

# **Plean Gníomhaíochta ar son an Chomhionannais 2023-2027**

## **Equality Action Plan 2023-2027**



Comhairle Ceantair  
**an Iúir, Mhúrn  
agus an Dúin**

**Newry, Mourne  
and Down**  
District Council

## Foreword

Welcome to the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Equality Action Plan 2023-2027. This plan sets out the Council's commitment to ensuring it fulfils its statutory obligation regarding Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

### Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Section 75 (1) states that public authorities in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity

- Between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, material status or sexual orientation;
- Between men and women generally;
- Between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- Between persons with dependents and person without.

Section 75 (2) states that public authorities in carrying out its functions relation to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial groups.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is committed to the fulfilment of its Equality duties in all parts of its organisation and this action plan sets out how it intends to do so.

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Councillor Valerie Harte  
Chairperson of Newry, Mourne  
and Down District Council

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Marie Ward  
Chief Executive of Newry,  
Mourne and Down District Council

# Equality and Diversity Framework

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Equality Action Plan is set within the context of the Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland's Equality and Diversity Framework.

The framework outlines five key principles which assist Council to meet its equality and diversity obligations.

The 5 principles are as follows:

## **Principle 1: Ensuring we work in a non-discriminatory environment, promote equality, and model best practice in equality and good relations**

It is everyone's responsibility to:

- Treat everyone equally and with dignity and respect
- Think about how our actions affect others
- Help people change for the better through example by challenging unacceptable behaviour and language
- Be knowledgeable by taking personal responsibility for training around equality and diversity and good relations (mandatory training for all elected members, Council staff and managers in place)

## **Principle 2: Ensuring all our decisions are based on evidence to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations**

We will:

- Ensure that all policies, projects and programmes of work are screened and where appropriate, impact assessed
- Publish all screening outcomes including any mitigation or alternative policies considered
- Involve the customers of the council, trade unions, business sector and voluntary and community sector on an on- basis to assist us in the review and development of existing and new policies

## **Principle 3: Providing access to services, facilities and information**

We will take steps to improve access to services, facilities and information and to be open about what we can and cannot do:

We will:

- Involve customers and stakeholders in the design, prioritisation and review of services
- Monitor and review services regularly to identify any under-representation or discrimination
- Make sure information is accessible using Plain English and other accessibility standards
- Provide alternative formats, translations and interpreters when needed
- Make sure buildings are accessible and welcoming to all
- Make sure meetings and events are easy to access

#### **Principle 4: Recruiting and employing people fairly**

The Council will make sure that we provide equality of opportunity to all in employment.

We will:

- Use non-discriminatory job criteria
- Take positive action to ensure a diverse workforce
- Apply fair selection procedures
- Monitor and review employment practice
- Make reasonable adjustments
- Support staff through appropriate networks

#### **Principle 5: Responding to and learning from complaints and incidents in a positive and proactive way**

Everyone has a right to complain about discrimination and harassment in good faith, without being victimised at any time.

We will:

- Handle complaints and grievances properly
- Resolve matters positively
- Respond to incidents of prejudice or hate crime

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Equality Action Plan 2023-2027 has been developed to ensure all the proposed positive actions identified are related to the five principles of The Local Government Staff Commission's Equality and Diversity framework.

## Equality Action Plan 2023-2027

### Principle 1: Ensuring we work in a non-discriminatory environment, promote equality and model of best practice in equality and good relations

| Issue   | Objective   | Positive Action   | Measure  | Responsibility  | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|--|---|-----------|
| Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations<br>Statutory Duty Compliance | To continue to develop an understanding of the Council's duty to promote Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations | <p>Develop an Equality and Good Relations training programme and guidance for staff and elected members to embed an Equality and Good Relations culture and ethos across the organisation</p> <p>Examples of training programmes will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality Scheme and Section 75 statutory duties</li> <li>• Disability Duties</li> </ul> | <p>Number of training sessions/programmes delivered.</p> <p>Attendance figures of elected members participating in Equality and Good Relations training programmes</p> <p>Attendance figures of staff participating in Equality and Good Relations training programmes</p> | <p>Corporate Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate Policy</li> <li>• Human Resources (Learning and Development)</li> </ul> <p>Active and Healthy Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Engagement</li> </ul> | Ongoing   |

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|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality screening</li> <li>• Consultation and engagement</li> <li>• Policy development</li> <li>• Good Relations</li> <li>• Disability awareness</li> </ul> | Evaluation and feedback from staff and elected members  |   |   |
|  |  | To integrate objectives and targets relating to the Section 75 statutory duties into Council's Departmental and Business plans.   | <p>Council has considered all S75 categories in the development of Corporate Strategic and Operational business plans</p> <p>Review of Corporate Reporting template which will map Officers' consideration of Section 75 in Council decision-making</p> | <p>Corporate Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance Improvement</li> <li>• Corporate Planning and Policy (Corporate Policy)</li> </ul> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Bi-annually (April &amp; October)</p> |

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|  |  | To utilise the Councillors' Equality and Good Relations Reference Group as a facilitated discussion forum for Elected Members to address contentious and sensitive issues | Number of meetings of the Councillors' Equality and Good Relations Reference Group held | Chief Executive Office<br><br>Corporate Policy | Ongoing           |
|  |  | Information on Equality and Good Relations for new staff  | Number of induction sessions held   | Human Resources<br><br>Corporate Policy        | Ongoing           |
|  |  | Council 'light up' civic buildings on recognised days to support and raise awareness of equality / disability related issues  | Number of times a civic building is 'lit up'  | Chief Executive Office                         | 4 events per year |

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|  |  | To promote the role of the Council's Diversity Ambassadors | Number of people who engage with Diversity Ambassadors   | Corporate Policy   | October 2023  |
|  |  | Implementation of the Council's Good Relations Action Plan | <p>Number of participants in Good Relations funded programmes</p> <p>Quarterly and annual reports to The Executive Office</p> <p>Number of people accessing the services of the Ethnic Minority Support Centre</p> | <p>Active and Healthy Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Engagement</li> </ul> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Annually &amp; Quarterly</p> <p>Annually (August)</p> |



**Principle 2: Ensuring all our decisions are based on evidence to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality and good relations**

| Issue              | Objective  | Positive Action  | Measure  | Responsibility                       | Timeframe                     |
|--------------------|--|--|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Equality Screening | To ensure that all policies and procedures are equality screened, i.e. to assess the likely impact of the policy on the promotion of Equality of Opportunity and/or Good Relations | All current and new policies are screened before council approval and implementation | Quarterly policy screening reports tabled at SPR Committee | All Directorates<br>Corporate Policy | Quarterly                     |
|                    |  |  | Annual report produced for Equality Commission NI          |                                      | Annually (August)             |
|                    |  | Reports uploaded to council website and forwarded to equality consultee listing      | Quarterly  |                                      |                               |
|                    |  | Guidance and support to staff on policy screening process                            | Number of screening training sessions provided per year    | Corporate Policy                     | Ongoing<br><br>Minimum of one |

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|  |  | Training provided for staff on the policy screening process                             |   |   | dedicated training course / year                        |
|  |  | To promote and raise awareness of the Council's Policy Development Framework            | Policy Development Framework communicated to staff biannually | Corporate Policy                          | Ongoing   |
|  |  | To promote and raise awareness of the Council's Guidance for reviewing Council policies | Guidance on policy reviews communicated to staff biannually   | Corporate Policy                          | Ongoing   |
| Effective Consultation and Engagement in line with Section 75 principles | To provide corporate guidance and establish a robust process for consultation and engagement | To review and refresh Council's Consultation & Engagement Framework                     | Production of a toolkit                                       | Corporate Policy<br>Evidence and Research | March 2024  |
|  |  | Review Equality consultee list annually   | Updated Equality consultee list                               | Corporate Policy                          | Annually (As per Equality Scheme – September each year) |

### Principle 3: Providing access to services, facilities and information

| Issue                 | Objective   | Positive Action   | Measure  | Responsibility  | Timescale   |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|---|---|
| Monitoring            | To have relevant Section 75 data available                                  | <p>Directorates to establish a system to collate relevant Section 75 data</p> <p>Engagement between Corporate Policy Section and relevant directorates to identify gaps in monitoring information</p> | Appropriate and relevant up to date data available to determine effectiveness of service provision | <p>All Directorates</p> <p>Corporate Policy</p> <p>Evidence and Research</p>  | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>To review data annually (April)</p> |
| Access to information | Information on council services is accessible to all parts of the community | Develop the corporate website ensuring it meets all accessibility requirements  | Availability of an accessible corporate website  | <p>Corporate Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Corporate Planning and Policy (Corporate Comms and Marketing)</li> </ul> | October 2025  |

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| Access to services and facilities | Services and facilities are accessible to all parts of the community | Review of council facilities to ensure they are accessible to all members of the community                  | Percentage of Council owned facilities meeting the requirements of the 'Every Customer Counts' accessibility checklist | All Directorates  | Annually (April) |
|                                   |  | To maintain Shop Mobility Scheme delivered by the Newcastle Centre and Delamont Country Park                | Numbers of people using service  | Active and Healthy Communities                              | Ongoing          |
| Advocating and influencing others | To positively contribute on equality matters                         | Elected Members' civic leadership role advocating with others for the benefit of all people of the district | Number of appointments to external partnerships and Community Planning Partnership                                     | Democratic Services / Community Planning / Corporate Policy | Ongoing          |

## Principle 4: Recruiting and employing people fairly

| Issue               | Objective  | Positive Action  | Measure   | Responsibility   | Timescale                               |
|---------------------|--|--|---|--|---|
| Workforce diversity | To ensure that Council provides Equality of Opportunity to all in employment | Integration of Section 75 statutory duties within job descriptions   |   | Corporate Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human Resources</li> </ul>                           | Ongoing                                 |
|                     |  | Workforce monitoring related to Article 55 Reviews   | Annual report to ECNI<br><br>Submission of three yearly Article 55 Report to ECNI | Corporate Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human Resources</li> </ul>                           | Annually<br><br>To report every 3 years |
|                     |  | Research, evaluate and monitor under representation of Section 75 categories within the workplace through analysing recruitment and selection data and the | Relevant section 75 workforce data  | Corporate Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human Resources</li> <li>Corporate Policy</li> </ul> | September 2023 / Ongoing                |

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|  |  | current workforce profile   |  | Chief Executive Office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence and Research</li> </ul> |         |
|  |  | Continue to facilitate requests for reasonable adjustments within the workplace | Number and type of requests for reasonable adjustments | All Directorates in conjunction with Safety, Health & Emergency Planning Section               | Ongoing |

## Principle 5: Responding to and learning from complaints and incidents in a positive and proactive way

| Issue                                    | Objective   | Positive Action  | Measure   | Responsibility  | Timescale   |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| Support, advice, guidance and assistance | Complaints are addressed in a positive manner and realistic timeframe                   | Implementation of Council's Complaint Processes  | Number of complaints<br><br>Number of Section 75 complaints | Corporate Services<br><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administration and Customer Services</li> </ul> Corporate Policy | Ongoing<br><br>Annually (As per Equality Scheme – August) |
|  | Ensure people with a disability can access the Council's complaints/ comments procedure | Provide a range of accessible formats for people to forward complaints/comments to Council | Number of requests for accessible formats                   | Corporate Services<br><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administration and Customer Services</li> </ul> Corporate Policy | Ongoing   |

## How the Equality Action Plan will be published

Following consultation and submission to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, this plan will be available by contacting:

Corporate Policy Section  
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council  
Monaghan Row  
Newry  
BT35 8DJ  
Telephone: 0300 013 2233  
[corporatepolicy@nmandd.org](mailto:corporatepolicy@nmandd.org)

The Equality Action Plan can be accessed on the Council's website at:

<https://www.newrymouredown.org/corporate-policy-and-equality>

The plan will be available in alternative formats upon request.