubella (German measles), collectively known as 'MMR', can be serious viral infections, with complications including meningitis and hearing loss. Young children are also considered to be an 'at risk' group within the population. A combined MMR vaccine introduced in 1988 offers protection against all three diseases in two doses – an initial dose at 12/13 months and a second dose at three years and four months of age (a 'pre-school' booster). As the timing of MMR immunisations coincides with others, a single primary care appointment can provide protection against several diseases. Where MMR vaccinations have been missed, it is also possible to catch up on these at a later date.

**2.26** Given the timing of the MMR doses, vaccination coverage achieved is assessed at two and five years of age. Three measures record the administration of:

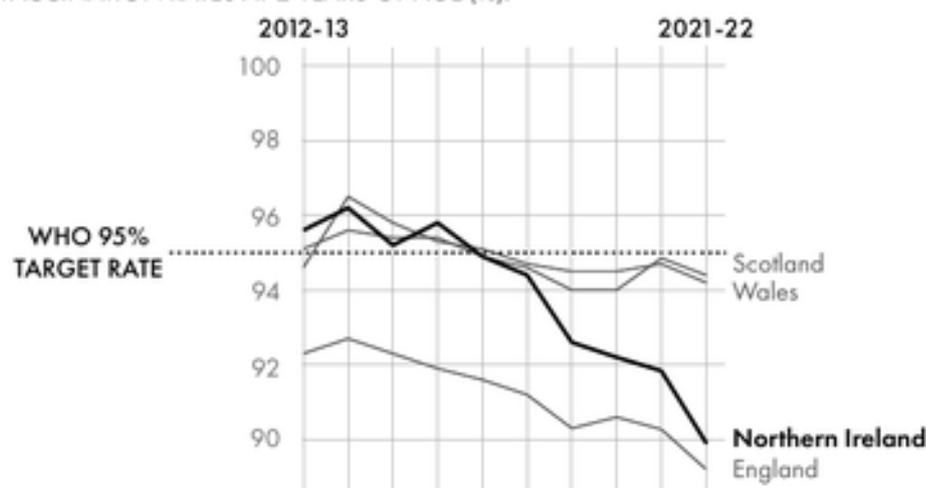
- (i) a single MMR dose at two years (the initial dose);
- (ii) a single MMR dose at five years (one of the two recommended doses); and
- (iii) two MMR doses at five years (both doses, as recommended).

- 2.27** Between 2012-13 and 2015-16, the rate of coverage achieved in Northern Ireland for the initial MMR dose (the 'single MMR dose at two years' measure) consistently exceeded 95 per cent. However, since 2016-17, the rate of coverage under this measure has steadily decreased (see Figure 15).

**Figure 15. MMR vaccination coverage at two years of age has fallen below the WHO target rate since 2016-17**

Rates of vaccination coverage have seen Northern Ireland fall behind Scotland and Wales in the last five years.

MMR VACCINATION RATES AT 2 YEARS OF AGE (%):

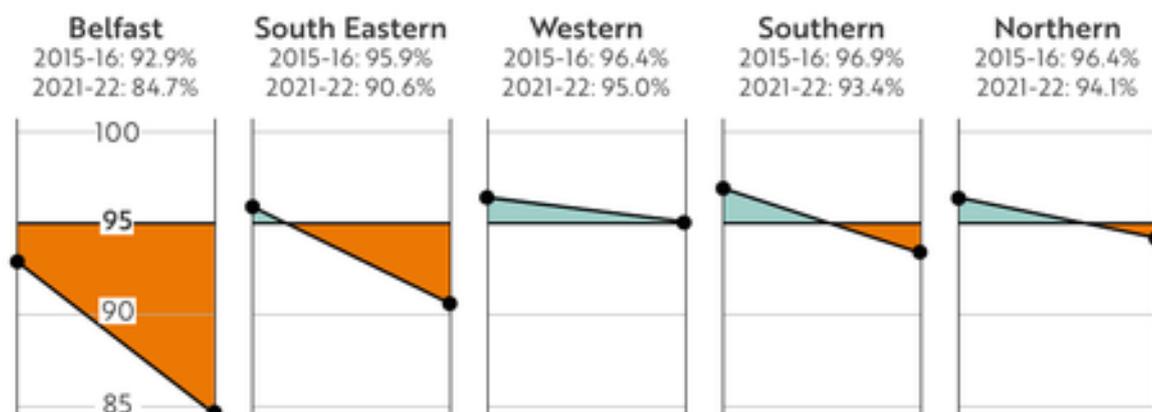


Source: NHS Digital/Public Health England: Childhood Vaccination Coverage Statistics

- 2.28** A breakdown of data across Northern Ireland since 2015-16 for 'single MMR dose at two years' outcomes shows that rates achieved in four of the five HSCT areas were close to, or exceeded, 95 per cent over a three-year period. However, coverage in the Belfast HSCT area was less than 93 per cent in 2015-16 and by 2021-22 had declined by 8.8 per cent (Figure 16).

**Figure 16. MMR vaccination coverage at two years of age has fallen below the WHO target rate in the majority of HSCT areas since 2018-19**

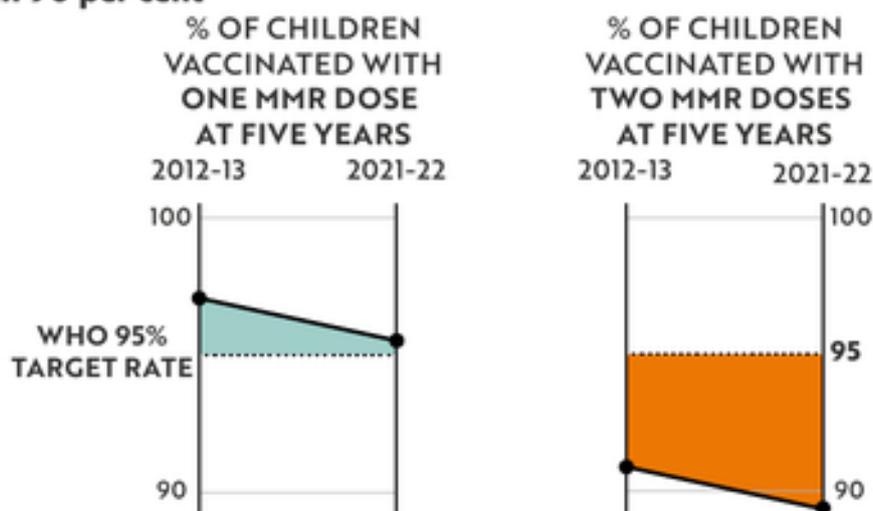
MMR VACCINATION RATES AT 2 YEARS OF AGE (%) (2015-16 TO 2021-22):



Source: PHA Annual Immunisation Reports, from quarterly COVER Programme returns (CHIS)

- 2.29** Considering the uptake of a 'single MMR dose at five years', **Figure 17** shows that rates of between 95.4 and 97.5 per cent have been achieved in Northern Ireland since 2012-13. However, efforts need to remain focused on increasing the coverage of 'two MMR doses at five years' to provide full protection against MMR, as a peak of 93.1 per cent reached in 2014-15 has been steadily declining since then.

**Figure 17. For nine of the last 10 years, MMR vaccination coverage has reached or exceeded 96 per cent for a single dose at five years of age, but in 2021-22, coverage for fully immunised five year-olds was less than 90 per cent**



Source: NHS Digital/Public Health England: Childhood Vaccination Coverage Statistics

- 2.30** One of the implications of declining rates of vaccination coverage can be higher numbers of infections over time, due to reduced protection against the diseases which are the source of these infections within the population. This has been seen with measles where, following a 12-month period with no endemic cases recorded in the UK, the WHO declared its 'elimination status' in 2016. However, after a resurgence in cases, this status was removed in 2019. As part of the UK's Member State commitments to the WHO, the PHA indicated its intention to publish a 'Northern Ireland Measles and Rubella Elimination Action Plan' during 2019-20<sup>21</sup> - however, this has not yet happened.

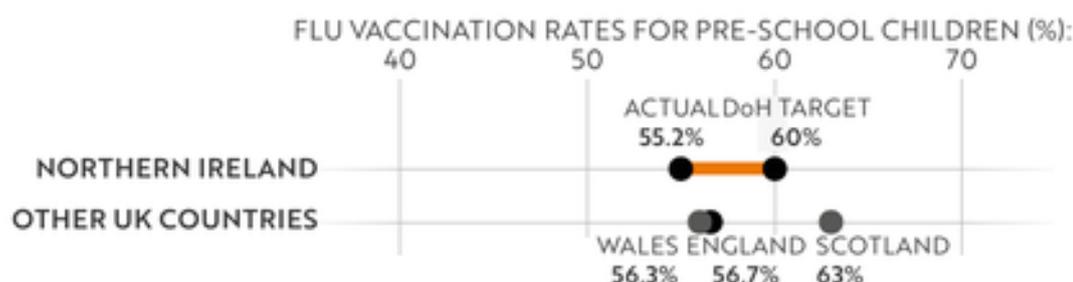
## (6) Annual Vaccination against Seasonal Influenza

- 2.31** Influenza ('flu') is an acute viral infection of the respiratory tract, which occurs most often in the winter months, usually peaking between December and March. Flu virus types A, B and C have been identified, with 'Influenza A' usually resulting in a more severe illness - complications can include bronchitis and secondary bacterial pneumonia. Given that the flu virus is unstable and new strains and variants are constantly emerging, this is one reason for offering a seasonal flu vaccination annually. The effectiveness of flu vaccines can also vary from year to year and influenza activity in Northern Ireland is continuously monitored by the PHA.

<sup>21</sup> Annual Immunisation Report for Northern Ireland 2018-19, PHA.

- 2.32** Research<sup>22</sup> has concluded that children up to four years of age<sup>23</sup> are particularly susceptible to complications from flu, which can result in increased GP visits and hospitalisation. Children also play a key role in its transmission among the wider population and, since the 2013-14 flu season, pre-school children (two to four years of age) are an 'eligible group' to receive this immunisation (as a nasal spray) within a primary care (GP practice) setting.
- 2.33** Considering levels of flu vaccination coverage<sup>24</sup> among Northern Ireland pre-school children since 2016-17, a downward trend was reversed in 2019-20 and 2020-21, with increases in immunisations provided of 0.9 and 6.7 per cent respectively (to 48.5 and 55.2 per cent). In the context of a COVID-19<sup>25</sup> pandemic ongoing during 2020-21, this is to be welcomed. The department told us that, while these flu outcomes remained below the respective target rates of 60 and 95 per cent coverage set by the DoH<sup>26</sup> for this eligible group, these were highly aspirational targets in order to encourage vaccine provision by GP practices.
- 2.34** Compared to other UK countries, the rate achieved in Northern Ireland for the 2020-21 flu season was 7.8 per cent less than in Scotland, 1.5 per cent lower than in England and 1.1 per cent lower than in Wales (see Figure 18). We note that work is ongoing in this area via a Four Nations Programme Board to gain further insight and share best practice.

**Figure 18. Flu vaccination coverage for pre-school children is lower than the target rate set by the Department of Health and consistently behind Scotland and Wales**



Source: *Surveillance of Influenza and other Seasonal Respiratory Viruses in the UK Winter 2020 to 2021*, PHE

- 2.35** Similar to PHE, and beginning with the Winter 2021 to 2022 season, the United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA), with a lead role in immunisation issues, published the rates of flu vaccination coverage achieved by each UK country. While this showed a general downward trend in coverage for pre-school children in all countries in 2021-22, other direct comparisons were not possible, due to the Department of Health in Northern Ireland introducing new methods to record and extract flu vaccine data from its Vaccine Management System (VMS), for the first time.

22 Kassianos C, MacDonald P, Aloysius I et al. Implementation of the United Kingdom's childhood influenza national vaccination programme: A review of clinical impact and lessons learned over six influenza seasons [2013/14 to 2018/19]. *Journal Vaccine*. July 2020.

23 Although susceptibility to flu complications is known to be particularly high up to four years of age, children below six months are deemed unsuitable for immunisation, while only those between six months and two years of age and deemed 'high risk' (e.g. due to long-term health conditions) are eligible for a flu injection.

24 The policy for the Seasonal Flu Vaccination Programme is set by the Department of Health (DoH), in line with recommendations from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), including regional targets for immunisation uptake, based on WHO recommendations.

25 Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by the novel respiratory coronavirus, SARS-COV-2.

26 Annually, the DoH sets a target rate for flu vaccination coverage for each of the eligible groups in the Northern Ireland population. During the 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 flu seasons, the target rates for pre-school children were 60; 95 and 80 per cent respectively.

- 2.36** Research<sup>27</sup> which considered the vaccination programme for healthy children in Northern Ireland over seven flu seasons to 2016-17 found that, overall, there had been statistically significant reductions in the need for GP consultations. This suggests that flu vaccination is cost-effective and higher rates of coverage are likely to enhance value for money outcomes.

“One of the implications of declining rates of vaccination coverage can be higher numbers of infections over time, due to reduced protection against the diseases which are the source of these infections within the population”.

### Northern Ireland Audit Office

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<sup>27</sup> Gallagher N, Jessop L, Sartaj M, Johnston J. Impact of live attenuated influenza vaccination programme for healthy children in Northern Ireland - A comparison of seven influenza seasons, 2010/11-2016/17. *Journal Vaccine*. 2017; 12:003.

**Part Three**  
**Maintaining  
and Improving  
Vaccination  
Coverage within  
the Pre-School  
Population**

## Introduction

- 3.1** Part 2 considered vaccination for Northern Ireland's pre-school children (birth to four years of age), both in terms of the rationale for each vaccine included in the routine immunisation schedule and the rates of coverage over time. Comparisons of the outcomes within Northern Ireland and with other parts of the UK have highlighted the breadth of variation in vaccine coverage achieved.
- 3.2** Given the importance of maintaining a sufficient level of population immunity to infectious disease, and with reducing rates of pre-school coverage for many of the vaccinations which target these diseases, this part of our report looks at:
- the current arrangements in place around vaccination supply and delivery in Northern Ireland; and
  - issues relevant to the rates of vaccination coverage in GP practices, including: workforce numbers; vaccine delivery capacity; achievement of GP targets set for vaccine uptake; completeness of system data on vaccinations administered; targeting selected vaccines; and hesitancy around vaccination by parents/carers.

## The Department of Health has overall responsibility for the supply of vaccines

- 3.3** The DoH<sup>28</sup> is responsible for the procurement processes which support the delivery of both the childhood vaccination and annual seasonal influenza (flu) programmes.
- 3.4** Pharmacists and pharmacy teams in hospitals manage the distribution of childhood vaccines to GP practices. The PHA has responsibility for ensuring that sufficient and timely supplies of annual flu vaccines are made available to vaccinate GP practice patients meeting the DoH's eligibility criteria. Northern Ireland's pre-school children between two and four years of age are an 'eligible group' within the population.

## Many areas of the health service are struggling with workforce pressures

- 3.5** A 2020 Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report<sup>29</sup> examined workforce planning for nurses and midwives in Northern Ireland's healthcare system and, in particular, the DoH's response to the need for sufficient resources of staff and finance to address the increasing demands placed upon it. The system-wide staffing and funding gaps identified in the report may also have implications for delivery of the broad remit of primary care offered in GP practices, including pre-school immunisations, particularly given the decreasing trend in overall vaccine coverage already identified in Part 2.

28 Pharmaceutical Public Health, Northern Ireland Department of Health (DoH) website.

29 'Workforce Planning for Nurses and Midwives', NIAO, 31 July 2020.

## Concerns around the capacity of GPs to deliver vaccines led to a review of the delivery model

- 3.6** The introduction of a vaccination programme against Meningococcal group B (Men B) disease in 2015 highlighted the significant difficulty of incorporating another vaccine into the existing arrangements for pre-school immunisations operating in GP practices. With this 'delivery model' already considered as not fit for purpose, the DoH commissioned *A Working Group Review of Pre-School Vaccination Delivery Model*, which reported its findings to the Department in December 2017. The Review's scope excluded the seasonal flu vaccination programme.
- 3.7** The Working Group, comprising key stakeholders, focused on a delivery model based on the principles of: fairness; effectiveness; patient focus; minimising harm; value for money; and flexibility. Pre-school vaccination delivery arrangements in England, Scotland and Wales were also taken into account.
- 3.8** The Review found variations in the way that immunisations were carried out in Northern Ireland. Even within individual trusts, there were differences in how GP practices were being staffed and funded. In some practices, a practice nurse directly employed by a GP administered vaccines. In others, a treatment room nurse working in a practice but employed by a trust undertook immunisations, while elsewhere, a combination of these arrangements operated in partnership within a single practice. While the variation in delivery methods did not appear to affect rates of vaccination coverage, there was no clear rationale governing the local arrangements in place, leading to perceived inequality among GP practices.
- 3.9** The Review also identified that the original funding model had changed over time as additional vaccination requirements were introduced. Under GP contract arrangements, vaccinations are an 'Additional Service' which attracts a top-up to the funding received by practices to cover the costs of medicines prescribing. However, payments for pre-school vaccines added more recently are issued as 'Item of Service' fees for each completed immunisation course, for example, where rotavirus vaccinations are successfully administered at two and three months. Further funding is also available through a 'Direct Enhanced Service' if practices achieve annual immunisation targets set by the DoH for certain vaccinations, assessed at two and five years of age (see paragraph 3.13). As a consequence, the arrangements around funding for vaccinations have become increasingly complicated.
- 3.10** In the case of more recent vaccines, trusts received no additional funding even though their staff based in GP practices were administering them. This led to some redirection of health visitors, who are employed by trusts, from their primary duties to undertake this work, in order to maintain rates of coverage. This redirection of staff was likely to have an impact on the delivery of other services. A DoH progress report on *Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together*<sup>30</sup>, noted that progress on the 'Healthy Child, Healthy Future' programme was being impacted by workforce capacity issues, including health visitors administering routine vaccinations which the DoH deemed unsustainable going forward, as well as a lack of funding to maintain the nursing support required.

<sup>30</sup> *Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together* is a 10-year approach to transforming health and social care in Northern Ireland, prepared in response to the Bengoa Report - published 16 May 2017.

- 3.11** The Working Group Review concluded that GP practices should be responsible for the future delivery of the pre-school immunisation programme, with nursing support at an appropriate level obtained and funded equitably across practices. It also took the view that health visitors should continue to encourage immunisation coverage through their direct contacts with families, but without direct involvement in vaccine administration. The preferred delivery model was for practices to receive funding to engage nursing support to undertake immunisation and other duties, which would help to address the existing issues while also fulfilling the delivery principles set down by the Working Group at the outset of the Review.
- 3.12** Following approval and acceptance of the report by the DoH, its findings were disseminated by Northern Ireland's Chief Medical Officer in April 2019. Nursing support funding would allow all GPs to employ nursing staff on either an individual or collective practice basis, or to engage nurses through HSCT contracts. These arrangements would be phased in as part of the implementation of the population-based staffing model for primary care nursing under the 'Delivering Care Policy Framework', subject to funding. Coordinating the implementation of the Review's recommendations would be the responsibility of the Director of Nursing and staff in the PHA. In recognising the need for this, the Department has told us that work is underway to invest in GP nursing workforce expansion which, to date, has included the recruitment and training of 28 nurses (around 19 per cent of the planned staff increases), alongside investment to support GP practices in the delivery of pre-school vaccinations.

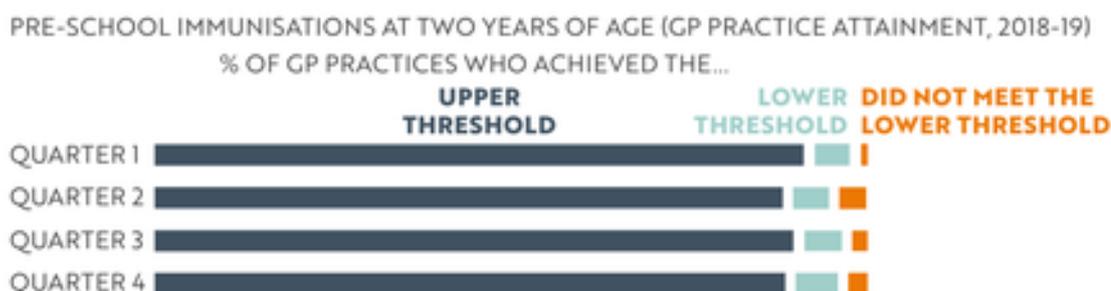
## A number of GPs are not meeting targets for the vaccination of pre-school children

- 3.13** The DoH sets targets for individual GP practices to encourage vaccine uptake. These targets are assessed at two years and five years of age, with upper and lower attainment thresholds set at 90 and 70 per cent respectively. The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) monitors<sup>31</sup> the outcomes achieved by practices annually by HSCT area, based on claims submitted. As illustrated in **Figure 19**, during 2018-19, an average of 92.2 per cent of practices achieved the upper (90 per cent) threshold for pre-school vaccinations assessed at two years of age. However, it also indicates that, for the same measure, between three and 13 GP practices did not meet the lower (70 per cent) attainment threshold for vaccine uptake.

<sup>31</sup> General Medical Services Contract Review Report 2018-19, HSCB.

**Figure 19. On average, over the four quarters of 2018-19, the rate at which GP practices attained the upper threshold for pre-school immunisations at two years of age was around 92 per cent**

The HSCB monitors pre-school immunisations administered by GP practices with reference to an upper threshold of 90 per cent and a lower threshold of 70 per cent. Across both measures, between 3 and 13 GP practices did not meet the lower threshold in any quarter during 2018-19.



**During 2018-19, the same outcome measured at five years of age was less than 87 per cent**



Source: GP claim submissions to HSCB during 2018-19

**3.14** In relation to immunisation levels achieved for pre-school booster doses assessed at five years of age, **Figure 19** shows that there was a reduction in the rates of vaccine uptake achieved for this measure compared to the assessment at two years of age - an average of 86.4 per cent of GP practices in Northern Ireland achieved the upper (90 per cent) threshold rate during 2018-19. However, it also indicates that between four and 13 GP practices did not meet the lower (70 per cent) attainment threshold for vaccine uptake at five years of age.

**3.15** When the data from claims submitted by GPs was considered by HSCT area, this showed that almost a third (31.7 per cent) of GP practices (on average) within the Belfast HSCT area did not achieve the upper threshold for immunisations assessed at five years of age during 2018-19. This compares to rates of between 4 and 13 per cent for the remaining HSCT areas and reflects our findings in Part 2 around coverage rates achieved for individual vaccinations.

## The data held on vaccination may be incomplete

- 3.16** Vaccination data in Northern Ireland has been collected on the Child Health Information System (CHIS) since 1986-87, and the Working Group Review (see paragraph 3.6) noted the importance of its inputs to national statistical reporting (see paragraph 2.3). However, with each HSCT operating its own CHIS, it was found that not all GP practices were utilising the system as intended (duplicating effort to issue vaccination invites, schedule clinics and monitor uptake); it was regarded as inflexible to change; and also lacked compatibility with other IT systems in use. While the Working Group was advised that some tailoring of the CHIS with training could improve compatibility, over the longer-term it recommended a replacement which could integrate fully with GP practice systems.
- 3.17** Given concerns around the completeness and accuracy of system data on vaccination coverage, during 2018-19<sup>32</sup> the PHA Immunisation Team worked with the HSCB and GP practices in the Belfast HSCT area to improve the uptake of MMR immunisations. This was one of the catch-up exercises referred to previously (see paragraph 2.25). With half of eligible GP practices participating, CHIS extracts identified a group of 2,000 children (now of school age) who, according to practice records, were 'unimmunised' or 'partially immunised' - they were then invited to attend a vaccination appointment. While the exercise resulted in around 500 children's records being updated, in over 300 cases this was due to the correction of previously incomplete MMR data, with fewer than 200 additional children being vaccinated.

## The Public Health Agency has plans to carry out targeted interventions for some vaccines

- 3.18** While increased immunisation coverage is the main benefit of targeting selected vaccines, such as MMR, maximising this can place heavy reliance on GP practice participation, along with co-ordinating the efforts of health professionals in health and social care settings (e.g. health visitors) and the maintenance of accurate health records. The PHA has plans in place to carry out further targeted interventions involving multi-disciplinary teams, where the necessary delivery arrangements can be put in place.

## The World Health Organisation (WHO) has identified vaccine hesitancy as a global health risk

- 3.19** 'Vaccine hesitancy' is defined by the WHO as a reluctance or refusal among parents and carers to vaccinate those in their care. Key reasons for this are considered to be complacency, inconvenience in accessing vaccines and a lack of confidence in them. As a result, vaccine hesitancy was included in the WHO's 'Top 10 Global Health Risks' for 2019.
- 3.20** The National Audit Office (NAO) conducted an investigation<sup>33</sup> into pre-school vaccinations in England, given the decline in uptake rates over recent years. Its report drew on some of the key outcomes of a PHE survey on attitudes towards vaccination in 2019, including that:
- 95 per cent of parents surveyed felt confident/very confident in the vaccination system (up from 93 per cent in 2017); and

32 Annual Immunisation Report for Northern Ireland 2018-19, PHA.

33 Department of Health & Social Care, Investigation into Pre-School Vaccinations HC 100 Session 2019-20, NAO, 25 October 2019.

- the percentage of parents refusing or postponing vaccinations had decreased from 11 per cent in 2015 to 8 per cent in 2019.

**3.21** However, the NAO also noted the view held by PHE that aspects of the delivery arrangements within primary care settings in England had significantly contributed to reduced uptake. These included:

- inconsistencies in the way healthcare professionals reminded parents/carers to vaccinate their children, with no single call/recall system in place; and
- difficulties in accessing vaccination services. Respondents to a 2018 survey undertaken by the Royal Society for Public Health<sup>34</sup> (RSPH) cited timing and availability of appointments and childcare as access barriers.

**3.22** Given the declining rates of vaccination uptake within Northern Ireland's pre-school population (considered in Part 2), there is merit in assessing factors with local relevance, in order to identify and take remedial action. In this context, the PHA reported<sup>35</sup> during 2019 on the results of a marketing survey it commissioned in 2018, where focus groups within a 'harder to reach' community group considered vaccination attitudes and influences. While the findings showed a general acceptance of vaccinations, communication issues and access were highlighted as barriers to receiving vaccines, which could be facilitated through increased co-ordination between the PHA and the other health professionals involved.

**3.23** The NAO report also noted limited survey evidence of anti-vaccination messages have had any major impact on uptake rates in England. Nevertheless, the promotion of a more consistently positive case for vaccination was being progressed by PHE, NHS England<sup>36</sup> and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in England in the form of a joint communications strategy. Such an approach could have applicability across the UK.

**3.24** The RSPH survey also reported the results of questions around seasonal flu concerns. Despite the potential severity of the illness<sup>37</sup>, one in five of the 2,600 parents/carers sampled had chosen not to have a child vaccinated. The most common reasons given were that they did not think the vaccine would be effective and that they were worried about side-effects.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

**3.25** Our study has focused on the rates of vaccination coverage within Northern Ireland's pre-school population and examined some of the key issues which, over time, have contributed to the ongoing downward trend in coverage achieved.

**3.26** We have also reported on the vaccination rates achieved during the annual seasonal flu programme for pre-school children. Even with the improvement in outcomes achieved in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 flu seasons, rates of vaccination coverage remained well below the DoH targets set for this eligible group.

<sup>34</sup> Moving the Needle – Promoting Vaccination Uptake across the Life Course, Royal Society of Public Health, January 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Annual Vaccine Preventable Diseases Report for Northern Ireland 2019, PHA.

<sup>36</sup> National Health Service (NHS) England is an executive non-departmental public body which leads and oversees the commissioning of healthcare provision in England.

<sup>37</sup> 'UK flu jab rates prompt complacency warning', BBC News Online, 27 August 2020.

- 3.27** The success of any large-scale vaccination programme will be dependent on addressing the issues identified during this study. These include:
- the lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities which has arisen in the administration of vaccinations provided through GP practices;
  - the fact that some GPs have not met vaccination coverage targets set by the DoH;
  - concerns raised around the completeness and accuracy of management information generated using vaccination records; and
  - the implications of vaccine hesitancy (a WHO 'global health risk') set against the need to maximise the effectiveness of any immunisation programme.
- 3.28** As part of its forward planning associated with COVID-19, the DHSC included each of these aspects in a consultation<sup>38</sup> process undertaken during 2020, along with vaccine promotion messaging within national advertising campaigns.
- 3.29** Where continuity of vaccine supplies is maintained, large-scale immunisation programmes rely on: the logistics required to facilitate timely immunisation being in place and operating effectively; convincing sufficient numbers of individuals to participate through clear and consistent messaging; and maintaining accurate vaccination records for patient safety reasons. To enable the achievement of these outcomes, we have made the following recommendations:



### Recommendation 1

Primary care settings require access to an available workforce (scaled-up as necessary to meet immunisation delivery targets) with appropriate clinical training, in order to maintain standards of patient safety.



### Recommendation 2

Clear, fact-based and consistently presented positive messaging is key to mitigating against genuine uncertainty around vaccination within the population and increasing rates of coverage.



### Recommendation 3

Given the concerns around the completeness and accuracy of vaccination records, the Department of Health should ensure that remedial action is taken in order that existing information systems supporting vaccination are fit for purpose. Over the longer-term, maintaining the integrity of immunisation data will be necessary for its seamless inclusion within an electronic patient record system for Northern Ireland<sup>39</sup> which was announced in late 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Consultation Document - Changes to Human Medicine Regulations to support the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines, Department of Health and Social Care, 28 August 2020.

<sup>39</sup> 'Patient Identity Management goes digital', Department of Health website, 18 December 2020.

## NIAO Reports 2022 and 2023

Title	Date Published
<b>2022</b>	
Planning in Northern Ireland	01 February 2022
The COVID-19 pandemic: Supply and procurement of Personal Protective Equipment to local healthcare providers	1 March 2022
Northern Ireland Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme: Progressing implementation of the Public Inquiry recommendations	22 March 2022
Extraordinary Audit of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council	07 July 2022
The National Fraud Initiative: Northern Ireland	19 July 2022
Continuous improvement arrangements in policing	21 July 2022
NIAO Review of NI Water's sale of Portavoe Reservoir	21 July 2022
<b>2023</b>	
Planning Fraud Risks	01 March 2023
Public Procurement in Northern Ireland	25 April 2023
Ministerial Directions in Northern Ireland	27 April 2023



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NAC

National Association of Councillors  
Northern Ireland Region

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### **About the NAC**

The National Association of Councillors, Northern Ireland Region (NAC) is the only organisation that is run by Northern Ireland councillors from all parties and none to represent their interests and provide information, advice and an all-party voice on matters that are relevant to the councillor role.

The organisation was set up 30 years ago in 1993, when local councillors decided that they needed a strong local representative body as well as belonging to the NAC UK. All 462 councillors in Northern Ireland are members of the NAC through a corporate membership scheme which is subscribed to by the 11 councils, each council is asked to nominate up to 8 NAC delegates to represent their councillors and those delegates are invited to attend NAC Members Meetings.

NAC Members Meetings are held bi-monthly with dates and details circulated in advance and published on the Meetings Page of the [NAC NI Website](#). All councillors are welcome to attend but only the official council nominated NAC delegates can vote or make proposals and decisions.

The NAC NI Executive Committee (EC) govern the organisation and NAC delegates can be nominated to serve on the EC at the NAC NI Annual General Meeting or at a NAC NI Special General Meeting. The EC meet monthly and comprises of a Chair, Senior Vice Chair, Junior Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Women's Representative, and other members who are selected from across the various political parties including an independent representative.

### **What the NAC do for Councillors**

- ❖ Communicate with members through information emails, newsletters, and the [NAC-NI website](#) providing information on changes in legislation, revised allowances, conferences, training, and other matters affecting councillors.
- ❖ The NAC NI bi-monthly [Members Meetings](#) provide a forum for opinions and concerns to be voiced, and the opportunity for information and experiences to be shared.
- ❖ Advice or signposting is given to councillors relating to well-being, allowances, tax, welfare benefits, expenses, pension, elections, ethics, and any other concerns that are raised.
- ❖ Will lobby local authorities, ministers, government departments and other bodies on issues that are of concern for councillors when necessary and make collective responses to government consultations on matters affecting councillors.

The NAC encourages all members to engage and get actively involved, everyone is welcome to participate as this will strengthen the organisation and our "councillor family".



NAC

National Association of Councillors  
Northern Ireland Region

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### **Current Aims and Objectives**

- *To make representation on behalf of NAC members with the aim of achieving equality for all councillors across the Northern Ireland region.*

The NAC has been campaigning for councillor equality for several years and their request for an independently led review of the councillor role is currently being progressed with the Department for Communities (DfC).

- *To address matters that affect councillors' well-being and provide appropriate information and advice accordingly.*

The NAC responds to individual councillors' requests for assistance and gives advice on matters of personal concern. When necessary, the NAC will make representation in confidence on behalf of councillors, to councils, government officials and other organisations.

- *To strive for adequate and appropriate training to be available for councillors to assist them with conducting the role.*

The NAC organises conferences and workshops on topics relevant to councillors. Nationally arranged events also provide the opportunity for NI councillors to engage with councillors from the other UK regions.

By councillors acting collectively on issues that are of common concern, the NAC has made major gains in councillors' terms and conditions and past achievements are listed below.

### **NAC Achievements**

*Over recent years, the NAC has:*

- Achieved a councillors' pension scheme with death in-service benefit.
- Achieved a dependants' carers' allowance.
- Achieved Code of Conduct insurance for councillors across all 11 councils.
- Achieved refunds of GDPR fees from 6 councils before exemption.
- Given advice on making tax and expenses claims to HMRC.
- Represented councillors' interests during the local government re-organisation.
- Achieved an Independent Remuneration Panel which increased councillors' allowances for the newly formed council areas.
- Achieved severance payments for councillors following the local government re-organisation.

**From:** Hughes, Voirrey <[Voirrey.Hughes@setrust.hscni.net](mailto:Voirrey.Hughes@setrust.hscni.net)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 31, 2023 2:30 PM  
**To:** 'david.burns@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk' <[david.burns@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk](mailto:david.burns@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk)>; Reid, Stephen <[Stephen.Reid@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:Stephen.Reid@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)>; 'marie.ward@nmandd.org' <[marie.ward@nmandd.org](mailto:marie.ward@nmandd.org)>  
**Subject:** FW: Waiting Time Information

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Marie, Stephen and David

Please see correspondence below from Chief Executive Roisin Coulter

I appreciate if you could please circulate to all councillors

Patients in Northern Ireland can now use a new online system to check how long they are likely to wait for a specialist hospital appointment.

The initiative has been developed to improve and centralise the information already publicly available to patients.

In this first phase, patients can find out the average waiting times for a first outpatients hospital appointment across the different clinical specialties in each Health and Social Care Trust area. <https://online.hscni.net/my-waiting-times-ni/>

The system will be updated on the first Thursday of each month with the latest waiting time information.

More information, including frequently asked questions, is available on the webpage: <https://online.hscni.net/my-waiting-times-ni/waiting-time-faqs/>

GPs and other primary care teams, such as dentists and pharmacists, will also have access to the information which should help them have more informed conversations with their patients.

We hope this information will be helpful to both you and your constituents.

Kind regards

Roisin Coulter  
Chief Executive

South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust  
Trust Headquarters  
Belfast  
(028 90553141 ex 22501)

Jane Loughrey

Head of Communications  
Trust HQ  
South Eastern HSC Trust  
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**From:** DoJ MACR Views <[macrviews@justice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:macrviews@justice-ni.gov.uk)>

**Sent:** Thursday, June 1, 2023 3:07 PM

**Subject:** Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility - Consultation Summary Responses Report published 1 June 2023

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

The Department of Justice has today published a summary report on the responses received to the public consultation on the **Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR)** in Northern Ireland. The consultation ran for 12 weeks from October to December 2022, and received over 450 responses. We are grateful to those individuals and organisations that took the time to respond.

Links to the report and the associated press release are below for your information.

[Department of Justice publishes consultation report on minimum age of criminal responsibility | Department of Justice \(justice-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

[Minimum age of criminal responsibility summary of responses | Department of Justice \(justice-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Reducing Offending Policy Unit  
Department of Justice  
1 June 2023  
Email: [macrviews@justice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:macrviews@justice-ni.gov.uk)