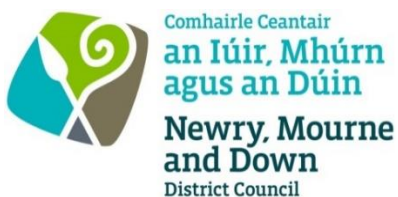


Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership

Action Plan 2024 - 2025



NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN
Labour Market Partnership
Working Together



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1. Introduction

Emerging from the Council's Skills and Employability Working Group, the NMD Labour Market Partnership was officially formed in February 2021 and is representative of the key skills and employability stakeholders from the Newry, Mourne and Down District area.

Through the development and implementation of Action Plans for the 2021-22; 2022-23; and 2023-24 periods, the Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership (NMD LMP) has made significant progress in improving the employability outcomes and labour market conditions of Newry, Mourne and Down residents.

NMD Labour Market Partnership Structure

The NMD LMP is a dynamic partnership, committed to working together to make a positive difference. The NMD LMP reflects best practice through extensive engagement with partners at local and regional level. It aims to be dynamic, responsive and innovative to achieve excellence.

NMD District Council has a number of other existing structures in place to enable successful delivery of the LMP. The Council engages regularly with external organisations such as the Local Enterprise Agencies, Chambers of Commerce, Invest Northern Ireland, Intertrade Ireland, Belfast City Region Deal partners, Regional Colleges and schools, training organisations and Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC). The ongoing partnership with these reputable organisations and others, will assist the LMP to make informed and evidence-based decisions and augment forward plans.

Membership of the NMD LMP consists of:

- Newry Mourne and Down District Council
- Further Education colleges
- Local Enterprise Agencies
- Chambers of Commerce
- Area Learning Co-Ordinators for NMD
- Invest NI
- Jobs and Benefits Offices
- DfE Careers Service
- Education Authority
- Disability Action
- National Trust
- Social Economy representatives
- Private business sector representatives

Strategic Assessment

The NMD LMP has undertaken a Strategic Assessment of the local employability and labour market conditions, an integral piece of work which informs the Action Plan, strategic priorities and themes for the LMP during the 2024-25 period and subsequent Action Plans for the 2024/25 – 2026/27 period.

Against each of the Strategic Priorities the Action Plan identifies a number of Themes, Aims and Key Activities which are evidence based and focused on outcomes which aim to improve employability and labour market conditions across the NMD area.

- Strategic Priority 1: To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area.
 - Theme 1: LMP Delivery and Development
- Strategic Priority 2: To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally.
 - Theme 1: Economic Inactivity (Access to Work)
 - Theme 2: Unemployment (Place to Work)
 - Theme 3: Disability (Opportunity to Work)
 - Theme 4: Skilled Labour Supply (Skills for Work)
- Strategic Priority 3: To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision available either regionally or locally.
 - Theme 1: Increase Awareness

Engagement

In developing the Strategic Assessment and Action Plan for 2024/25, NMD LMP reviewed key strategic and policy documents; enrolled the services of Ulster University Economic Policy Centre to undertake a desktop review of existing evidence available; and held direct individual meetings with a number of LMP partners, which concluded with collective engagement sessions with all partners of the NMD LMP.

The aim of the engagement process was to:

- identify the key themes / issues in relation to the local labour market within Newry Mourne and Down District Council area
- identify key issues NMD LMP aspire to change locally to improve labour market conditions
- identify a range of initiatives, addressing both the supply side and the demand side, which could improve employability outcomes for local people, with a view to moving closer to work and / or into work
- identify current available initiatives which NMD LMP would be able to support and provide enhanced delivery or effective engagement.

The output of the process is the agreed themes, aims, activities and indicators as outlined within the NMD LMP Action Plan 24/25.

2. Executive Summary

Action Plan 2024/25

The Action Plan set out within section 7 of this document, is based on the assumption of an available operational budget in section 8 being available for the entire 2024/25 period. Any variance to these components will impact the level of activity and performance measures achieved.

A Turning the Curve exercise was undertaken in relation to the LMP Action Plan Themes and projects which considered the programmes of work in relation to the outcomes they delivered.

As a result of the LMP planning exercises, it has been agreed to drive progress in 3 core strategic priorities and 4 cross cutting high level themes which focus on outcomes to improve employability and labour market conditions across the NMD area, specifically in regard to:

- Theme 1: Economic Inactivity (Access to Work)
- Theme 2: Unemployment (Place to Work)
- Theme 3: Disability (Opportunity to Work)
- Theme 4: Skilled Labour Supply (Skills for Work)

NMD LMP will address Regional LMP priorities across the range of activities within the action plan to include:

- Green jobs
- Disability employment gap
- City and Growth deals
- Skills strategy
- Diversity and inclusion

A Summary of actions outlined in section 7	
SP1	
LMP Delivery and Development	
1.1 Effective delivery of the LMP	Ensure the delivery of the 2024/25 Action Plan and respond to new challenges in the labour market.
1.2 Develop Action Plan for 25/26	A consultation exercise will be undertaken to update research, identify and inform current and future employability and skills supply, to aid in the scoping of interventions to meet skill gaps, vacancies and recruitment challenges for a future 2025/26 Action Plan.
SP2	
Economic Inactivity	
2.1 Get Work Ready: pre-employment support	Personalised employment pathways programme to support participants into employment, education or training.
2.2 Enterprise Pathway Programme	Specialised mentoring and business support for participants between 'Go Succeed' participation and establishing a trading business which offers either PT or FT self-employment for the business owner.

Unemployed	
2.3 Employability Academies	Identify, design and deliver a range of employment academies for skill interventions in sectors and occupations where opportunities for employment is identified with local employers.
2.4 A Place to Work	<p>Build on the 'Place to Work Campaign' which promotes NMD as a good place to work with opportunities for career progression.</p> <p>Promoting improved information on local employers, employment opportunities and career pathways, building on linkages with schools / job seeker and local businesses to promote the district as a leading employment location, creating awareness of key sectors, employment and upskilling opportunities.</p>
Disability	
2.5 Disability Advice Workshop	Engage with local employers to provide advice and updates on legislation around disability and employment issues enabling people with disabilities to gain employment.
Skilled Labour Supply	
2.6 Upskilling for Growth	Meeting employer needs and supporting career progression by upskilling employees. Provide support to employers to upskill staff to enable career progression for those in employment to facilitate vacancies and opportunities for those entering the labour market.
2.7 Skills Conference	Conference for businesses, careers teachers, school principals, training providers, recruitment consultants and academics from across Newry Mourne and Down District Council area and further afield, to develop a cohesive strategy to identify current and future skills gaps across all sectors to develop short, medium and long-term solutions to meet local skills and staff shortages.
SP3	
Increased Awareness	
3.1 Employment Pathway Events	Support delivery of Jobs Fairs and Career fairs and events, including sectoral focused events where scope and opportunity exists.
3.2 Promote apprenticeships, traineeships and placements as pathways to employment	Promote the benefits of recruiting through opportunity pathways, such as Apprenticeships, Traineeships, and work experience placements to employers.
3.3 Increased awareness of employability and skills programmes	Increase awareness among job seekers and those who wish to upskill, of the range of employability and training support there are available.

The LMP will report against the Action Plan as required on a quarterly basis, through Project Report Card returns and Thematic Report Card as required by DfC.

This document should be considered as a living document, one that is to be reviewed and updated in response to local emerging opportunities and changes within the employment and skills landscape.

Summary of previous NMD LMP delivery: Year 1 2021/22

With funding secured from DfC in December 2021 for implementation of the Labour Market Partnership Action Plan 2021/2022, the LMP implemented a number of key priority projects. Achievements included:

Business Start: Wrap Around Support

Provision

- To support 25 Entrepreneurs who have started the process of establishing a new business. Support those PT or benefit dependant to gain FT self – employment via wrap around intensive mentoring support.

Output:

- 25 participants increasing employment levels via self employment.
- 5 days mentoring to support the start up and scale of on a new business.
- 25 business incentive challenge fund grants delivered.

HGV Drivers Employment Academy

Provision:

- Support those unemployed to gain a HGV category C (Class 2) or Category C + E (Class 1) Licence. Launched 14th Feb 2022.

Output:

- 6 Employers directly supporting employment academy.
- 155 Expressions Of Interest (EOI) received from participants.
- 53 Eligible and invited to next stage.
- 2 Information Sessions on 9th March – 45 people in attendance.
- 43 Participants invited to interview – 30th March.
- 40 Participants passed and invited to undertake medicals/proceed to next stage of theory and practical (by April 22).

Health and Social Care Employment Academy

Provision:

- Support those unemployed to access employment opportunities in health and social care sector, creating pathways to vacancies in Domiciliary Care, Day Care Support Workers and Carers.
- With a focus on 1) General HSC Academy and 2) HSC Academy for Southern Health and Social Care Trust.

Output:

- 20 Places available for Band 2 | Band 3 Entry Level roles.
- 13 participants recruited to Academy and received job specific training and employability skills.
- 6 participants called for interview. 4 offered posts within the Trust (by April 22).

Apprenticeship awareness campaign

Purpose:

- Promotion of Apprenticeships as a viable and alternative pathway to employment, including the development of resources showcasing the range of apprenticeships and Higher-Level apprenticeships on offer in the area.

Outputs:

- Apprenticeship Social Media Videos x 9
- Apprenticeships Marketing Collateral
- Apprenticeship Information Evenings
- Digital and Social Media Campaign
- 'In Conversation with' Local Employers and Apprentices videos (4 nr) – to view web link [Local Jobs Local Apprenticeships \(src.ac.uk\)](http://src.ac.uk)
- Apprenticeship (HLA) Booklet to post primary Schools

NMD – A Place to Work – Strategy and Action Plan

Provision:

- Promotion of the NMD District as a great place to work, including development of a brand, creation of YouTube content, completion of research and development of strategy and action plan for moving forward.



Output:

- Strategy in place.
- Research complete to shape the pathways/partners and digital/non digital assets proposed for the longer term strategy.
 - Employer - 50 businesses representing more than 1,270 jobs across the district.
 - Stakeholder - One to one interviews with more than 20 stakeholders.
 - Employee - Target of 50 job seekers
- Branding/Marketing:
 - A Great Place to Work draft brand created.
 - PR Plan drafted for short term delivery.
 - Irish News full page feature.
 - Q Radio booked.

Year 2 2022/23

Despite a shortened timeframe the NMD LMP initiated the majority of the proposed actions within the 2022-23 Action Plan addressing the themes set out in the Action Plan which were:

- Theme 1: Access to work
- Theme 2: Skills for work
- Theme 3: A Place to work

A Summary of actions delivered in Q3 and Q4 outlined in 2022-23 Action Plan		
Development		
1.1 Research - Labour Market Supply Intelligence	Research will: 1) Scope the employability and skills requirements of NMD employers; 2) define and identify NMD disadvantaged groups within the unemployed and economically inactive population.	Procured and delivered
Access to work		
2.1 Get Work Ready: pre-employment support	Get Work Ready is a personalized work preparation, job search and career guidance service.	Procured and delivered
2.2 High Skill Pathway: Recruitment Pilot	A pilot to test with NMD employers how hard-to-recruit vacancies can be filled through new pathways for graduates and others. The initiative will be co-designed with NMD employers.	Unable to deliver due to limited time available
2.3 Self-Employment: Business Start Development Programme	Specialised mentoring and business support between 'Go for It' participation (the creation of a business plan) and establishing a trading company which offers either PT or FT self-employment for the business owner.	Procured and delivered
Skills for Work		
2.4 HGV Sectoral Academy	HGV Sectoral Academy aligned to local employment opportunities, providing a stepping stone into entry level employment positions.	Procured and delivered
2.5 Upskilling for Growth	Employee Upskilling: Meeting employer needs and supporting career progression: Support employers to upskill staff to enable career progression for those in employment and open up opportunities for those entering the labour market.	Procured and delivered
2.6 Employability Academies	To implement Academies for skill interventions in sectors and occupations where opportunities for employment are identified with employers.	Procured and delivered
A Place to work		
2.7 Engagement Campaign and Digital employability and skills platform	Promoting improved information on employers and their vacancies for people who are looking for work. Collate and communicate local employability and skills opportunities. Promote NMD as a good place to work with opportunities for progression.	Key promotional activities delivered successfully; however, limited timeframe prevented

		development of digital platform
2.8 Employment Pathway Events	Support delivery of Jobs and Career fairs and events, including sectoral focused events where scope and opportunity exists. Opportunity to showcase key sectors, and career opportunities.	Delivered: 2 jobs fair 1 Bring IT On event 1 Upskilling Your Staff for Business Growth Event

Year 3 2023/24

A Summary of actions delivered in Q2, Q3 and Q4 outlined in 2023-24 Action Plan		
Development		
1.1 Effective delivery of the LMP	Ensure the delivery of the 2023/24 Action Plan and respond to new challenges of the labour market.	Procured and delivered
1.2 24-27 Strategic Assessment for 24-27 and 24/25 Action Plan	A consultation exercise will be undertaken to research, identify and inform current and future employability and skills supply. It will aid in the scoping of interventions to meet skill gaps, vacancies and recruitment challenges for a future 2024-25 Action Plan.	Procured and delivered
Access to work		
2.1 Get Work Ready: pre-employment support	Personalised employment pathways programme, supporting participants into employment, education or training.	Procured and delivered
2.2 Enterprise Pathways Programme – Go Succeed	Specialised, mentoring and business support between 'Go Succeed' participation (the creation of a business plan) and establishing a trading business which offers either PT or FT self-employment for the business owner.	Procured and delivered
2.3 Enterprise Readiness Programme (ERP)	<p>NI Councils are launching in 23/24 a new entrepreneurship support service (ESS). NMD LMP will add additionality to the ESS programme, supporting key target groups through their enterprise pathway journey.</p> <p>The Enterprise Readiness Programme (ERP) will support individuals with entrepreneurial aspirations but who require additional pre-enterprise support. ERP will encourage them to develop enterprise skills, supporting them into sustainable employment or self-employment.</p>	Unable to deliver due to duplication with SPF programmes

Skills for Work		
2.4 Upskilling for Growth	Employee upskilling: Meeting employer needs and supporting career progression. Provide support to employers to upskill staff to enable career progression for those in employment and open up vacancies and opportunities for those entering the labour market.	Procured and delivered
2.5 HGV #2 Bus and Drivers Academy	Continued delivery of the HGV #2 Bus and Drivers Academy which was commenced under 2022/2023 LMP Action Plan	Procured and delivered
2.6 Employability Academies	Identify, design and deliver a range of employment academies for skill interventions in sectors and occupations where opportunities for employment is identified with local employers.	Procured and delivered
2.7 A Place to Work	Build on the 'Place to Work Campaign' which promotes NMD as a good place to work with opportunities for career progression. Promoting improved information on employers, employment opportunities and career pathways via existing YouTube channel building on linkages with schools / job seeker and local businesses to promote the district as a leading employment location, creating awareness of key sectors, employment and upskilling opportunities.	Procured and delivered
Disability		
2.8 Employer Engagement – Disability Awareness	Break down barriers for people with disabilities to gain employment - host an event to engage local employers, provide advice and update on legislation around disability and employment issues.	Procured and delivered
Promote and Support Delivery		
3.1 Employment Pathway Events	Support delivery of Jobs Fairs and Career fairs and events, including sectoral focused events where scope and opportunity exists.	Procured and delivered
3.2 Increased awareness of employability and skills programmes	Increase awareness among job seekers and those who wish to upskill of the range of employability and training support there are available.	Procured and delivered
3.3 Promote apprenticeships, traineeships and placements as pathways to employment	Promote the benefits of recruiting through opportunity pathways, such as Apprenticeships, Traineeships, and work experience placements to employers.	Procured and delivered

3. Policy Context

Policy Content at a Regional level

This section outlines the overarching policy context that the Labour Market Partnership Action Plan sits within. It summarises the regional priorities and commitments, how this is played out in strategy formulation and reviews the main policy and strategy development at the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council level.

Northern Ireland Programme for Government – Draft Outcomes Framework 2021

This Framework is an outworking of the 'New Decade, New Approach' deal brokered to restore the NI Assembly in January 2020. This included a number of commitments including:

1. A top priority of the Executive will be to develop a regionally balanced economy with opportunities for all.
2. The Executive will make it a priority to realise the economic potential offered by the City Deals for the Belfast Region and Derry/Londonderry.
3. In support of both economic and educational objectives, the Executive will develop an enhanced approach to careers advice, curriculum, training and apprenticeships to enhance employability and support economic growth.

The current relevant outcomes to the LMP identified within the Programme for Government are:

- Outcome 3: 'We have a more equal society'
- Outcome 6: 'We have more people working in better jobs'
- Outcome 8: 'We care for others and help those in need'

DfC is the lead department for a number of indicators, through which progress on these outcomes will be measured:

- Indicator 17: Economic inactivity rates excluding students
- Indicator 32: Employment rate of 16-64 year olds by deprivation quintile
- Indicator 33: % of people working part-time who would like to work more hours
- Indicator 19: % of population living in absolute and relative poverty

Northern Ireland Draft Industrial Strategy

This strategy has a specific focus on 'Education, Skills and Employability' pillar which focuses on three areas:

- Improving educational outcomes from an early age
- Supporting those furthest from the workforce
- Ensuring we have the necessary skills pipeline to meet business needs now and in the future.

Northern Ireland Economic Recovery Plan - Rebuilding a Stronger Economy

Rebuilding a Stronger Economy 2021 seeks to deliver interventions which will contribute to:

- Building a higher skilled and agile workforce
- Pursuing and securing better jobs; and
- Producing a more regionally balanced economy

The Action Plan is supported by an additional £290m allocation for 2021-22 across: Research and Development and Innovation, £20m; Highly Skilled and Agile Workforce, £50m; Greener Economy, £20m; and Investment, Trade and Exports, £200m.

10x Skills Strategy

Skills for a 10X Economy sets out a strategic framework for the development of the Northern Ireland skills system to 2030 and is a key pillar of the Department for Economies wider 10X Economic Vision for Northern Ireland.

The key objectives are set out below:



The LMP Action Plan and range of employability academies specifically align to the Skills Strategy's identification of:

'the need for new entry level qualifications, to provide pathways to further engagement with skills development and labour market opportunities.'

Other NMD LMP Action Plan programmes, such as the Upskilling for Growth Programme meet the requirement set out in the Skills Strategy to uplift in the number of people undertaking professional and technical qualifications at mid-levels, ensuring that a qualified workforce can meet the challenges of labour market demand for mid-level qualifications.

Belfast Region City Deal

The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) represents a new way of working between central and local government and regional partners and secures a bespoke package of investment from central government and the BRCD partners of more than £850 million to support the delivery of a shared vision of:

*"Inclusive economic growth that delivers more and better jobs,
a positive impact on the most deprived communities
and a balanced spread of benefits across the region".*

The BRCD programme aims to generate 20,000 jobs in an inclusive and sustainable way. One of the four key pillars focuses on Employability and Skills with the aim of establishing and supporting interventions which will enable a constant pipeline of talent to support the growth created by the BRCD investments and ensure that the right skills are available within the region to support emerging job opportunities.

BRCD has been designed to address both the needs of individuals seeking to enter the workforce and those who recognise a need to upskill or reskill in order to continue to avail of opportunities within the labour market. The framework integrates a suite of interventions grouped across three thematic areas of:

Themes	Actions
Skills for Inclusion	Creating opportunities to address skills imbalances and improve access to employment opportunities across the region through socially inclusive progression pathways.
Skills for Growth	Working with employers to align skills programmes and employment opportunities with the growth sectors supported by BRCD; helping to create new apprenticeship pathways and fostering development of higher-level skills. The BRCD priority sectors include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital and Creative Industries • Green Economy • Health and Life Sciences • Construction • Tourism and Hospitality • Advanced Manufacturing
Skills for a Digital Future	Helping to build our digital literacy from grassroots up and enhancing the digital transformation of businesses across the region, with a specific focus upon smaller enterprises.

A number of capital projects within NMD will directly benefit from BRCD Funding including:

- The Mourne Mountains Gateway
- Newry Southern Relief Road

- Newry City Centre Regeneration
- Digital and Innovation Project

These projects will create employment opportunities for NMD residents. A need is recognised for LMP Action Plans to consider the opportunities emerging from the projects making up the BRCD so that local people are appropriately skilled and positioned to avail of them. Opportunities are:

- Sufficient flexibility for delivery of construction related employment academies;
- Contribution to the development of sectoral skills assessments aligned to the BRCD deal investment projects;
- A commitment to contribute to other partnership opportunities identified through BRCD work.

Northern Ireland Energy Strategy Action Plan

The new Energy Strategy – The Path to Net Zero Energy 1 was published in December 2021 after being agreed by the Executive. It outlines a roadmap to 2030 aiming to deliver a 56% reduction in our energy-related emissions, on the pathway to deliver the 2050 vision of net zero carbon and affordable energy.

As part of the *Grow the Green Economy* an Energy Skills Audit for energy decarbonisation will be undertaken. This will identify gaps and the skills needed from the education and training sectors in the short, medium and long term and will ultimately identify economic opportunities and support people into secure, well-paid jobs.

DfC Trust Inclusion Consultation

In September 2022 The Department for Communities (DfC) revealed that:

- 1 in 5 in NI have a disability
- Only 35% of which are employed vs 81% for those without disabilities
- NI performs worse than UK Regions across all skills levels and all conditions
- Disabled people in NI earn £310 per month less than in UK, and over £400 less than those without disabilities in NI.
- With unemployment below 3%, there is a labour pool available under the right conditions and support.

Subsequently DfC launched a consultation exercise in October 2022 seeking views on a new ***Trust Inclusion*** scheme aiming to direct support and guidance to those employing people with disabilities. It is hoped that the Trust Inclusion Scheme will offer greater support and guidance for employers in employing those with disabilities.

It will encourage and support employers of all sizes, industry and experience to be more confident and effective in attracting, retaining, and developing people with disabilities within their organisations. According to the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) almost 30,000 more disabled people would be in employment if NI matched the UK rate. (*NMDDC Economic Forecast - February 2023*).

Employability Northern Ireland

The Department of Communities (DfC), Employability Northern Ireland proposals include a new gateway service for clients to access government services, new commissioning approach provided through a dynamic purchasing programme and a menu of choices available for voluntary clients including:

- Careers Advice and Job Search
- Skills
- Enterprise
- Community and
- Health.

Employability NI will be managed through new governance arrangements at a regional level and local authority level with the establishment of Labour Market Partnerships.

The Careers Service is an integral part of the Department for the Economy (DfE) and provides a free, impartial, careers information, advice and guidance service to clients of all ages and abilities throughout Northern Ireland. We are committed to delivering a quality service and to meeting the needs of clients and other stakeholders in the wider economy. The aim of the Careers Service is *'to develop and deliver an effective, impartial and professional careers service to help people realise their career aspirations, enabling them to contribute positively to their community and to the NI economy.'*

Others

Additional relevant policies which align to the work of the Labour Market Partnership, creating challenges and opportunities with respect to strategic direction and coordination, include:

'Preparing for Success', the NI careers strategy, a joint Department for Education (DE) and Department for the Economy (DfE) policy delivered through 5 key policy commitments. The strategy is currently being revised.

New proposals for apprenticeships and youth training contained within **Securing our Success** and **Generating our Success** have been delivered including a focus on Higher Level Apprenticeships and greater alignment with target growth sectors.

DfE's **Skills for Life and Work** which has replaced Training for Success offers a mix of training, work placement and personal and essential skills training for young people aged 16-18 years old. In addition, a new Traineeship at Level 2 has been introduced through the FE Colleges targeted at particular sectors across the regional economy.

Funding considerations for Skills and Employability

Previously, European funds have played a significant role in delivering employability and skills services across the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, however cessation of the **European Social Fund (ESF)** programmes have a severe impact on local service provision. The replacement UK programme, **Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)** is now operational with a focus on support for the entrepreneurial ecosystem,

increased investment in R&D, targeted interventions for high value add sectors, and investment in green growth activity.

SPF funded programmes currently operational in the Newry, Mourne and Down area targeted specifically at Disabled and Women are outlined in the table below.

Supplier	Programme	Target Group 1	Target Group 2
Action Mental Health	SkillSET	Disabled	X
Women’s Tec	Building Futures	X	Women
Bryson Charitable Group	Maximise Employment	Disabled	Women
Triangle Housing Association	Prosper	Disabled	Women
Women’s Resource & Development	Scaling Up	X	Women
Ulster Supported Employment Ltd	Empower	Disabled	X
Southern Regional College	Employ Me	Disabled	Women
People First	Work it Out	Disabled	Women

Relevant to ‘Supporting Local Business’ investment priority is the [Peace Plus Funding Programme](#), which represents funding of over €1bn across 6 themes for the 2021-27 programme period.

Entrepreneurship Support Service (ESS)

A new Entrepreneurship Support Service (ESS) launched in 2023 by all NI Councils in partnership with the UK Government through the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), focuses on helping potential entrepreneurs, new starts and existing businesses to maximise their potential and contribution to Northern Ireland’s economy. It provides would-be and existing businesses with flexible, tailored and easily accessible advice and support at any stage of their growth journey.

One of the key areas of focus under the ESS programme is “engage” – engaging individuals in prestart activities and lighter touch support for volume starts. Engage will focus on identifying individuals with entrepreneurial aspirations, as well as encouraging them to develop enterprise skills and consider starting a business, drawing on partnerships with organisations already active in this space.

Key activities include:

- Community outreach work to underrepresented groups,
- Facilitating events/workshops/competitions to encourage early-stage entrepreneurial activity
- Advice and guidance – including idea refinement, business plan development, financial planning, marketing etc

- Delivering knowledge sharing events, including best practice/case studies, skills and knowledge development, networking opportunities
- Providing access to specialist subject matter experts in areas such as procurement, digital, marketing etc
- Aftercare support and monitoring

Activity will be delivered via:

- 1-to-many masterclasses, 1-2-1 optional advice sessions and peer support network meetings

There is an opportunity for NMD LMP to add additionality to the ESS programme, supporting key target groups through their enterprise pathway journey
LMP Deliverables may include:

- To engage and support participants with personal development
- To engage and support participants to reskill / upskill on accredited enterprise awareness skills
- To support participants to overcome financial barriers through provision of a start-up grant fund

In summary there is no shortage of policies which support employability and skills provision, there is however, a distinct lack of coordination which is the opportunity accorded to the Labour Market Partnership.

Policy Context at a Local Level: Newry, Mourne and Down

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC) area has put in place a range of innovative structures to ensure it has become a stronger, more dynamic and unified unit, providing its citizens with outstanding public services, while unlocking the full potential of the region.

The policies in place by Newry Mourne and Down District Council via its Community Plan, Corporate Plan and the Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy is to understand that supporting unemployed and economic inactive people on their journey into work matters; not only does it help to increase the employment rate and economic activity levels in the economy, which will have a positive effect on growth, it also mitigates the deterioration of skills, confidence and health that can occur with prolonged periods of unemployment.

The Newry Mourne and Down District Community Plan to 2030 – ‘Living Well Together’

The Community Plan to 2030 - ‘Living Well Together’, supported through its approach to partnership working with the local community, has provided the framework for collaborative working to deliver positive change for the community. The Community Plan has as its vision:

Newry, Mourne and Down is a place with strong, safe and vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high-quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people's needs.

Prosperous Communities is one of the strategic themes included within the Community Plan and includes specific references to a skilled economy. The long-term outcome under skilled economy is that, *'We prosper through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy'* and that *'We have more people working in better jobs'*. Based on an Outcomes Based Accountability model it establishes the following indicators:

- Level of economically inactive
- Level of Gross Value added (GVA) per head
- Shift in Sectoral spread of business
- Level of Skills development across population

It states, *'Both the availability of jobs and the earnings people receive are relevant for well-being. Not only do they increase people's command over resources, but they also provide people with a chance to fulfil their own ambitions, to develop skills and abilities, to feel useful in society and to build self-esteem'*.

Newry Mourne and Down District Council Corporate Plan 2024 -2027

With its broadened remit following Local Government Reform, NMD is a Council which is fully equipped to lead the development agenda. Through its vision, mission and values NMDDC's Corporate Plan focuses its efforts and resources firmly on Accountable, Collaborative and Transparent working with others, with tailored priorities to support business growth and development, developing workforce and employment skills, progressing regeneration plans and enhancing the health and wellbeing of its residents thus improving their quality of life.

Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy 2020 – 2025

In November 2020, Newry Mourne and Down District Council launched its Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy 2020 – 2025. The strategy is built around 3 key pillars of investment:

- Supporting Entrepreneurship, Business growth and Innovation
- Improving Employability and Skills
- Investing in Regeneration and Modern Infrastructure

This strategy was completed through desk-based research, thematic workshops, survey of business needs and stakeholder consultations. The Council, committed to prioritising local business needs, interviewed or surveyed businesses from across key sectors as part of the strategy development process. This ensured a large body of opinion and ideas for identifying employability and skills needs and opportunities within the Council area.

This strategy specifically priorities actions which will support local people to get closer to work and into work through addressing economic inequalities and creating more and better jobs as part of the Council's commitment to short-term recovery and long-term inclusive economic growth.

Community Wealth Building Action Plan

Development of a Community Wealth Building Action Plan 2023 – 2025 is currently being drafted to include the 5 main recommendations as follows:

- Adopt community wealth building as a key strategic approach within the Council's corporate plan and approach
- Create a policy and framework to embed social value across procurement and commissioning for Newry Mourne and Down
- Build on the existing collaborative work to generate new opportunities for anchor institutions to use their combined economic and social heft to deliver benefits for everyone in NMD
- Target areas of deprivation for skills development and jobs
- Develop community wealth building research and evaluation

Specific recommendation of "Target areas of deprivation for skills development and jobs" is directly linked to the aims of NMD LMP and aligned with strategic priority 2.

4. Strategic Assessment: Key Findings

This section of the report will provide an overview of current structure of the labour market and will drill down into a number of potential areas of work (and target groups) and the longer-term employability and skills challenges for NMD LMP to address. The general picture, before 2020, was of a tight local labour market with rising employment rates, falling numbers of both the Unemployed and Economically Inactive, and difficulties in recruiting staff for some positions.

NMD LMP will continue to target various residents of the Council area who will be more detached from the labour market, in the case of the long-term unemployed or economically inactive, as well as those who are either entering the labour market, as school-leavers and graduates, or those who are looking to improve their position within it, including apprentices, self-employed and those keen to reskill. These potential areas of concern regularly arise in any assessment of local labour markets and are intended for discussion in wider consultation as to their current level of priority for the work of the LMP.

Summary of findings

Key Finding 1:

Population and labour force will slow, creating a tighter labour market in the NMD area

- The local population and labour force in Newry, Mourne & Down will continue to grow over the next decade though rates of growth will slow adding to the tightness in the labour market. This is especially due to the beginnings of a decline in the numbers of people of working age (currently 16-64 years old).

Key Finding 2:

Strong growth in volume of employee jobs and employment rates from 2015

- There has been strong growth in employee jobs in Newry, Mourne & Down over the period since 2015 in particular and this has continued after the initial shocks from the Covid-19 pandemic. The proximity of the council area to the strongly growing economy in the Republic of Ireland is also a driver of higher employment rates for residents.

Key Finding 3:

Low growth forecast to 2027 regarding new jobs being created

- The employment outlook is for low growth out to 2027 (perhaps an additional 500-700 jobs per year), but for this to accelerate for the rest of the decade to 2033. In the full decade there will be an additional 5,000 new jobs created in Newry, Mourne & Down, some in the traditional growth sectors (Health and Manufacturing) and others in those sectors which have begun to grow strongly over the past ten years (ICT and Professional Services).

Key Finding 4:

Skills demand will be for Level 4 qualifications and above

- The skills demand with these additional jobs in the Council area is likely to be predominantly Level 4 and above with a need to ensure a strong pipeline of apprentices, and graduates from Further and Higher Education institutions. The qualifications profile in the Council area is similar to Northern Ireland more generally and the need for greater numbers of people with mid-level and higher skills is increasingly clear.

Key Finding 5:

Higher female inactivity rates in NMD

- The local labour market has other significant supply challenges given the gender and disability gaps in employment rates. The eleven percentage point gap in employment rates between men and women is the second largest among LGDs in Northern Ireland and is as large as it was back in 2016.

Key Finding 6:

Higher disability employment rates in NMD

- Disability employment gaps are even more stark in the Council area. The employment rate for people with disabilities (42%) is above the NI average but remain just above half the rate for those without disabilities. The gap is the largest for any LGD in NI and has widened since 2020 as employment rates for disabled persons appear to have fallen by more than ten percentage points.

Key Finding 7:

Low level of unemployment in NMD

- The unemployment rates in Newry, Mourne & Down have been at historically low levels in recent years which is one key reason why the average 3,000-4,000 annual vacancies have been increasingly difficult to fill.

Key Finding 8:

Economic inactivity reducing in NMD

- Economic inactivity rates have moved in a volatile fashion but do point in a downward direction over time, a similar trend to NI more generally. The rate of inactivity in 2022 (24.6% or 18.6% excluding students) is equivalent to 20,000 individuals and is close to the 2019 rate (18.7%). Female inactivity rates remain higher than those for males as do those for disabled individuals when compared with non-disabled.

Key Finding 9:

Caring duties and long-term sickness reasons

- The reasons for economic inactivity point to those with caring duties and, increasingly, long-term sickness as the key factors behind these levels.

Key Finding 10:**Barriers to returning to the labour force**

- The barriers to returning to the labour force from economic inactivity are also similar in Newry, Mourne & Down as in NI more generally and include age, health conditions, affordable childcare, flexibility.

Key Finding 11:**Lower wage rates in NMD**

- Wages in Newry, Mourne & Down are lower than the Northern Ireland average and have been so since 2015 when the gap first opened up. The gap exists across the wage distribution but is larger in the top quintiles.

Key Finding 12:**High quality of work in NMD**

- Work quality in Newry, Mourne & Down is on a par or better than the experience of workers elsewhere in Northern Ireland with the exception of the lower proportions for whom work flexibility is available. Alongside the wage differentials this could prove a challenge for the recruitment of staff in the longer term.

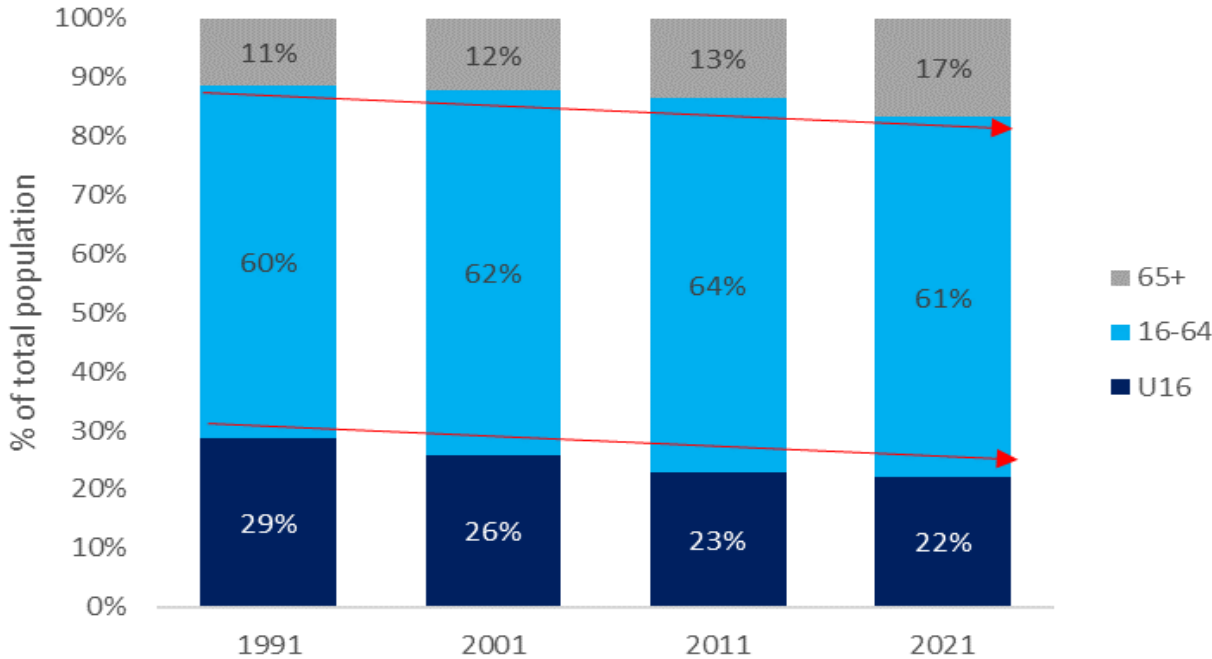
Strategic Assessment: Detailed statistical audit into the Newry Mourne and Down District Local Labour Market Structure, outlook to 2027 and possible areas of work for the Labour Market Partnership

3.1 Labour Market Overview

At the 2021 Census, Newry, Mourne & Down (NMD)'s total population was 182,100 people, 111,550 of these falling into the 16-64 year old working age population. The demographic changes in NMD mirror those across Northern Ireland (NI) more generally with the growth rate in the 65+ population increasing, while that for the working age and under-16 population is decreasing.

The projections for the NI population are that the working age population will begin to decline in absolute terms so that, by 2051, NI will have approximately **81,500 less** people within the 16-64 cohort compared to 2021. This will add significant pressures to what is an already tight labour market, as well as significantly increasing the dependency ratio of those not in work (retired and U16) on those who are. The same trends can be expected in NMD.

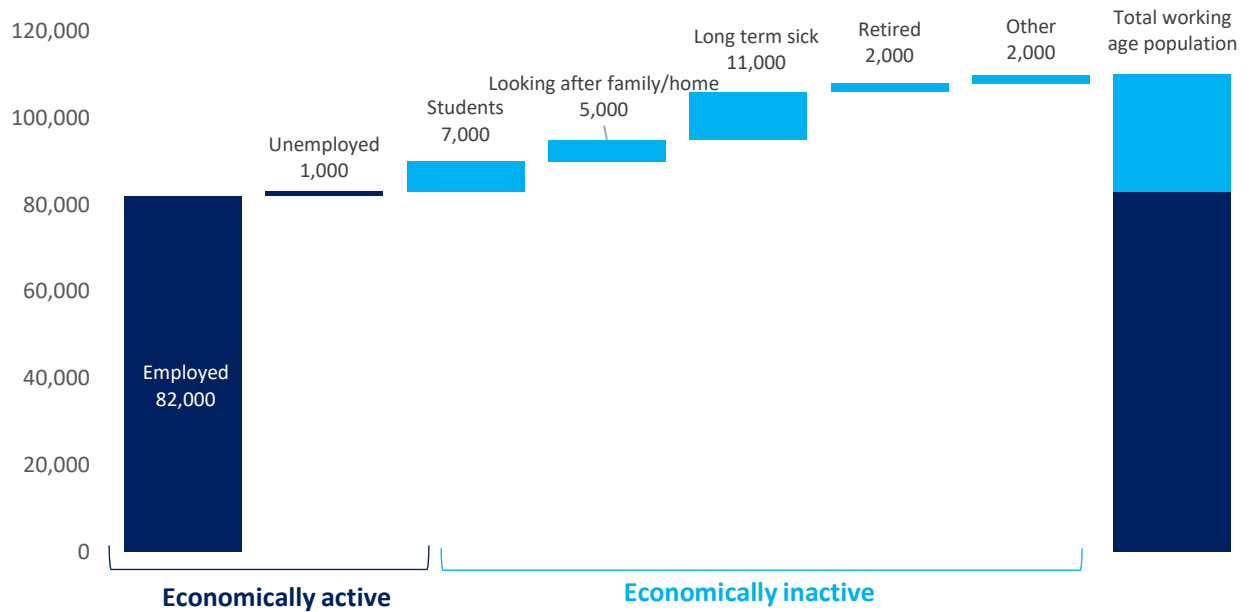
Figure 1.1: Population by age group (%), Newry, Mourne & Down, 1991-2021



Source: NI Census 1991-2021

Figure 1.2 below shows the tightness of the local labour market in NMD. In 2022 the working age population in NMD was made up of 84,000 economically active, a further 20,000 inactive (27,000 if students are included).

Figure 1.2: Profile of working age population, Newry, Mourne & Down, 2022

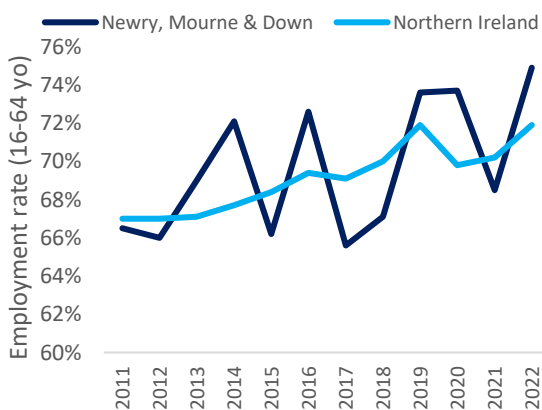


Source: NISRA, UUEPC analysis

3.2 Employed

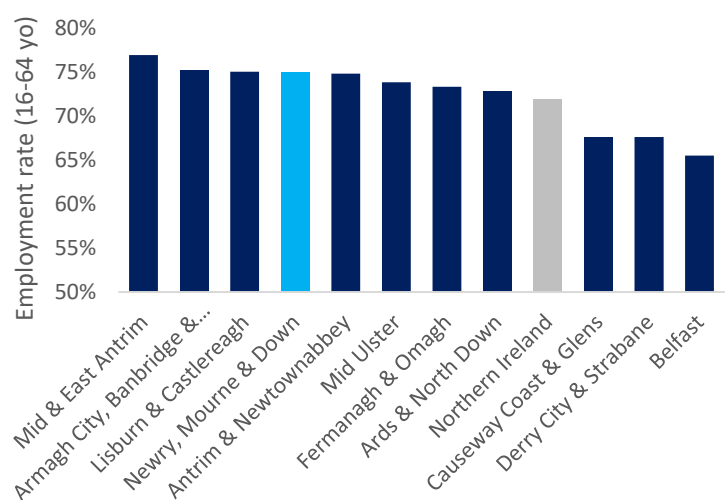
The employment rate in NMD has been a particularly volatile one with some annual swings of 5-6 percentage points between 2012 and 2022. Fluctuations of this size are relatively unique to the Council area and are not mirrored across most other LGDs where employment rates move more closely in line with the NI average changes. In 2022, NMD ranked 4th compared to 2020 and 2021 where it ranked 3rd and 9th respectively, further illustrating this volatility.

Figure 1.3: Employment rate (16-64 yo), NMD vs. NI, 2011-2022



Source: NISRA (Labour Market Status - sub population, LFS)

Figure 1.4: Employment rate (16-64 yo), NI LGD's, 2021



Employee jobs

The number of employee jobs within NMD have increased on average by 1% each year between 2012-2022, with a total of 61,800 jobs in 2022, an increase of 10,800 on a decade before.

Figure 1.5 illustrates the sectoral breakdown of employee jobs within the council area, of which **almost half are concentrated between three key sectors:** Wholesale & retail (12,160 jobs), Healthcare (10,070) and Manufacturing (8,950). The latter two sectors share more than 5,000 of the new jobs since 2012 between them.

Figure 1.5: Employee jobs by sector (%), Newry, Mourne & Down, 2021

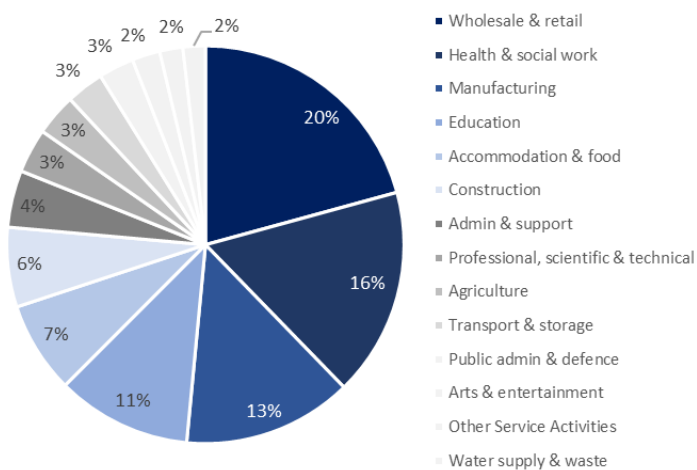
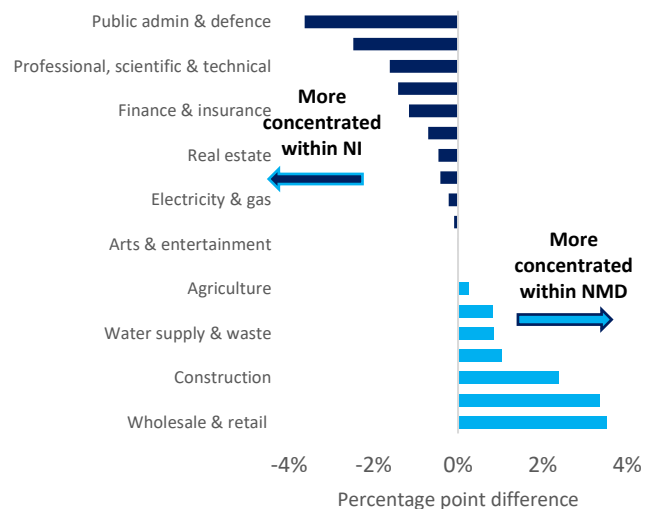


Figure 1.6: Percentage point difference in sectoral concentration, Newry Mourne & Down vs. NI, 2021



Source : BRES, UUEPC analysis

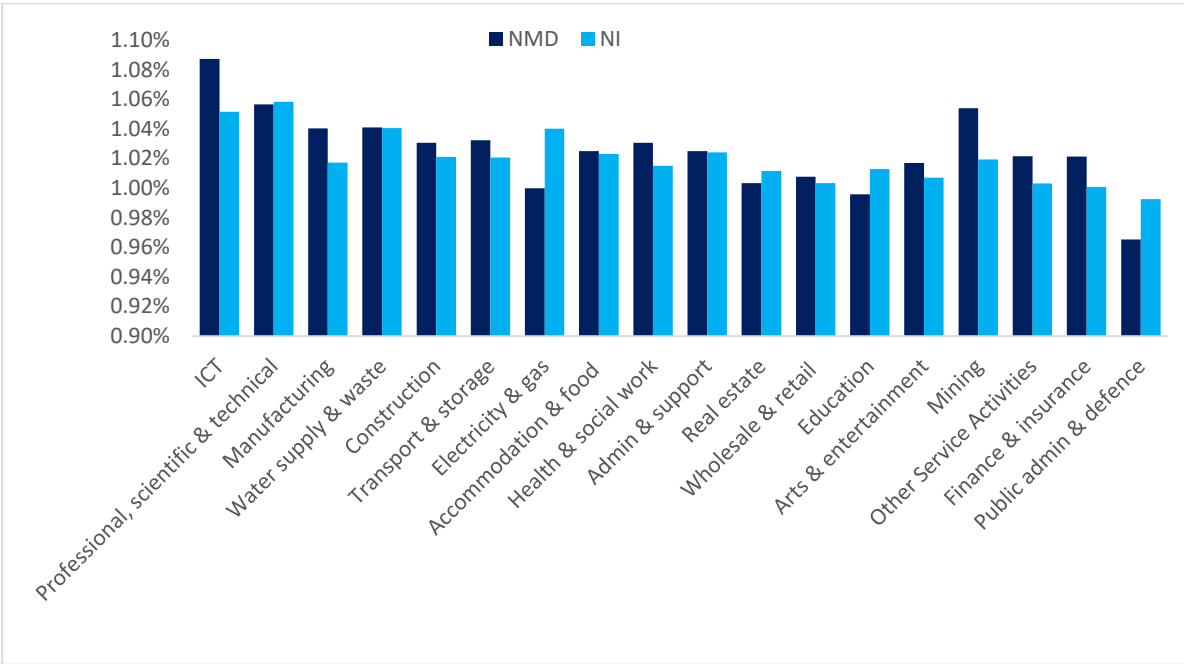
Note: Sectors with less than 1% representation have been omitted from Figures 1.5 and 1.6

Figure 1.6 shows the difference in sectoral concentration between NMD and the NI average. **Retail, Manufacturing and Construction account for a larger proportion of jobs within the council area than the NI average.** On the other hand NMD is underrepresented in terms of Public Administration, Administrative & Support Services and Professional Services roles compared to the rest of NI.

However, Administrative & Support Services and Professional Services are sectors which have been growing at a strong rate within the council area.

Figure 1.7 compares growth rates within the sectors across the last decade. Several sectors (ICT, Professional Services and Manufacturing) have grown strongly both in the recovery period and then also during the pandemic. They have also kept pace or grown faster than the NI average, something which the Healthcare, Construction and Transport sectors have also seen.

Figure 1.7: Annual average growth by sector, Newry Mourne & Down, 2012-2022



Source: BRES, UUEPC analysis

NMD recorded particularly strong employment growth across the 2019-2022 period, whilst NI experienced initial job losses during the pandemic followed by a recovery. This **raises a question about whether such momentum of growth can be maintained**, not least due to issues in the wider labour market.

Unemployment was much higher after the 2008 financial crisis, so there were available people to fill jobs as firms increased their workforce to meet the steadily increasing demand they were experiencing after 2015. Migration was also an indicator working in the favour of a buoyant labour market, especially in the 2000s. The numbers of non-UK nationals applying for National Insurance numbers has slowed in recent years, due to Brexit and then the pandemic.

Combined, this leaves a tighter labour market for firms in NMD to draw on when they have new and existing vacancies to fill. Demographic changes that were discussed earlier will further exacerbate this tightness in coming years, hence comparing growth in the future against that achieved in the past will not be on a like-for-like basis.

The number of vacancies are one signal of an active local labour market. For the period 2014/15 to 2022/23 the number of vacancies referred to the Jobs & Benefit Offices in NMD have averaged 3,300 a year or around 5% of total vacancies in NI. The last two years have seen 4,300 and 4,000 vacancies in each year, higher than average and a sign of the recovery from the pandemic, and reflecting newer, tighter pressures on the labour market.

Disability

The tighter labour market is a further reason to improve the employment rates of groups with lower rates, in particular the disabled and women. The challenge can be seen from the disability employment rate in NMD which was 53% in 2022, much higher than the NI average (42%). The gap to the employment rate of those without disabilities (85%) is stark, suggesting you are more than twice as likely to be employed if you have no disability than if you have.

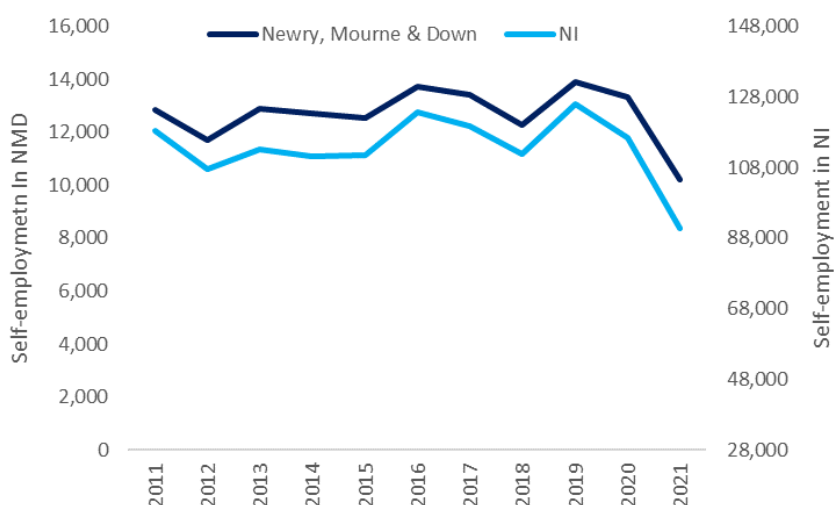
Worryingly, the disability employment rates in NMD have also been declining in recent years, which may be a knock-on effect of the pandemic though it has happened to a greater extent than in other LGDs and should be monitored closely. More widely, Northern Ireland continues to have both the lowest employment rates of all UK regions but also the lowest disability employment rate, and this gap has been widening not closing.

Self-Employed

Self-employment trends in NMD have moved in tandem with the NI average over the last decade peaking at 13,900 in 2019. During the Covid-19 pandemic the self-employed were disproportionately affected compared to other employed groups through difficulty accessing support measures and lack of specialised support. Micro and 1-person businesses in particular experienced heightened decline across NI and the wider UK with many people transferring across to 'employed' status opposed to self-employed¹.

At council level NMD experienced a slightly smaller contraction with self-employment declining by 27.5% over 2019-2021 compared to a 30% decline at NI level. There has been something of a recovery in 2022 in self-employment at the NI level so it will be interesting to see if this is repeated in the Council area.

Figure 1.8: Number of self-employed, Newry, Mourne & Down vs. NI, 2011-2021



Source: UUEPC local model

¹ UUEPC, A Covid counterfactual: What if government had not provided support? (January 2023).

Self-employment within Newry, Mourne & Down totalled 10,200 in 2021, down 3,500 on two years previously. Just over half of these jobs fall within three main sectors: Construction (24%), Agriculture (18%) and Retail (9%). Employee jobs within NMD account for 8% of overall employee jobs in NI whereas **self-employment within the council area accounts for 11% of total self-employed jobs**. Hence the disproportionate impacts on the self-employed during the Covid-19 pandemic would have been felt even more in NMD.

Underemployed

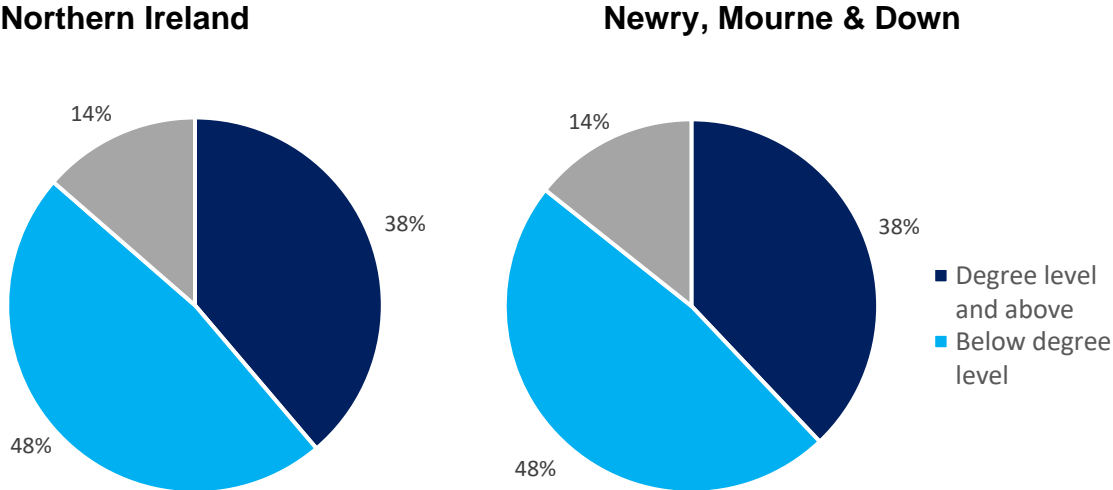
The most recent analysis of underemployment² in NI identifies that, when compared to other LGDs, **Newry, Mourne & Down has a higher rate of those who are underemployed (7.7%)** compared to the NI average (6.4%). This translates to approximately 5,000 individuals who have capacity to take on more hours of paid work.

Underemployment is **particularly prevalent amongst younger people** within the workforce with approximately 11.3% of 16-24 year olds classified as underemployed in NI compared to 3.5% of 55-64 year olds in Q2 2023. People with lower qualification levels (Below NQF level 2 and NQF level 2-3) are more likely to be underemployed compared to those with NQF level 4+ qualifications.

3.3 Qualifications

Council-level analysis allows resident qualifications levels to be split into three broad groups: degree level and above, below degree level and no qualifications. The breakdown for both NI and NMD can be seen below in Figure 1.9 and shows how the Council area is closely aligned to NI more generally.

Figure 1.9: Qualification level, NI vs. Newry, Mourne & Down, 2022



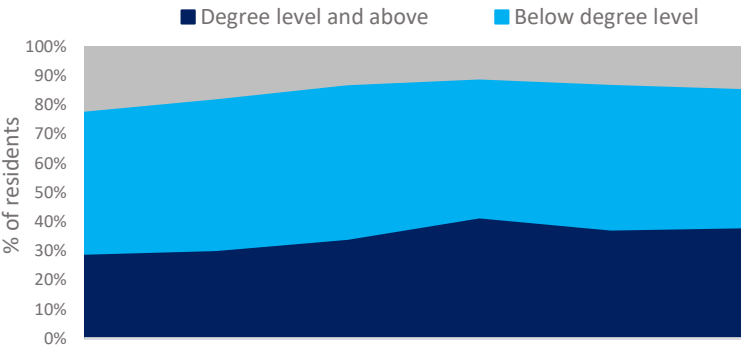
Source : NISRA (LFS Annual 2022)

² The definition of underemployment is an individual who is employed but would like to work more hours through their current job, a supplementary job, or in a new job; see NISRA, *Underemployment in Northern Ireland* (October 2020).

Figure 1.10 illustrates how these qualification levels have changed over the recent time period (2017-2022). The proportion of people with below degree level qualifications has fallen by 1p.p (percentage point) across this period with the proportion with no qualifications also showing a similar trend until 2021.³ The number of people with degree level qualification has increased by 9 p.ps, showing a general **increase in the qualification level of residents over time.**

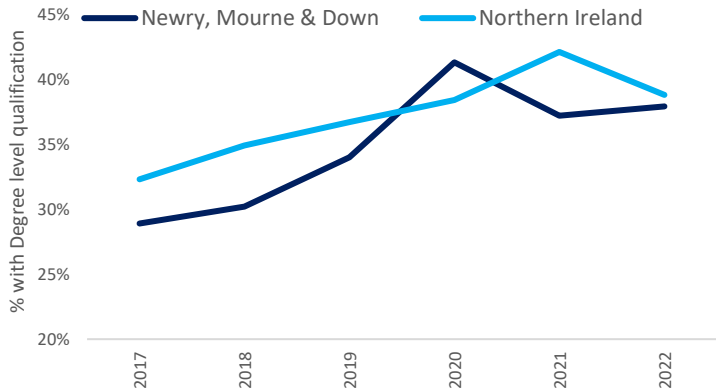
The trend in qualification levels in NMD mirrors what is happening across the rest of NI. As illustrated in Figure 1.10, considerable progress has been made between 2017-2022 regarding degree level qualifications. In 2017 a 3.4p.p gap existed between Newry, Mourne & Down and the NI average, by 2022 (after a number of years of ebb and flow, the gap is **0.9 p.p gap below the NI average.** This is an important indicator to monitor across the next number of years as it points to the qualification levels among local residents and available to employers.

Figure 1.10: Resident qualification levels (%), Newry, Mourne & Down, 2017-2022



Source: NISRA (LFS annual reports)

Figure 1.11: % of residents with degree level qualifications, Newry Mourne & Down vs. NI, 2017-2022



Apprenticeships

Enrolment rates on apprenticeships within the Council area are proportionate in terms of population size compared to the rest of NI. Approximately **10% of Apprenticeships NI (level 2 &3) participants are from NMD in 2021/22.** The rate for those on level 7/8 HE delivered Higher Level Apprenticeships is 11%, although Department for the Economy data shows a higher proportion (**13%**) of **level 4-6 FE delivered Higher Level Apprenticeships live in the Newry, Mourne & Down area.** The HLAs are also, over time, showing an increasing participation rate by females though the gap in Construction and Engineering HLAs remains large.

Further Education

Further Education enrolments within NMD have accounted for 11%-12% of total enrolments across 2012-2020. In 2020 this translated to approximately 10,000

³ Data for 2022 suggests an increase in the percentages of people with No Qualifications in NI and most LGDs but after a decade of slow decline in these numbers this increase might be treated with some caution.

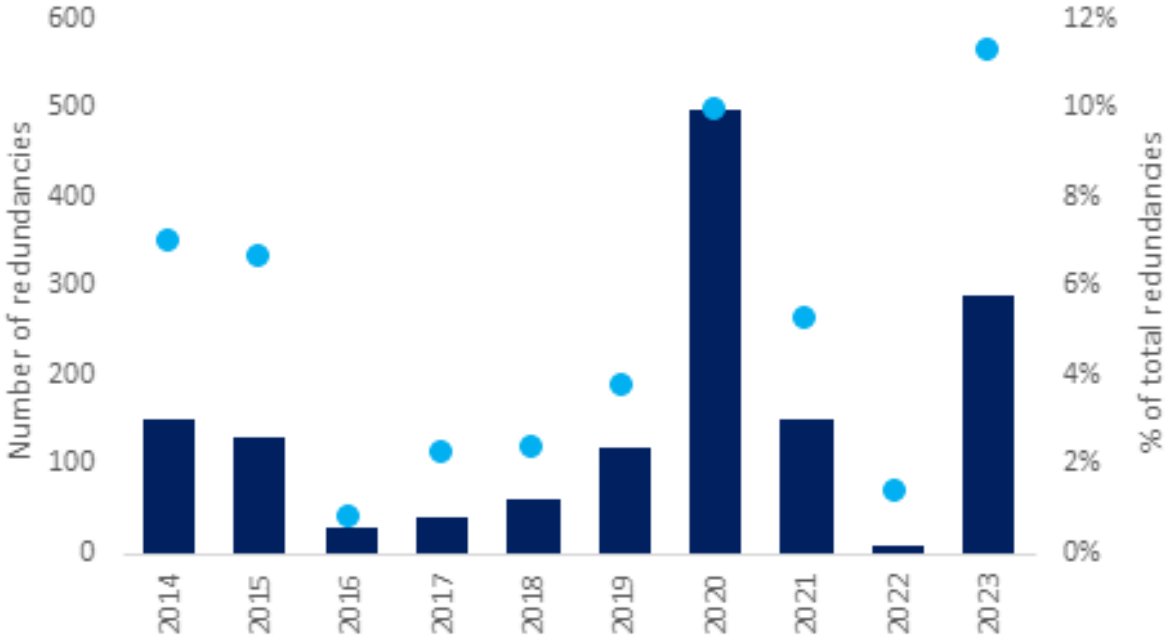
students⁴. In 2021/22, 6,605 students enrolled in Higher Education institutes were from addresses in NMD, 10% of all NI HE students. The **vast majority of these students (77%) attend HE institutions in Northern Ireland** compared to 23% in GB/ other.

3.4 Unemployment

The unemployment rate in Northern Ireland and, more locally, in NMD, has been at historically low rates in recent years or close to or below 3%. There have been some fluctuations in this but little sign of any sharp rise despite higher interest rates and very low growth in the wider economy. In 2022, based on the Labour Force Survey the unemployment rate in NMD reached never-seen rates of less than 1%, which would be fewer than 1,000 people.

These rates have continued despite the short-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, in terms of higher reported redundancy numbers. In 2020, NMD saw 500 confirmed redundancies, a considerable increase on previous years as illustrated in Figure 1.12. This figure made up 10% of total layoffs, with only three other Council areas in NI experienced greater levels of redundancies in 2020. This effect was relatively short-lived, with confirmed redundancies falling equal to and below the pre-pandemic levels in 2021 and 2022. There was a sharp rise once more in 2023 with 290 confirmed redundancies, second only to Belfast in terms of numbers.

Figure 1.12: Number of redundancies & % of total redundancies, Newry, Mourne & Down, 2014-2023

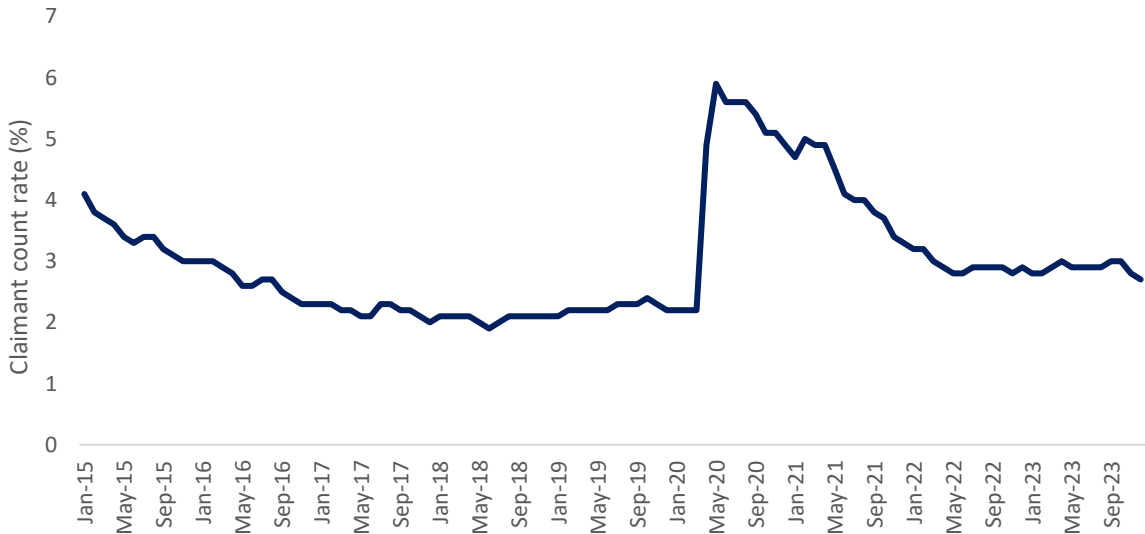


Source: NINIS

⁴ These are FE enrolments within the NMD area, rather than enrolments of NMD residents within FE institutions.

The short and long-term effects of the pandemic can also be seen in the claimant count numbers. Between March and May 2020 the claimant count rate increased sharply from 2.2% to 5.9% within Newry, Mourne & Down (see Figure 1.13). This increase was similar to that seen across all council areas in NI at the time. At the peak in May 2020, 6,600 people were registered on claimant count in NMD. As a variety of support interventions were introduced and Covid-19 restrictions eased the claimant count rate began to fall steadily.

Figure 1.13: Claimant count rate (%), Newry, Mourne & Down, January 2015 – December 2023



Source: Department for Communities

As Figure 1.13 shows the rate seems to have settled at around 3% in NMD, a little above the NI average but showing the same trend of settling above the previous 2019 average rate. This increase from the 2018/19 average of 2.1% is more likely to be a permanent effect from Covid-19, one more caused by working fewer hours than not working at all. The increase in the claimant count rate translates to **around an additional 700 registered on claimant count in the council area** with a total of 3,055 recorded in December 2023.

Individuals who have been ILO unemployed for more than one year are classified as **long term unemployed**. The long term unemployment rate for NI had been declining over time, falling as low as 0.8% in Q2 2020, before picking up during the pandemic. However, the rate is again beginning to fall through 2022 and 2023 to stand close to the record low at 1% in Q2 2023. Although this data is not available at LGD level, it is probably fair to assume (given the wider mirroring of trends) that it will have fallen in NMD also.

Graduate unemployment was slightly lower in Northern Ireland compared to the UK in 2020/2021 with only 2.3% graduates from Higher Education institutions in Northern Ireland classed as unemployed compared to 3.8% in the UK. The proportion

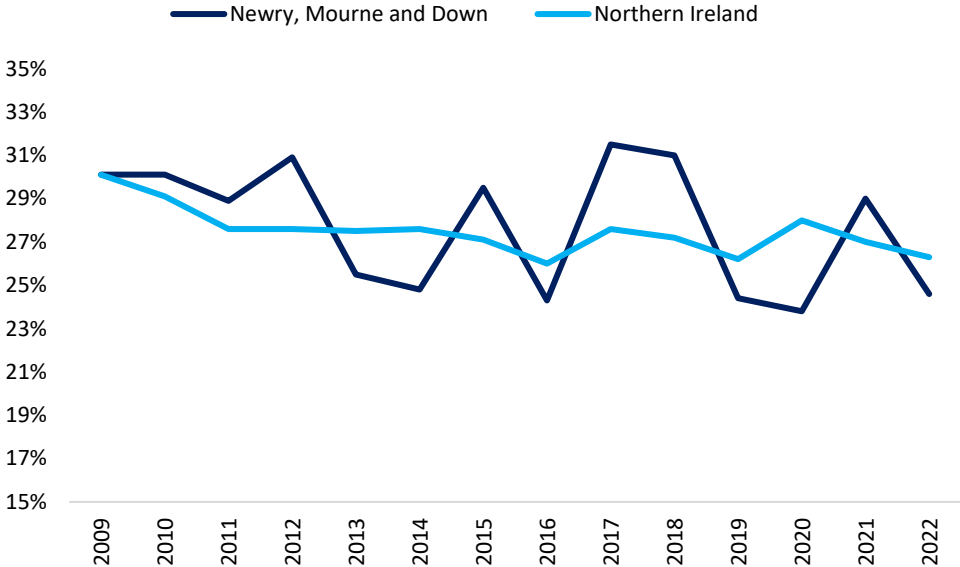
of graduates entering employment (68% & 70%) and continuing with further study (21% & 20%) were very similar in Northern Ireland and the wider UK.⁵

3.5 Economic inactivity

The trends for economic inactivity are certainly uneven but point in a downward direction over time in NMD, similar to NI more generally. As Figure 1.14 shows the rate of inactivity in 2022 was well below the peak of 31.5% in 2017, and close to the 2019 levels of 24.4%.

The 24.6% rate in 2022 is equivalent to 27,000 individuals. The Council area is now among a broad group of councils within a 22-25% band of rates of economic inactivity; with three Councils (Belfast, Derry City & Strabane and Causeway Coast & Glens) having significantly higher rates closer to 30%.

Figure 1.14: Economic inactivity rate, Newry Mourne & Down vs. NI, 2011-2022



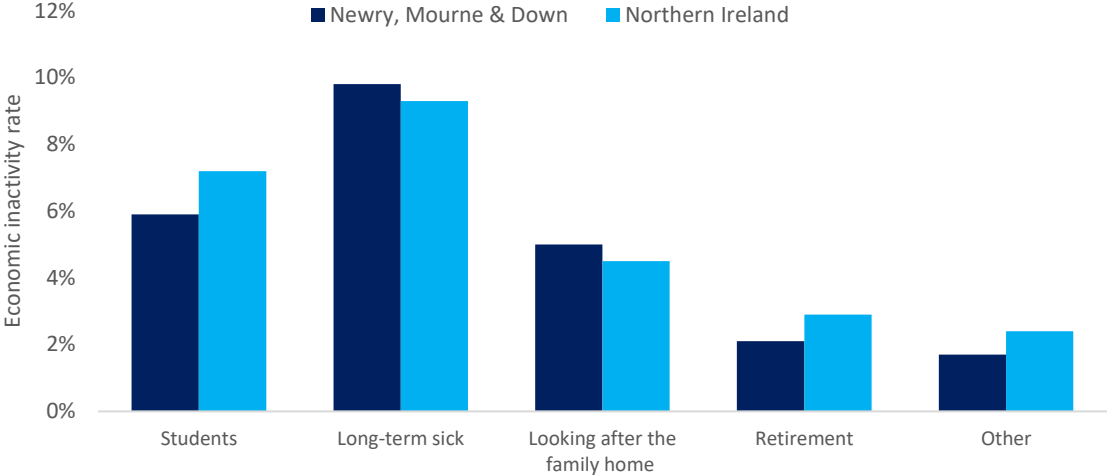
Source: NISRA, LFS Annuals

There are five different reasons given for economic inactivity, shown in Figure 1.15. NMD had a similar proportion of students among the inactive to the NI average in 2022 (26% vs. 27%), though these shares vary from year to year depending on enrolments and the ability of students to find part-time work. In some statistics students are excluded from the economically inactive group, on the basis that they are outside the labour force but in full-time education to develop qualifications and skills.

There has been little change in those inactive due to early retirement (2.1%) and other reasons (1.7%) and both are below the NI averages of 2.9% and 2.4% respectively.

⁵ HESA, 2020/2021 graduate outcomes (2023). There are other concerns about over-qualification of graduates in employment which are more to do with work quality as opposed to the availability of work itself.

Figure 1.15: Economic inactivity by reason, Newry Mourne & Down vs. NI, 2022



Source: NISRA, LFS user requested data

The largest group of economically inactive, the long-term sick, has grown as a share and in absolute numbers. In 2019 7,000 individuals in NMD were inactive for health reasons and this has grown to 11,000 in 2022 (41% of the total inactive in the Council area, up from a quarter). Several factors are coming into play for this category, not just in NMD or NI or the UK, but across many advanced economies, even if to a lesser extent elsewhere.

First, the growth in the number of long-term sick is likely to be connected to more limited access to patient diagnosis, treatment and wider healthcare during the pandemic. Second, there is a growing shift in the types of health conditions behind long-term sickness, from muscular-skeletal conditions to those more broadly connected with mental health conditions. This may be tied to a third factor, where mental health conditions are more likely to be both brought forward by patients and diagnosed than was the case in the past.⁶

When looking at economic inactivity due to long-term sickness the key appears to be early interventions to reduce or limit the number of people moving from claimant count into inactivity due to health reasons, as the likelihood of returning to the workforce once entering this category is low. What also seems to work are health-led initiatives to help those inactive for health reasons to re-enter the labour market. Finally, flexibility among employers is key to retaining people within the workforce once they have a health diagnosis.⁷

⁶ More on this can be seen in UUEPC, *Analysis of the Newry, Mourne & Down labour market* (May 2023) and UUEPC, *Economic Inactivity: Who, what, where and why?* (Jan. 2024). Both available at <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/epc/publications>

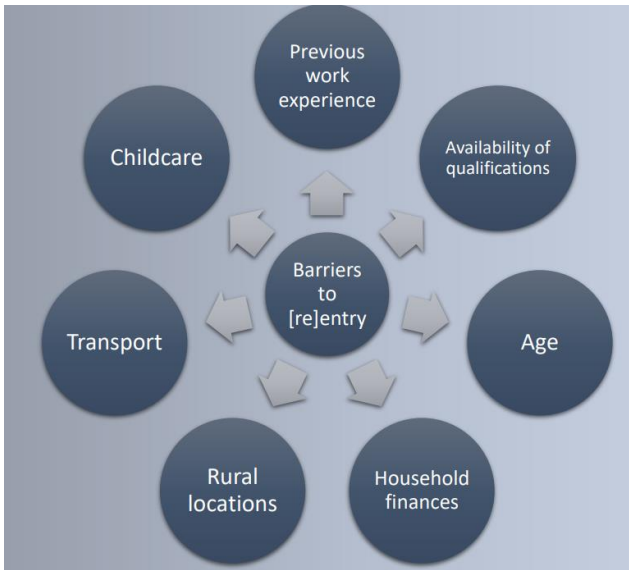
⁷ For more on this see UUEPC, *Sickness Absence: Lessons for Northern Ireland businesses and managers* (2023), available at https://www.ulster.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/1588629/Sickness-Absence-Dec-23-Final.pdf

The numbers of those who are economically inactive to “look after the family/home” has been falling steadily over time as female participation in the workforce has grown. In NMD the same trend is evident with an inactivity rate for this reason of 5% in 2022, just above the NI average (4.3%) and half the share of the long-term sick. At the same time, female inactivity rates remain higher than those for males not only due to their dominance of looking after the family/home but also higher rates of sickness. For this reason there is a significant (10 percentage point) gap between rates of economic activity for men and women in the council area, closely aligned with many other councils in NI with large rural areas.

Consultations and focus groups with economically inactive individuals last Spring sought to identify the barriers that might prevent them re-entering the labour market, if they were in a position to do so.⁸

The figure below shows the findings of those consultations, with the prevalence on two particular barriers being:

- i. The fear for the impact on household and individual finances associated with moving from benefits to wages; and
- ii. The provision of affordable childcare and the ability to flexibly combine work with caring duties for children (or other family members).

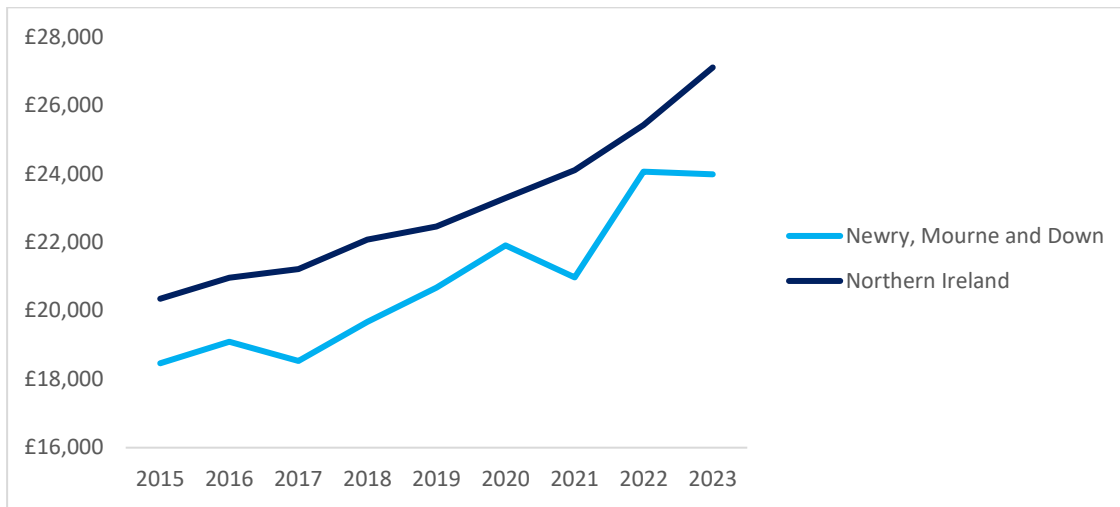


3.6 Wages, work quality and training

Wages, both those available in workplaces in NMD and those received by NMD residents working elsewhere, tend to be lower than the NI averages, respectively by around £2,000 and £3,000 annually. One reason for this is that the annual growth in wages in NMD since 2015 has been a full percentage point less than in other parts of NI, largely because a gap opened up in 2015-18 that has remained since. In addition average wages in 2023 have remained at the same level as they were in 2022 in NMD, further widening the gap.

⁸ UUEPC, *Analysis of the Newry, Mourne & Down labour market* (May 2023), available at <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/epc/publications>

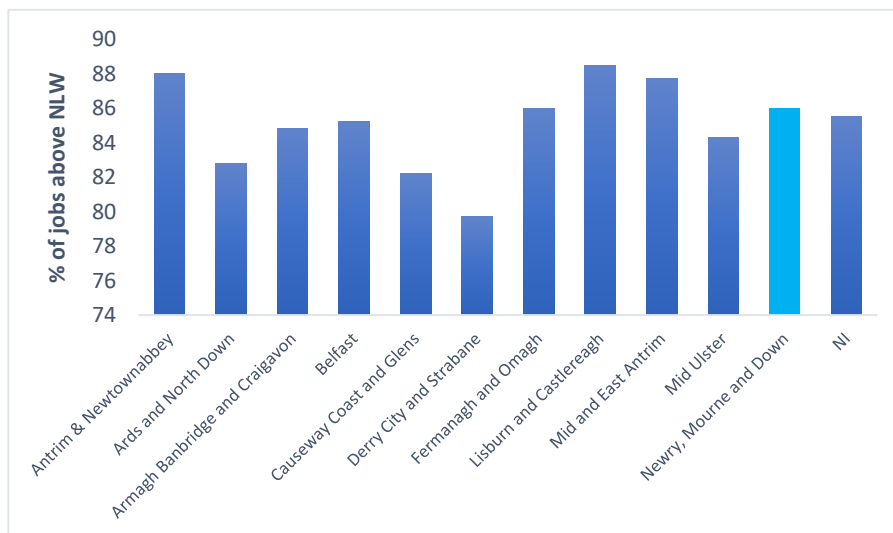
Figure 1.16: Median annual workplace wages, NMD vs. NI, 2015-23



Source: NISRA, ASHE

By another measure – the different elements which make up work quality⁹ - NMD is generally in line with the NI averages. In terms of the low pay picture, this has been improving in NI in recent years with fewer jobs (15% of the total in 2022 below the National Living Wage. In NMD the proportion is similar with 86% of employee jobs in 2022 being above that threshold, slightly above the NI average and one of the better-performing councils by this measure.

Figure 1.17: Proportion of employee jobs above National Living Wage, LGDs, 2022



Source: NISRA

⁹ These include proportions of employees not earning low pay, not under-employed, in secure employment, reporting job satisfaction, reporting opportunities for career progression, are involved in decision-making, find their work meaningful and have flexibility at work.

Table 1.1: Income deprivation by ward, Newry, Mourne & Down, 2017

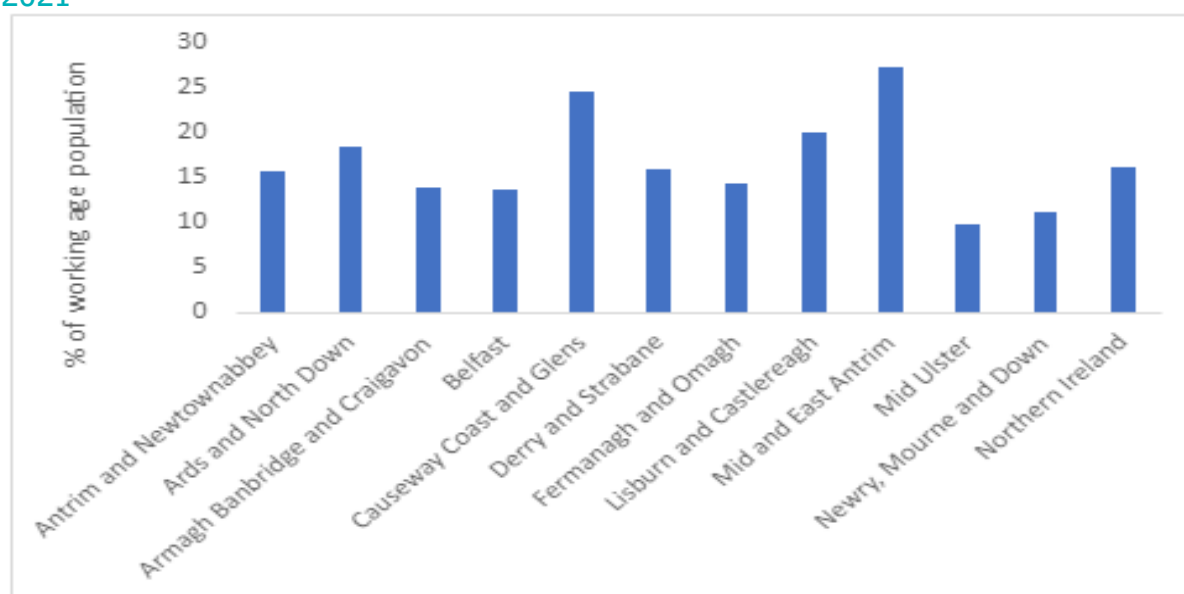
Most and least overall deprived wards in NMD, 2017			
Least Deprived	Score (max 462)	Most Deprived	Score
Quoile	386	Crossmaglen	1
Saintfield	377	Newtownhamilton	2
Kilmore	328	Mullaghbane	3
Derryboy	314	Forkhill	9
Drumaness	304	Fathom	10

Source: NISRA, ASHE; NI Multiple Deprivation Measure

This improving picture should contribute to improving a bleak statistic for the Council area from 2017. At that time (based on 2011 Census results), five of the wards in the Council were in the top 10 of wards by income deprivation at that time. This drove a general picture whereby NMD saw higher levels of deprivation when compared to many other parts of Northern Ireland, with almost 70% of wards within the council falling into the 2 most deprived quartiles according to the 2017 NI Multiple Deprivation Measure.

By other measures of work quality around under-employment, job security, opportunities for career progression and involvement in decision making respondents in NMD rank among the highest Council areas in NI. One area where NMD scores much less well, ranking among the lower council areas is percentages of employees in flexible (not remote) work with 42% of employees only having this available to them, significantly behind the 54% in NI more generally.

Figure 1.18: Proportion of 16-64 year olds receiving training in work, LGDs, Jan-Sep 2021



Source: NISRA, LFS

One final aspect of work is how far on-the-job training or education is available to staff. The data here is a few years old but does point to low levels of the labour force in general receiving in-work training and NMD and Mid Ulster being the two Council areas where these proportions are lowest (12% and 10% respectively).

3.7 Labour market outlook

The general outlook for the labour market in NI out to 2027 is for low growth (5,000 additional jobs or less per annum), followed by a pick-up from 2028-2033 (of more than 8,000 additional jobs every year).

The short-term outlook is that the labour market will not see a ‘hard’ landing of significant levels of redundancies and a sharp increase in unemployment rates, but something of a softer and more stagnant period ahead.

Indeed, given the continuing low levels of unemployment (of little above 3%), the issue will remain one of supply and attention will continue to be focused on how to assist the inactive who want to and are able to work to come back into the labour market.

In Newry, Mourne & Down the labour market outlook remains positive and indeed resident employment rates will continue to increase because even if workplace job growth is low out to 2027 the cross-border labour market remains strong and opportunities will exist there. Therefore unemployment rates will stay low (even if not at the current very low levels) and the pressure will be one of increasing supply of skills at all levels to match local demand for workers.

Data availability

Data type	NMDDC Data	NI Data	Latest NMD Data
Population by age	Y	Y	2021
Profile working age population	Y	Y	2022
Employment rate (% of 16-64 yo)	Y	Y	2022
Employee jobs	Y	Y	2021
Annual average growth by sector	Y	Y	2022
Self-employment	Y	Y	2021
Qualifications	Y	Y	2022
Redundancies	Y	Y	2023
Claimant Count	Y	Y	2023
Economic inactivity rate	Y	Y	2022
Median workplace wages	Y	Y	2023
National Living wage	Y	Y	2022
Deprivation	Y	Y	2017
Training in work	Y	Y	2021

Source: NISRA Labour Force Survey, Claimant Count; HMRC CJRS.

5. Baseline Information

Below sets out the high-level strategic priorities for NMD LMP, the indicators NMD LMP aims to impact on at population level and the associated baseline indicator.

Strategic Priority 1: To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area													
Indicators to which Local LMP contribute (Source)	2024/25 Baseline												
% LMP members who feel the local LMP is making a positive contribution and delivering effectively <i>Source NMD LMP</i>	% LMP members who feel the local LMP is making a positive contribution and delivering effectively												
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 50%;">Year</th> <th style="width: 50%;">LMP Members (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2019</td> <td>0 (no baseline data)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020</td> <td>0 (no baseline data)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021</td> <td>0 (no baseline data)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	LMP Members (%)	2019	0 (no baseline data)	2020	0 (no baseline data)	2021	0 (no baseline data)	2022	100%	2023	100%
	Year	LMP Members (%)											
	2019	0 (no baseline data)											
	2020	0 (no baseline data)											
	2021	0 (no baseline data)											
2022	100%												
2023	100%												

Strategic Priority 2: To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally															
Indicators to which Local LMP contribute (Source)	2024/25 Baseline														
Theme 1: Economic Inactivity															
Economic Inactivity Rate – Excluding Students; % Working Age (aged 16-64) <i>Source LMI Portal</i>	% Working Age Economic Inactivity Rate – Excluding Students														
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tbody> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">2016</td> <td style="width: 50%;">18.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017</td> <td>24.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018</td> <td>24.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019</td> <td>18.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020</td> <td>18.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021</td> <td>18.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022</td> <td>18.6%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2016	18.4%	2017	24.1%	2018	24.0%	2019	18.7%	2020	18.5%	2021	18.7%	2022	18.6%
	2016	18.4%													
	2017	24.1%													
	2018	24.0%													
	2019	18.7%													
	2020	18.5%													
	2021	18.7%													
2022	18.6%														

Theme 2: Unemployment

Claimant Count (%) <i>Source DfC</i>	% Claimant Count	
	2017	2.2%
	2018	2.1%
	2019	2.2%
	2020	4.6%
	2021	4.2%
	2022	2.9%
	2023	2.9%

Theme 3: Disability

Employment Rate of people with Disabilities (% of working age) <i>Source NISRA Labour Force Survey</i>	% Employment rate of people with disabilities	
	2017	30.1%
	2018	31.2%
	2019	42.3%
	2020	45.2%
	2021	37.1%
	2022	32.6%

Theme 4: Skilled Labour Supply

No Qualifications (% Working Age): <i>Source NISRA – Labour Force Survey</i> # All Persons Median Wage (Resident based) <i>Source NISRA LMI Portal</i>	% Working Age: No Qualifications	
	2016	16.1%
	2017	22.1%
	2018	17.9%
	2019	13.0%
	2020	11.1%
	2021	12.9%
	2022	14.3%
	# All Persons Median Wage	
	2018	£20,767.00
	2019	£21,161.00
	2020	£21,942.00
	2021	£22,621.00
	2022	£24,247.00
	2023	£25,113.00

Strategic Priority 3:
To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision
either regionally or locally

Indicators to which Local LMP contribute (Source)	2022/23 Baseline
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Theme: Increased awareness

Increased awareness of existing regional/local employability or skills provision <i>Source NMD LMP</i>	# of those surveyed who have an increased awareness of regional/local employability and skills provision	
	Year	LMP Members (%)
	2021	0 (no baseline data)
	2022	0 (no baseline data)
	2023	770
	2024 (Q3)	905

6. Turning the Curve Methodology

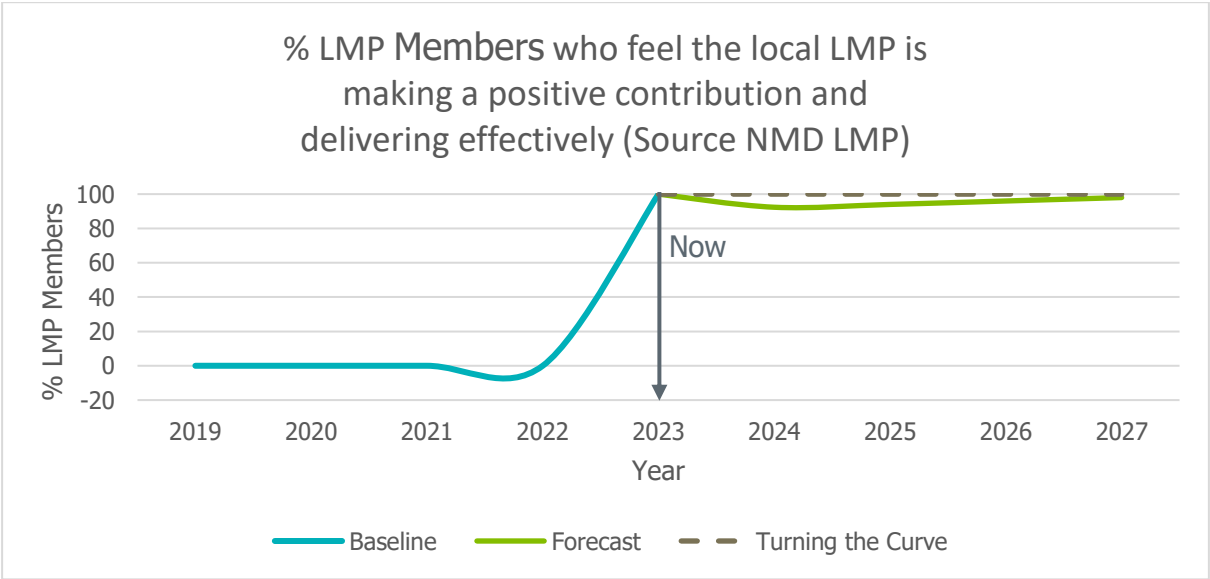
At the heart of the NMD Labour Market Partnership is the need to ensure that a quality skills provision is driven by demand for skills in the local economy, leading to reduced economic inactivity and unemployment at a local level. This approach has been consistently adopted by NMD LMP with a concerted effort to move the Partnership from thinking about timely and outcomes-based interventions, to taking action that can be used to design and monitor Employability and Skills programmes for the future.

Given this and as a result of the Policy Context, the Strategic Assessment and the Baseline indicators mentioned above, NMD LMP has undertaken a 'Turning the Curve' exercise which focuses in on Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) across the three strategic priorities of the LMP programme.

SP1 To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area; Source NMD LMP

NMD LMP will ensure the delivery of the 2024/2025 Action Plan, whilst being agile in response to new challenges in the labour market. Regular meetings of NMD LMP and relevant subgroups will contribute to the % of LMP members who feel the LMP is making a positive contribution. NMD LMP partners involved will be monitored throughout the year and regularly updated regarding changes to personnel or inviting other partners to participate if applicable.

During 2022-23, NMD LMP established a School and Industry Working Group bringing together the Area Learning Co-ordinators representing 26 post primary schools from across the NMDDC area as well as local employers and regional colleges. The aim of the School and Industry Working Group is to showcase successful NMD businesses to schools, parents and young people in order to encourage a future pool of homegrown talent to remain in the district and ensure the continued growth and success of local businesses. This sub-group will continue to meet and devise activities and initiatives relevant to the aims initially outlined.



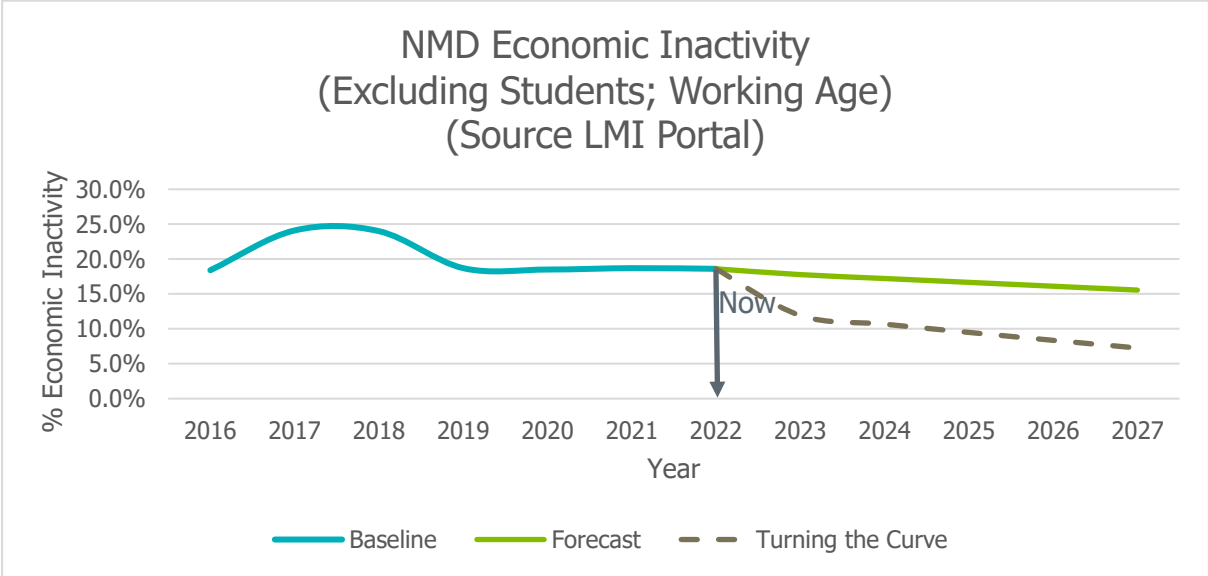
SP2 To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally focusing on the following themes:

- 1. Economic Inactivity
- 2. Unemployment
- 3. Disability
- 4. Skilled Labour Supply

Turning the Curve – Economic Inactivity Rate (Excluding Students); Working Age; Source LMI Portal

The Turning the Curve approach to reducing economic inactivity and supporting people back into employment is shown below. The most common reasons for inactivity after being in full-time education, are being long-term sick; looking after family; or early retirement. The labour market barriers faced by these groups are varied and complex, ranging from a lack of previous work experience; availability of qualifications; and age, to access to transport; access to affordable childcare; and the impact on household finances.

NMD LMP will seek to address these Access to Work issues by recognising the diverse nature of these groups, to include Women and Disabled and ensure that interventions proposed in the Action Plan are designed to help them towards the labour market and will be person-focused and based upon voluntary participation. By providing additional wrap around support, participants may either enter into employment, education or training or become self-employed.

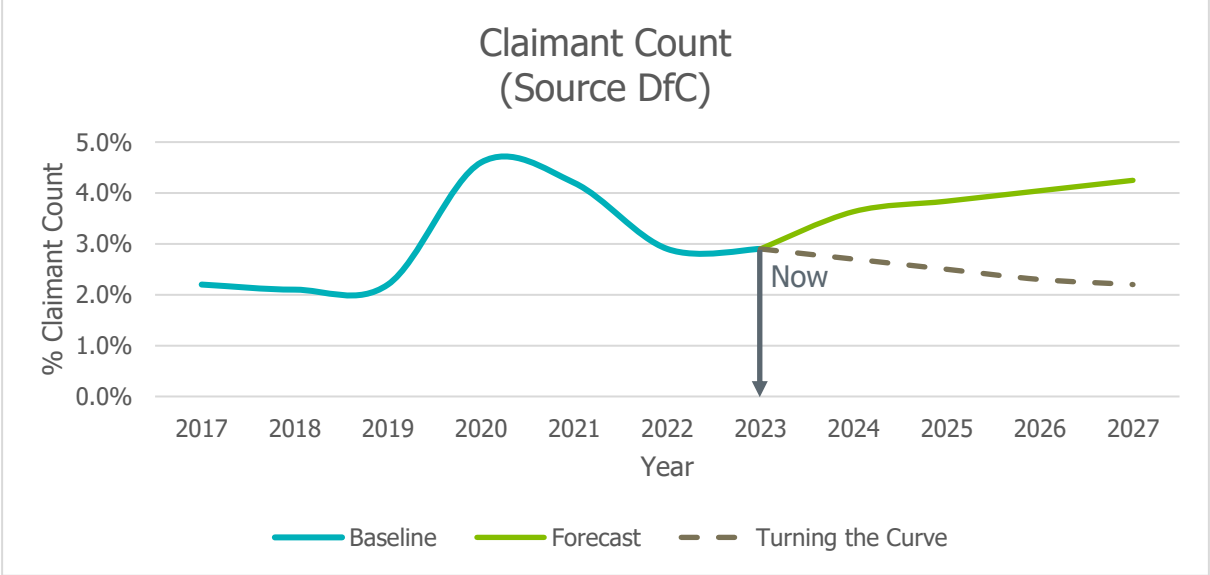


Turning the Curve – Claimant Count %; Source DfC

NMD Claimant Count sits at 2.9% (3220 people) which is below the NI average of 3% and considerably less than the 4.6% and 4.2% rates in 2020 and 2021 respectively. Although the claimant count is reducing in NMD, it remains above the pre-pandemic rate of 2.2% (2510 people).

Labour Force Survey unemployment rates in Newry, Mourne and Down are at an historically low level in recent years, annual vacancies have been increasingly difficult to fill. Given that the key employment sectors are Wholesale and Retail; Healthcare; and Manufacturing, suitable Employability Academies will enable those who are unemployed, inactive or underemployed the opportunity to gain employment by obtaining a relevant qualification and developing key employability skills required.

Additionally, employability academies and promotion of Newry, Mourne and Down as a Great Place to Work will align with the main growth sectors of ICT; Professional Services; Construction; and Transport to enable participants to secure employment.



Turning the Curve – Employment Rate of people with Disabilities (% of working age); Source NISRA Labour Force Survey

The relationships between work/unemployment, poverty and health are well scripted. People with a disability are more likely not to be working and not actively looking for work than people without disabilities, consequently, they are much less likely to be in employment than people without disabilities.

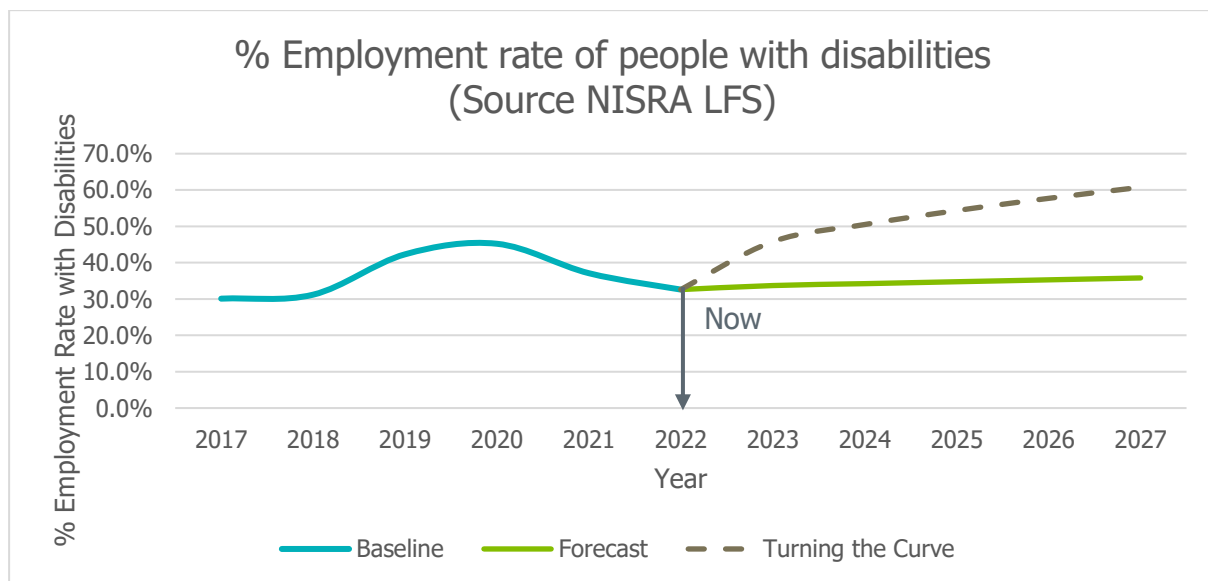
- In 2021 the NMDDC employment rate for people with disabilities was 37.1%, the employment rate for people without disabilities was 77%. The disability employment rate gap was 39.9 percentage points (pps).
- Employment rate fell lower in 2022 to 32.6% in NMD for people with disabilities, in comparison to an increase for those without disabilities to 74.9%.

- The disability employment gap for NI in 2021 was 44pps, compared to 29pps for the whole of the UK. Since 2014, the disability employment gap has consistently been higher in Northern Ireland than the rest of the UK.
- The disability employment gap was lowest for those aged 16 to 24 (when compared with other age groups) in 2020, at 25.0pps. This is consistent with trends since 2014 and is due to lower employment rates for those aged 16 to 24 without disabilities.

Worryingly, the disability employment rates in NMD have also been declining in recent years, which may be a knock-on effect of the pandemic though it has happened to a greater extent than in other LGDs and should be monitored closely. More widely, Northern Ireland continues to have both the lowest employment rates of all UK regions but also the lowest disability employment rate, and this gap has been widening not closing.

Source: UUEPC Maximising potential: A review of labour market outcomes for people with disabilities in Northern Ireland

People with disabilities face barriers such as access to transport, the physical environment and limited support in employment, all of which can impact on their ability to participate in employment. The Turning the Curve exercise by the Partnership aims to increase the numbers of people with disabilities into employment.



NMD LMP will focus on understanding what the specific needs are from an employer and participant perspective to ensure that any interventions are designed to improve employability and skills levels, and are focused on the areas which reduce economic inactivity of those with disabilities throughout the Newry, Mourne and Down district.

Turning the Curve – No Qualifications (% Working Age); Source NISRA LFS and #All Persons Median Wage (Resident based); Source NISRA LMI Portal

Having the right skills is a key driver of productivity and is important to individuals, businesses and the macro economy. Skills benefit individuals through increased

probability of being in employment and receiving higher wages; as individuals with higher levels of qualifications tend to earn more. Businesses and employers benefit from having a more highly skilled workforce which in turn increases output and productivity.

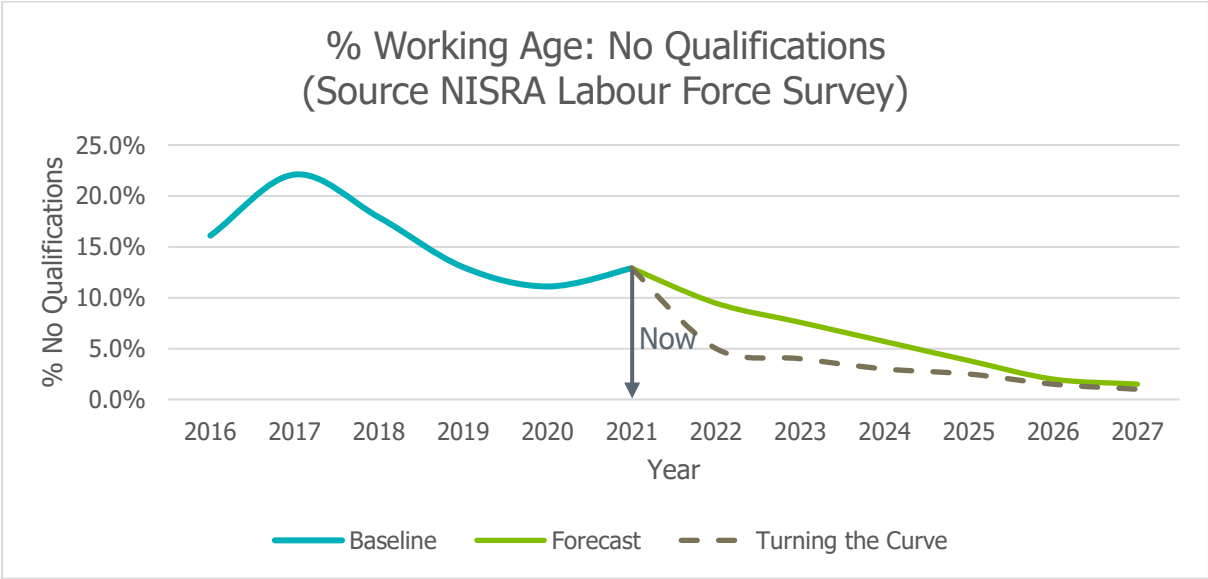
For vocational and practical qualifications to support the drive towards a higher skilled workforce it is important for qualification design and delivery to focus on how to promote productivity in the longer term as people with qualifications and highly developed skill-sets are more likely to have stable work backgrounds.

With this information in mind NMD LMP understands the importance of offering the correct level of qualifications both vocational and practical and putting in place a system of care to ensure that each participant feels supported and encouraged to reach their full potential.

NMD LMP wishes to ensure that the correct methods of delivery and the implementation of differentiated learning techniques are provided. The partnership also aims to ensure that the right programmes of study and support are correctly matched to meet the needs of the outlined themes identified as high priority across the District.

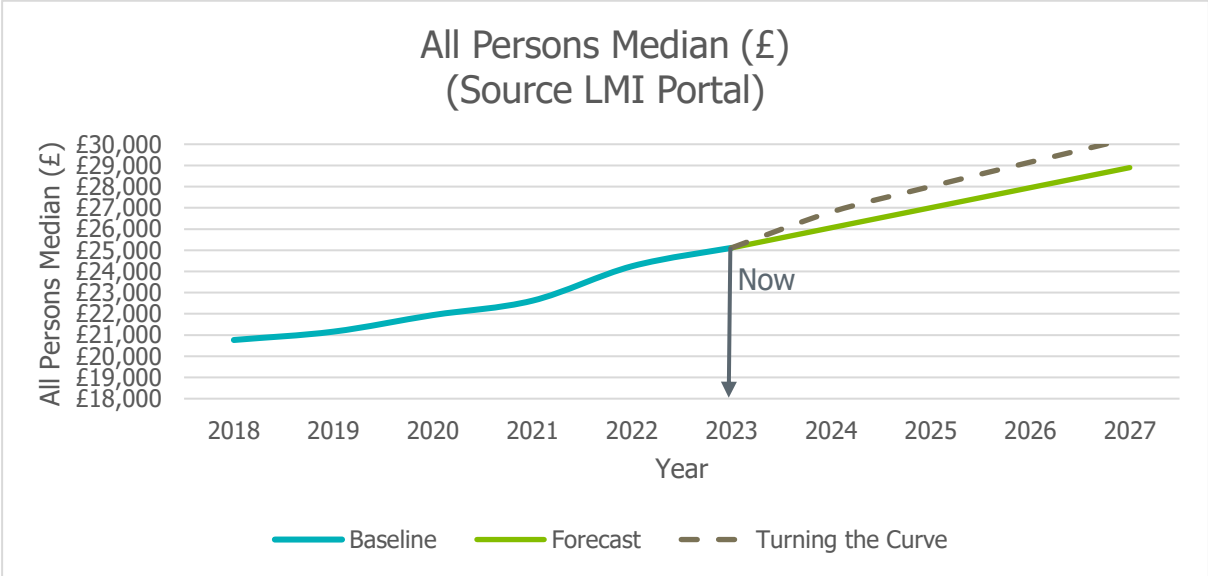
A combination of economic factors including Brexit, continuing legacy of Covid 19 and a cost of living crisis have impacted on the economy and pose great difficulties for businesses and residents of NMD.

As a result, the Turning the Curve exercise as depicted below will direct specific interventions to reskill in areas where demand exceeds supply. Particular focus will be on Leadership and Management; Classroom Assistants; Transport and Green Economy, which through local knowledge and employer engagement NMD LMP are aware of acute skills gaps. NMD LMP will also aim to meet the ambitions of the 10x strategy through provision of digital skills training for NMD residents.



The UUEPC Skills Barometer research from 2019 suggests qualifications required by employers in NMD were below those held by the population. NMD statistics typically mirror that of NI on the whole which has an oversupply of L1&L2 and an undersupply at L3&4. Based on 2021 figures, the number of people with degree level qualification has increased by 9 p.ps, showing a general increase in the qualification level of residents over time.

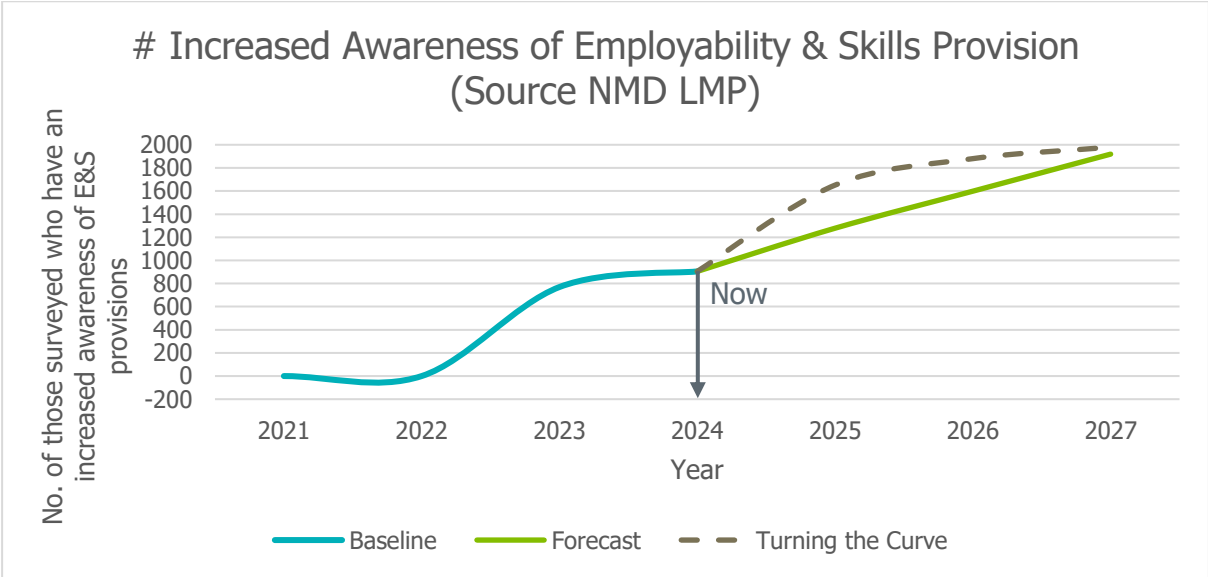
In addition to increasing the number of people with qualifications it will be important to examine the correlation between the increase in employees with qualifications and increase in wages and as such we expect to see the earning potential increase for NMD residents as shown in the Turning the Curve exercise below.



NMD LMP aim over the course of the next 3 years to level the budget allocation on Upskilling initiatives to that of the that of the Employability Academies, particularly in light of the low unemployment rate and the need to enhance qualifications and skills to the benefit of both the employee and employer.

SP3 To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision either regionally or locally

1. Theme: Support Regional Employability Programmes



The activities identified by NMD LMP as a means of addressing the theme above are:

- An opportunity for local employers to showcase their current and future skills needs to help secure future capacity and capability. This element will be promoted across all themes and target groups and include raising awareness of regional employability programmes and opportunities including Apprenticeships.
- A further aim is to create opportunities for young people, parents and schools to be better informed, speak to employers, explore options and be better equipped to secure employment locally. In addition to educating businesses to better understand the labour market in the Newry, Mourne and Down area and seek to provide the offering to enable employment positions to be filled.
- NMD LMP takes account that it needs to do as much as it can to reduce economic inactivity and long-term unemployment within the district. It recognises there is no single silver bullet or 'programme', instead we need a joint effort on several fronts. Working in partnership with strategic partners to deliver on Job and Career Events, provide career guidance and stimulate self-employment are all initiatives proposed in the NMD Action Plan for 2024 - 2025 and subsequent Action Plans within the 2024/25 – 2026/27 period.

Through tailored programmes of promotion of opportunity and a support system via the Partnership, the aim of the above is to break the cycle of Economic Inactivity and to help those most at risk of disengaging from the Labour Market, as well as to showcase the skills gaps available through our local employers by encouraging Apprenticeships and sectoral focused programmes, it is hoped that NMD LMP can turn the curve on Economic Inactivity and Disability to bring those furthest from the labour Market back into work.

In summary, NMD LMP is committed to working with all its strategic partners within the local community and with our local businesses to deliver on the initiatives outlined in the Action Plan below.

7. Action Plan

Strategic Priority 1: To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area						
Indicators		% LMP members who feel the local LMP is making a positive contribution and delivering effectively				
Theme	Title of Programme	Key Activities, Project Aims and Description	Start Date	End Date	Performance Measures	Delivery Quarter
LMP Delivery and Development	1.1 LMP Delivery	<p>Ensure the delivery of the 2024/2025 Action Plan;</p> <p>To be agile in response to new challenges in the labour market.</p> <p>Facilitate meetings of the NMD LMP and relevant subgroups.</p> <p>Establish external delivery contracts to ensure effective management and delivery against the LMP Action Plan.</p> <p>Issue quarterly progress returns on LMP activity.</p>	01 Apr 24	31 Mar 25	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 x LMP meetings held <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall total 90/120 and 75% attendance of LMP member organisations at meetings <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16/20 and 80% of LMP members who feel that they are contributing to the delivery of the LMP. 16/20 and 80% of LMP members who think that the LMP is making a positive difference. <p><u>Note</u> 20 organizational members * 6 meetings per year = 120 member attendances</p>	Q1,2,3,4

	<p>1.2 Development of Action Plan</p>	<p>Develop 25/26 Action Plan</p> <p>Using research, identify and inform current and future employability and skills supply and demand. Develop initiatives to meet skill gaps, vacancy and recruitment challenges for a future 2025-2026 Action Plan.</p> <p>Action Plan to identify potential opportunities for new sectoral Academies and Upskilling programmes.</p> <p>Consultations will be conducted with regional colleges and other key stakeholders to create a common approach to local labour market intelligence and improvement of employability outcomes in NMD.</p>	01 Dec 24	31 Mar 25	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of LMP Action Plan 2025/2026 to address local needs and approved by Regional LMP <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18/20 and 90% of LMP Members who feel that their views have been taken into account with regard to the Action Plan <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18/20 and 90% of LMP members reporting increased awareness of local employability and labour market issues 	Q4
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Strategic Priority 2: To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally

Indicators	<p>Theme 1: Economic Inactivity Economic Inactivity Rate - % Working Age Source NISRA - Labour Force Survey</p> <p>Theme 2: Unemployment Claimant Count</p>
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Source DfC

Theme 3: Disability

Resident Employment rate of people with disabilities - % of working age

Source NISRA - Labour Force Survey

Theme 4: Skilled Labour Supply

No Qualifications - % Working Age

Source NISRA - Labour Force Survey

All Persons Annual Median Wage (Resident based)

Source NISRA – Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

Theme 1: Economic Inactivity (Access to Work)

Theme	Title of Programme	Key Activities, Project Aims and Description	Start Date	End Date	Performance Measures	Delivery Quarter
Economic Inactivity	2.1 Get Work Ready: Pre-employment support	<p>Get Work Ready aims to provide targeted, personalised, effective employment assistance and advice to job seekers.</p> <p>The desired impact is to support participants to find fulfilling, lasting, paid work and for those claiming Universal Credit and in poorly paid jobs to get better paid work.</p> <p><u>Target participants</u></p> <p>Out of Work Participants</p>	01 Apr 24	31 Mar 25	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80 participants enrolled on programme <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 64/80 and 80% participants who enrolled completed the project 51/64 and 80% of completers who reported satisfaction with the LMP project <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 48/64 and 75% of completers gaining new employment 	Q1,2,3,4

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job seekers with a resident location in the District • 18 to 24-year-olds unemployed 6+ months • 25+ year-olds unemployed 12+ months (long term unemployed) • 18+ year-olds economically inactive <p><u>Underemployed Participants</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Credit claimants who are in low paid employment and who want to increase their income • Those at risk of losing their job • Others that although not long-term unemployed are considered by the LMP to warrant the provision of intensive employment support services. <p>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75%: Job Entry Rate <p>That is the proportion of all participants who secure employment by 31st March 2025. Employment must be for at least</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32/48 and 67% of participants still in employment 6 months after finishing participation • 56/64 and 88% of completers who reported feeling more confident regarding their employability as a result of participation on the project 	
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		<p>16 hours per week at, or above, the National Minimum Wage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •66%: Sustained Job Rate The proportion of Job Entries which are sustained in employment for 12 weeks. •15%: Earnings increase In-work UC claimant participants to increase their earnings (with current or new employer) by over 15% by 31st March 2025. Measured by delivery agent. <p>Programme Components – 16 Weeks Maximum Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The duration of service a participant is entitled to will be a <u>maximum of 12 weeks</u> of intensive and personalised support to find employment. • For those that secure employment a <u>maximum of 4 weeks additional</u> follow-up advice will be offered, including in-work support. <p>Implementation – Core services</p>				
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one meeting with a Caseworker • Personalised Action Plan (PAP) • One-to-one review meetings with participants • Employability Skills Support • On-going Job matching support <p>Implementation – Wrap Around service Wraparound targeted services are provided on an “as-needed basis” to help participants overcome individual barriers to employment.</p> <p>Signposting Signposting and referrals will include DfE Career Service, DfC Work Coaches, health service initiatives and other community services as appropriate.</p>				
	2.2 Enterprise Pathways Programme	Enterprise Pathways Programme provides specialised, mentoring and business support between ‘Go Succeed’ participation, establishing and growing a new-start business which offers more	01 Apr 24	31 Mar 25	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 entrepreneurs enrolled on the programme <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32/40, and 80% of participants who completed the project. 	Q1,2,3,4

		<p>sustainable employment for the participant. (i.e. PT or FT self-employment for the business owner)</p> <p>A programme of mentoring support will be offered for up to 3 months along the business start-up journey.</p> <p>Eligible participants will have completed the Go Succeed Programme and be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economically inactive • Unemployed • Under-employed <p>(Under employed: those who would like to work more hours either in their current job, a supplementary job, or in a new job)</p> <p><u>Business Start-up Fund</u> To operate a start-up fund which provides financial assistance towards business startup costs. Participants on the programme can apply for financial assistance to assist with start-up costs aligned to the business startup.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26/32, and 80% of completers who reported satisfaction with the project. <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall total 26/32, 80% of completers reporting they have commenced self-employment. • Overall total 21/26 and 80% of participants still in self-employment 6 months after finishing participation. 	
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Theme 2: Unemployment (Access to Work)

Theme	Title of Programme	Key Activities, Project Aims and Description	Start Date	End Date	Performance Measures	Delivery Quarter
Unemployment	2.3 Employability Academies	<p>Identify, design and deliver a range of employment academies for skill interventions in sectors and occupations where opportunities for employment is identified with employers.</p> <p>Potential delivery of Academies to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warehousing and Forklift • Transport • Childcare Assistant • Digital Skills • Hospitality Academy • Health • Manufacturing <p>Final academies delivered will be determined following consultation with stakeholders and employers to ascertain demand.</p> <p>NMD LMP will also seek to include interventions which meet recommendations of regional LMP including:</p>	01 Apr 24	31 Mar 25	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 participants enrolled <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80/100 and 80% of participants successfully complete the academy • 75/80 and 94% of completers reporting satisfaction with project. <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 68/80 and 85% of completers who gained a qualification as a result of participation on the project • 60/80 and 75% of completers gaining new employment • 40/60 and 66% of completers still in employment 6 months after finishing participation 	Q1,2,3,4

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting action on climate change by enabling green jobs; • Consider sectors for growth identified through the 10X strategy; • Addressing the disability employment gap; • Utilizing opportunities arising from City and Growth deals; • Supporting the aims and implementation of the Skills Strategy; and • Promoting diversity and inclusion <p>Target groups will be: unemployed; economically inactive; underemployed; at risk of redundancy.</p> <p>Mentoring support and guidance to be available to participants to support their engagement throughout their participation on the academy and follow on support to create a steppingstone into employment or further training.</p>				
	2.4	A Place to Work aims to:	01 Apr 24	31 Mar 25	How much did we do? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 employers engaged 	Q1,2,3,4

	<p>A Place to Work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the district as employment location • To create awareness of the key sectors • To create awareness of local employers • To create awareness of and access to career pathways • Promote NMD as a good place to work with opportunities for progression. <p><u>To deliver an engagement ‘Place to work’ Campaign that will</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of the range of career opportunities available locally and the pathways to access jobs. • Particularly targeting job seekers, economically inactive, students, and graduates. • Promote employers and showcase local employment opportunities across NMD. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 250 attendees engaged <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8/10 and 80% of employers reporting satisfaction with project • 100/125 and 80% of attendees reported satisfaction with the project <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8/10 and 80% of employers who reported feeling more confident that their business would be more successful • 100/125 and 80% of attendees feel more informed of career opportunities 	
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Theme 3: Disability

Disability	2.5	Host an Employer Engagement Disability	01 Apr 24	31 Mar 25	How much did we do? • 15 employers engaged	Q1,2,3,4
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	Employer Engagement Disability Awareness Raising Events	<p>Awareness Raising Event to engage local SME employers from various sectors to explain and update on disability employment issues.</p> <p>Session content to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a disability? • Breaking down the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 • Disability Advisory Services 			<p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12/15 and 80% of employers reporting satisfaction with project <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12/15 and 80% of employers have increased awareness of disability and employment issues • 6/15 and 40% of employers commit to supporting job seekers with a disability to access employment opportunities • 6/15 and 40% of employers participating reported the event would assist in filling vacancies 	
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Theme 4: Skilled Labour Supply (Skills for Work)

Skilled Labour Supply	2.6 Upskilling for Growth	<p>Employee Upskilling: Meeting employer needs and supporting career progression</p> <p>Supporting employers to upskill staff to enable career progression for those underemployed or employed and seeking career progression; creating employment vacancies and opportunities for those entering the labour market.</p>	01 Apr 24	31 Mar 25	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 employers engaged • 107 participants enrolled <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24/30 and 80% of employers reporting satisfaction with project • 86/107 and 80% of participants enrolled who completed the project • 69/86 and 80% of completers reporting satisfaction with project. <p>Is anyone better off?</p>	Q1,2,3,4
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		<p>Engagement Engage with local employers to identify their upskilling requirements and address their skills shortages via progression opportunities for existing staff.</p> <p>Support the upskilling of employees which enables job and career progression.</p> <p>Employers will be asked for the number of vacancies that may be realized.</p> <p>Delivered in partnership with SRC, SERC and delivery agents, to include a range of upskilling / reskilling opportunities from L2 to L7 in response to employer need and demand.</p> <p><u>Examples of training may include</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Assistant • Transport • Leadership and Management • Strategic Management • Trade and Export • Reducing Carbon Footprint 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23/30 and 75% of employers have created new jobs as a result of the support received • 86/107 and 80% of participants gained a qualification as a result of participation on the project • 43/86 and 50% of completers moved into higher paid employment as a result of participation on the project 	
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	<p>2.7 Skills Conference</p>	<p>Host a Skills Conference for businesses, careers teachers, school principals, training providers, recruitment consultants and academics from across Newry Mourne and Down District Council area and further afield, to develop a cohesive strategy to identify current and future skills gaps across all sectors to develop short, medium and long-term solutions to meet local skills and staff shortages.</p> <p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the development of a district-wide skills strategy through regular engagement between local employers and skills developers/schools and training organisations. • Provide a platform for information flow and discussion between employers and those tasked with meeting the skills need across the District. • Provide a platform for all stakeholders to hear 	<p>01 Apr 24</p>	<p>31 Mar 25</p>	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 attendees engaged <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80/100 and 80% of attendees reported satisfaction with project <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80/100 and 80% of attendees reported feeling more confident for their business/ employment future 	<p>Q3</p>
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		<p>details of the NMD LMP Strategic Assessment Research report compiled by Ulster University.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance membership, engagement and scope of the NMD LMP, whilst outlining delivery of initiatives to date. • Provide opportunities for Industry Clusters to meet regularly to discuss potential solutions to recruitment and skills challenges. • Promoting NMD as a great place to work, in partnership with NMD LMP and provide exposure for NMD LMP. • Create a Skills Forum tasked with implementing the outcomes and actions from the Conference. 				
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Strategic Priority 3: To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision either regionally or locally

Indicators		1. Increased Awareness of Employability & Skills Provision				
Theme	Title of Programme	Key Activities, Project Aims and Description	Start Date	End Date	Performance Measures	Delivery Quarter

Employability and Skills provision	3.1 Employment Pathway Events	<p>Support delivery of 3 Jobs and Career fairs and events, including sectoral focused events where scope and opportunity exists.</p> <p>Opportunity to showcase key sectors, and career opportunities.</p> <p>Enhanced Career Guidance aligned to local opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Jobs Fair promoting NMD wide employment opportunities • Two career fairs for pupils, teachers and principles 	01 Apr 24	31 Mar 25	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,500 attendees at events • 100 employers participating <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 400/500 and 80% of attendees rated the events as helpful for finding work / training • 40/50 and 80% of employers reporting satisfaction with event <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 375/500 and 75% of attendees feel more informed of career opportunities • 38/50 and 75% of employers participating reported the event would assist in filling vacancies 	Q1,2,3,4
	3.2 Promoting apprenticeships, traineeships and placements as pathways to employment	<p>NMD LMP will work with DfC, DfE and Colleges, to increase the number of employers offering placements, traineeships and apprenticeship opportunities.</p> <p>NMD LMP will promote the benefits of recruiting through opportunity pathways, such as Apprenticeships, traineeships, and work experience placements, to employers.</p>	01 Apr 24	31 Mar 25	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 students attending events • 40 employers engaged <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200/250 and 80% of attendees at events report that the event was informative • 23/30 and 75% of employers reported the event was a good platform to showcase their sector <p>Is anyone better off?</p>	Q1,2,3,4

		<p>NMD LMP will aim to increase the number of school leavers considering apprenticeships as a pathway to employment. The campaign will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bust myths • Target parents & schools • Promote value of employer engagement. <p>Communication channels will include events, social media, print, and digital platforms.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200/250 and 80% of attendees feel more informed of career opportunities • 200/250 and 80% of attendees reporting the events increased their knowledge of the work of the LMP/Employability NI 	
	<p>3.3 Increased awareness of employability and skills programmes</p>	<p>Increase awareness among job seekers and those who wish to upskill of the range of employability and training support there is available through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events targeting participants and employers • Regular updating to local JBO's on NMD LMP Programmes 	01 Apr 24	31 Mar 25	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200 attendees at supported events <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80/100 and 80% attendees reporting satisfaction with events <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75/100 and 75% of attendees reporting the events increased their knowledge of the work of the LMP/Employability NI 	Q1,2,3,4

