



September 11th, 2025

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Monday, 15th September 2025** at **6:00 pm** in **Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre.**

Committee Membership 2025-26

Councillor C Bowsie **Chairperson**

Councillor M Gibbons **Deputy Chairperson**

Councillor J Brennan

Councillor L Devlin

Councillor D Finn

Councillor C Galbraith

Councillor R Howell

Councillor J Jackson

Councillor D Lee-Surginor

Councillor O Magennis

Councillor A Mathers

Councillor L McEvoy

Councillor D Murphy

Councillor K Murphy

Councillor J Truesdale

Agenda

1.0 Introduction and Apologies

2.0 Declarations of Interest

3.0 Action Sheet arising from Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 11 August 2025

📄 *Action Sheet from AHC 2025 08 18.pdf*

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For Discussion/Decision

4.0 Council of Sanctuary

For Decision

📄 *City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network - vf.pdf*

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📄 *Appx 1 - Further Information - Council of Sanctuary - vf.pdf*

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📄 *Appx 2 - City of Sanctuary Charter - vf.pdf*

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📄 *Appx 3 - Council Award Procedure and Criteria 2025 - vf.pdf*

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5.0 Crotlieve Multi Sports Hub Review

📄 *AHC - Multi-Sports Facilities Review 2025- Crotlieve - vf 10.09.25.pdf*

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📄 *Appendix 1 - Crotlieve MSH Review 2025.pdf*

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6.0 Kilbroney Pitches

For Decision

📄 *AHC Report - Kilbroney Park - vf 10.09.2025.pdf*

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7.0 DEA Forum Update Report

For Decision

📄 *AHC DEA Report September 2025..pdf*

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📄 *Appx 1 -Action Sheet Newry DEA Forum Meeting 3 June 2025 - vf.pdf*

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📄 *Appx 2 -Action Sheet Downpatrick DEA Forum Meeting 12 August 2025 - vf.pdf*

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8.0 Consultation Response on The Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy

📎 *Response to Anti Poverty Strategy 2025 - AHC - vf.pdf*

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📎 *Appx 1 - Proposed Response Anti-Poverty Strategy Public Consultation - vf.pdf*

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📎 *Appx 2 - NI Executive Anti-Poverty Strategy - vf.pdf*

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Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

9.0 Programme Delivery Partner

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act Northern Ireland 2014- information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

📎 *Programme Delivery Partner - restricted.pdf*

Not included

For Noting

10.0 Newcastle Centre Site Selection

For Information

📎 *AHC - Newcastle Centre September 2025 - vf.pdf*

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11.0 Council Good Relations Programme Update

For Information

📎 *AHC Good Relations Update Report September 2025 - vf.pdf*

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12.0 Play Strategy Programme of Works for Year 2 and Year 3

📎 *AHC -Play Strategy Programme of Works for Year 2 and Year 3 - vf.pdf*

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Invitees

Cllr Terry Andrews

Cllr Callum Bowsie

Cllr Jim Brennan

Mr Gerard Byrne

Cllr Pete Byrne

Cllr Philip Campbell

Cllr William Clarke

Cllr Laura Devlin

Cllr Cadogan Enright

Cllr Killian Feehan

Cllr Doire Finn

Cllr Conor Galbraith

Cllr Mark Gibbons

Cllr Oonagh Hanlon

Cllr Glyn Hanna

Cllr Valerie Harte

Mr Conor Haughey

Cllr Martin Hearty

Cllr Roisin Howell

Cllr Tierna Howie

Cllr Jonathan Jackson

Joanne/Noelle Johnston

Cllr Geraldine Kearns

Miss Veronica Keegan

Cllr Cathal King

Cllr Mickey Larkin

Cllr David Lee-Surginor

Cllr Alan Lewis

Cllr Oonagh Magennis

Cllr Aidan Mathers

Cllr Declan McAteer

Cllr Leeanne McEvoy

Cllr Declan Murphy

Cllr Kate Murphy

Cllr Selina Murphy

Cllr Siobhan O'Hare

Mr Andy Patterson

Cllr Áine Quinn

Cllr Henry Reilly

Cllr Michael Rice

Ms Alison Robb

Cllr Michael Ruane

Cllr Gareth Sharvin
.....
Cllr David Taylor
.....
Cllr Jarlath Tinnelly
.....
Cllr Jill Truesdale
.....
Cllr Helena Young
.....

ACTIONS ARISING FROM ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING – 18 AUGUST 2025

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
AHC/062/2025	Presentation – NMD Strategic Stakeholder Forum – Social Supermarket Initiative	It was agreed that the Active and Healthy Communities Committee provide letters of support for the Strategic Stakeholder Forum working with the various Government Departments and write on their behalf to offer support for applications when required.	A. Robb	Noted	Y
AHC/063/2025	Action Sheet Arising from Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting Held On 16 June 2025	It was agreed to note the Action Sheet of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 16 June 2025.	A Patterson	Noted	Y
AHC/064/2025	District Electoral Area (Dea) Forums Update Report	It was agreed to note the report and approve the actions in the action sheets for: - Rowallane DEA Forum Meeting held on 10 June 2025 - Downpatrick DEA Forum Meeting held on 10 June 2025 - Slieve Croob DEA Forum Meeting held on 17 June 2025 - Newry DEA Forum Meeting held on 8 July 2025 - Slieve Gullion DEA Forum Meeting held on 1 July 2025 - Mourne DEA Forum Meeting held on 22 July 2025	A. Robb	Noted and actions being progressed	Y

AHC/065/2025	Leisure Centre Closure Arrangements 2025/26	It was agreed to approve the leisure closure arrangements for the 2025/26 period as detailed within the officer's report.	C. Haughey		Y
AHC/069/2025	Policing & Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) And Newry & Downpatrick Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership (NRP) Report	It was agreed to note the following: - Minutes of the Newry Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership (NRP) Meeting held on 28 May 2025 and approved on 25 June 2025 - Action Sheet of the Downpatrick Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership (NRP) Meeting held on 31 March 2025 and approved on 24 June 2025 - Minutes of the Policing Committee & PCSP Meeting held on 27 May 2025, approved at the Policing Committee & PCSP Meeting on 29 July 2025.	A. Robb	Noted	Y
AHC/070/2025	Participatory Budgeting Events	It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McEvoy, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, to note the contents of this report, including the upcoming Participatory Budget events in each of the 7 District Electoral Areas.	A. Robb	Noted	Y

ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014

AHC/066/2025	2026/26 Community Support Programme and Community Development Service Level Agreements	It was agreed to award funding from the 2025/26 Community Support Programme budget and to enter into Service Level Agreements with the named organisations with regards to their funding and service provision, as detailed within the officer's report.	A. Robb	Agreed – Service Level Agreements being progressed	Y
AHC/067/2025	Areas At Risk Programme Funding	It was agreed to note receipt of Letters of Offer for the continuation of programme delivery for the period 2025/26 as set out within the officer's report.	A. Robb	Noted	Y
AHC/068/2025:	Community Festival and Events Programme Funding	It was agreed to note receipt of Letters of Offer for the continuation of programme delivery for the period 2025/26 as set out within the officer's report.	A. Robb	Noted	Y

Report to:	Active and Healthy Communities Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 September 2025
Subject:	Council of Sanctuary
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Alison Robb, Assistant Director Community Development
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Justyna McCabe, Projects Coordinator

For decision	X	For noting only	
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	<u>Purpose</u> To note the contents of this report and to consider the recommendations in section 3.1 of this report in relation to Council joining the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network and working toward formal recognition as a 'Council of Sanctuary'.
1.2	<u>Background</u> At the Council Meeting on 7 July 2025, it was agreed that a report would be brought back to the Active and Healthy Communities Committee outlining the process for Council of Sanctuary, and what it meant, including the Charter for the Council of Sanctuary, to alleviate any concerns that people had. Further information on the Council of Sanctuary Local Authority Network & Accreditation is included at Appendix 1. This includes Council's current position, and information on addressing concerns and clarifying misconceptions. The City of Sanctuary UK movement began in 2005 and now supports a growing network of communities and institutions working to build inclusive environments for people fleeing violence and persecution. The Local Authority Network, created in 2020, includes over 170 Councils across the UK actively engaged in sharing good practice, developing strategic frameworks and supporting effective public service responses. By joining the network, Councils sign up to the vision and values of City of Sanctuary (see City of Sanctuary Charter attached at Appendix 2) and commit to working towards the Council of Sanctuary Award. To achieve the award, Councils must demonstrate a commitment to: • Learning about the experiences and needs of people seeking sanctuary; • Embedding the values of welcome and inclusion across their services and policies; • Sharing their progress and learning with others to inspire wider change. The Council of Sanctuary Award Procedure and Criteria is attached at Appendix 3.
2.0	Key issues
2.1	The City of Sanctuary initiative closely aligns with the Council's statutory responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, particularly in promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.

	The Council of Sanctuary approach complements the Community Plan and the Corporate Plan 2024–2027, aligning with the following corporate objectives: • Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the District • Empower communities to play an active part in civic life • Represent the voice of the District with our partners • Deliver sustainable services. This initiative aligns with the work currently undertaken by Community Development through its Ethnic Minority Support Centre, Good Relations Programme and Financial Assistance.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	1. To note the contents of the report. 2. Councillors to consider NMDDC joining the Local Authority Network and work towards formal recognition as a 'Council of Sanctuary'.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	Local Authority Network membership fee of £250.00 per annum, which will be met within existing budget. If approval is obtained to achieve accreditation at a later date, there would be a fee of approximately £1,500.00.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☐
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☒ No ☐ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☒ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation – N/a</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves. ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐

	<i>Rationale:</i>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	Appendices
7.1	Appendix 1 – Further Information on Council of Sanctuary Local Authority Network & Accreditation Appendix 2 - City of Sanctuary Charter Appendix 3 - Council of Sanctuary Award Procedure and Criteria.
8.0	Background Documents
8.1	None.

Information on Council of Sanctuary Network & Accreditation

Current Council Position

NMDDC has not agreed to join the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network or to work towards formal recognition as a Council of Sanctuary at this time.

Council agreed at a meeting on 7th July 2025 that a report providing additional information would be brought back to the Active & Healthy Communities Committee for further consideration.

Addressing Concerns and Clarifying Misconceptions

Concern/Misconception	✓ / X	Clarification
The Council of Sanctuary work influences asylum decisions, placements and/or immigration status.	X	No - this remains within the Home Office remit. Council's role is to respond appropriately to the needs of those who arrive here for the benefit of the whole community. This initiative is intended to improve Council services for all residents as it helps create more inclusive services for all as well as resilient and cohesive local communities.
Council influences who arrives or stays.	X	No – Council responds to Home Office placement decisions and must fulfil its duties accordingly.
Asylum Seekers choose to come to our District.	X	No - Asylum Seekers cannot choose where they live . They are housed in temporary accommodation and do not take priority over local housing lists. Asylum Seekers who receive Refugee status tend not to remain in the longer term in our District and currently the number is amongst the lowest in Northern Ireland Council areas – currently less than 40.
The district is flooded with illegal migrants.	X	The narrative has become confused between illegal migrants or people who may have been trafficked, and those who are in one of the following categories: • people who are legally seeking asylum or have been granted refugee status, • legal migrants, • individuals on student or work visas from different countries, • people from different countries who have lived in Northern Ireland for some time – often working here, buying property, having families and are contributing to our community.
Council decides where Asylum Seekers are accommodated.	X	No - the placement of individuals in asylum accommodation is currently managed by the Home Office and its contracted providers, not by the Council . Councils do not control immigration policy or asylum decisions, and we are not

		responsible for allocating accommodation for asylum seekers. Our role is to ensure that all residents, regardless of their background, are treated fairly and supported so that they can integrate quickly.
Council of Sanctuary is the same as Sanctuary Cities in the USA.	X	No - a "Sanctuary City" is a USA city, county, or state limits cooperation with federal immigration enforcement agencies to protect undocumented immigrants from deportation and ensures access to local services like schools and healthcare. These policies are controversial, with proponents arguing they foster community trust and protect vulnerable populations, while opponents contend they undermine federal law and encourage illegal immigration. Council, in managing social inclusion and good relations work, cooperates with all statutory, community/voluntary and other partners in order to do the best for all our community within current Government legislation and policy.
Council receives £70,000 for each Asylum Seeker who comes to the District.	X	No – last year Council received funding from The Executive Office for Refugee Integration Funding. This is to cover Council working with local groups to support cultural integration activities, and needs based projects, etc. This is not annual funding, and no funding decision has been confirmed for this current financial year as yet. Council does not directly fund Asylum Seekers/Refugees.
Asylum Seekers are living in luxury in hotels.	X	No - whilst some Asylum Seekers are accommodated in designated hotels as a short-term measure the number of hotels in Northern Ireland being used for this purpose has now reduced from 8 to 3. There are fewer than 300 Asylum Seekers in hotel accommodation at the current time and none within the NMDDC area.
Being a welcoming District means that Council is encouraging or attracting migration.	X	No - being a welcoming District does not equate to encouraging or attracting migration. People do not risk everything to come here because of local services they likely know nothing about. Asylum seekers cannot access normal benefits. They receive only minimal support and usually cannot work. Supporting people seeking sanctuary does not mean favouring one group over another. It is about building efficient, inclusive systems that work for all residents.

What about illegal immigration?	X	Seeking asylum is not illegal. Under international law, including the 1951 Refugee Convention, anyone fleeing persecution, war, or serious harm has the legal right to claim asylum. As a Council, we do not determine immigration status - that is the responsibility of the Home Office. Our role is to ensure that anyone who is here, especially vulnerable people and children, are treated with dignity and supported in line with our legal and statutory duties.
Asylum Seekers are more likely to commit crimes than the general population.	X	No - there is no evidence that asylum seekers are more likely to commit crimes than the general population. People seeking sanctuary are often women and children fleeing violence, seeking the same protection and safety local families hope for. In particular there has been an narrative around asylum seekers, refugee men and sexual offences. Data shows that in relation to Violence against Women and Girls the vast majority of perpetrators are known to the victim. Anecdotally feedback from Council's Ethnic Minority Support Centre, organisations we work with and even our own employees, is that there is a level of fear within the community as a result of the current climate and anti-migrant narrative.

Being part of the Local Authorities of Sanctuary network is about supporting vulnerable people, strengthening community cohesion, and ensuring that all residents can live safely and with dignity.

Supporting the Council of Sanctuary movement is not about encouraging people to come to our District. It is simply aimed at ensuring those who are going through a Home Office application process, or who are legally allowed to remain in this country and have been placed in our District by due legal and governmental process, are provided with support. Individuals are assigned to areas by the Home Office while their cases are being processed. Local authorities are not involved in these decisions or allocations.

Background Information

Council has a long-standing history of supporting, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers through the work of our Ethnic Minority Support Centre and by providing a range of support services and integration projects. It has consistently demonstrated commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for **all** residents, including newcomer families and individuals.

Council's Corporate Plan 2024/27 set out the following Strategic Objectives:

Strategic Objectives	Key Actions	Measures of Success
Empowering communities to play an active part in civic life	Development and delivery of the: • District Electoral Area Action Plans • Policing & Community Safety Partnership Action Plan • Good Relations Programme Action Plan • Downpatrick and Newry Neighbourhood Renewal Areas Action Plan • Social Inclusion Action Plan including the delivery of the Ethnic Minority Support Centre • PeacePlus Action Plan • Community Wealth Building Action Plan. Implementation of the Community Plan. Development of a Community Facilities Strategy. Delivery of the Financial Assistance Programme.	Percentage of residents who agree their local area is a place where people of different backgrounds get on well together. Percentage of residents who agree the Council consults with, and listens to, the views of local people. Percentage of residents who feel they can have a say on how services are delivered in their local area. Number of financial assistance projects funded. Number of people accessing the Ethnic Minority Support Office services.

City of Sanctuary UK Movement in Brief

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- The movement began in 2005 and now supports a growing network of communities and institutions working to build inclusive environments for people “fleeing violence and persecution.”
- The Local Authority Network, created in 2020, includes over 170 Councils across the UK actively engaged in sharing good practice, developing strategic frameworks and supporting effective public service responses.
- By joining the network, Councils sign up to the vision and values of City of Sanctuary and commit to working towards the Council of Sanctuary Award. To achieve the award, Councils must demonstrate a commitment to:
 1. *Learning about the experiences and needs of people seeking sanctuary,*
 2. *Embedding the values of welcome and inclusion across their services and policies,*
 3. *Sharing their progress and learning with others to inspire wider change.*
- Joining this network will position the Council at the forefront of best practice across the UK and Ireland, aligning it with other leading organisations in Northern Ireland that have already received Sanctuary Awards — including Queen’s University Belfast, Belfast Metropolitan College, the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and 42 schools.
- Being recognised as a Council of Sanctuary means a local authority has shown it is committed to making its area welcoming and inclusive for everyone – including people who have moved here seeking safety.
- This recognition does not give the Council any powers over immigration or who comes to live in the area. Decisions about immigration, asylum, and dispersal are made by Central Government, not local Councils. What a Council of Sanctuary does is focus on how people are treated after they arrive – making sure that everyone who lives here is treated fairly, can access support when needed, and has the chance to contribute to our communities.
- Becoming a Council of Sanctuary means a local authority is committed to being welcoming and fair to everyone in the community. The process involves the Council – in the longer term - creating a practical plan and working with local organisations to ensure services work well for **all** residents. This approach helps create a more cohesive community where everyone feels valued and can contribute positively.

City of Sanctuary Charter

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City of Sanctuary Charter

We, organisations and individuals working together under the City of Sanctuary banner, share the following common vision, values and purpose:

Vision

Our vision is that the UK will be a welcoming place of safety for all, and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution.

Purpose

We aim to build a culture of hospitality and welcome by creating opportunities for relationships of solidarity between local people and those seeking sanctuary.

We support local and national groups and organisations to:

- Embed sanctuary principles in their everyday work.
- Learn about the issues facing people seeking sanctuary.
- Share best practice and experiences with others.

Core Values

1. Inclusivity

We welcome and respect people of all backgrounds, and we include those with lived experience of seeking sanctuary in all aspects of our work.

2. Openness

We work transparently and collaboratively with a spirit of generosity, sharing resources, knowledge and power.

3. Participation

We encourage people seeking sanctuary to shape and lead our work, ensuring their voices are heard and

City of Sanctuary Charter

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valued.

4. Inspiration

We celebrate the contributions of people seeking sanctuary and the positive impact of welcoming communities.

5. Solidarity

We stand in solidarity with people seeking sanctuary and challenge injustice wherever we see it.

6. Integrity

We act with honesty and accountability, guided by our values and by the experiences of those we work alongside.

We Commit To:

- Learning from those who have sought sanctuary.
- Embedding welcome and inclusion into everything we do.
- Sharing our experiences and encouraging others to join the movement.

Endorsement

By signing this Charter, we commit to building a culture of welcome, equality, and respect for people seeking sanctuary in the UK.



Council of Sanctuary Award Procedure and Criteria

1. Introduction

City of Sanctuary UK holds the vision that the UK will be a welcoming place of safety for all and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution. In order to realise this vision, City of Sanctuary UK supports [a network of groups](#), which includes cities, towns, villages, boroughs and regions across the UK, and others engaged in Streams of Sanctuary¹, Sanctuary Awards and activities intended to welcome people seeking sanctuary². For more information see our [Charter](#).

2. What is City of Sanctuary?

City of Sanctuary is an umbrella organisation working with 125+ local grassroots groups to create communities welcoming to people fleeing violence and persecution. To this end we apply an institution-by-institution approach striving to develop a tapestry of inclusive and accessible local organisations and services.

By fostering local partnerships between City of Sanctuary groups (where they exist), refugee and community sector organisations, people with lived experience, and mainstream organisations, we support the development of **local refugee frameworks** that are joined-up, coherent, and effective in supporting people to rebuild their lives from day one.

3. What are Sanctuary Awards?

The [Sanctuary Award](#) process is strategic framework for cultural and institutional change within local organisations (councils, schools, universities, colleges, libraries etc.) which ensures that

¹ We call each sector that we work within a 'stream'. These Streams of Sanctuary encourage professionals or practitioners within a sector to come together and collaborate with other interested parties including people seeking sanctuary.

² A term used to describe people predominantly categorised as either a refugee or an asylum seeker (including those whose appeal rights exhausted).

they contribute to the creation of a welcoming environment for people seeking sanctuary in local communities, and that they play an active role in the wider movement for safeguarding and promoting the rights of people in need of sanctuary in the UK.

Councils, as anchor institutions, play an important role in promoting inclusion within their own institutions, the wider community, and with other local statutory and voluntary sector stakeholders. The 'Council of Sanctuary' award process and minimum criteria for recognition are therefore tailored to the specific contextual challenges and opportunities within local government, and the role they play in welcoming and supporting people seeking sanctuary.

4. The award process

The Award process usually starts with a conversation with the [City of Sanctuary UK officer](#) for local authorities³, and with your local [City of Sanctuary group](#) (if such exists). We also encourage councils to express their aspiration to be recognised as a 'Council of Sanctuary' with local refugee supporting organisations at the earliest opportunity and involve these organisations in the process from the start.

In June 2020 the City of Sanctuary Network voted at the AGM to dispense with the city-wide recognition process and to establish the Local Authority Network and the related Council of Sanctuary Award. Any local authority can become a formal member of this network, following a public commitment via a full council motion (or an informal member without a motion). To recognise the work undertaken by councils through the city-wide assessment, those councils can join as 'awarded' members but must then submit an application following the new recognition process.

A step by step guide is detailed below, but note that these steps need not be sequential and can take place in parallel:

Step 1 – The council publicly commits to joining the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network, and to work towards recognition as a 'Council of Sanctuary'. This can be via a [motion](#) at a public committee such as Council or Cabinet.

Step 2 – The council becomes a member of the [Local Authority Network](#) by signing the membership form. In joining the network the council is committing to work towards the 'Council of Sanctuary' Award and is agreeing to sign up as a Supporting Organisation (this

³ We use the term 'local authorities' to include all types of local government from across the whole of the UK e.g. county councils, districts, boroughs or city councils, unitary councils, London boroughs, combined authorities, metropolitan boroughs as well as parish and town councils.

includes an endorsement of the [City of Sanctuary Charter](#)).

Step 3 – The council engages with the City of Sanctuary local group (if one exists), local refugee organisations, and people with lived experience. Councils usually do this via existing partnership/multi-agency (Sanctuary) forums, or where such don't exist or don't undertake strategic work the council can set one up. (There is no one size fits all approach to engagement so please ask the City of Sanctuary UK officer for local authorities for good practice examples).

Step 4 - The council develops a strategy/framework for supporting people seeking sanctuary in the community by embedding 'Sanctuary' principles across council services and works to promote inclusion and welcome across the wider community. Councils usually develop [Sanctuary Strategies](#) either as a standalone or as part of an existing strategy. Councils can focus on reviewing/uplifting council services, or facilitate the development of a partnership strategy which includes services provided by a wider section of local stakeholders.

Step 5 – The council reviews the LEARN, EMBED and SHARE criteria set out below and ensures it meets them, and when ready, applies for recognition by submitting the council specific [Awards Application form](#).

Step 6 – The application will be appraised by a panel which will normally include members of the local City of Sanctuary group (if one exists), people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary, representatives from local refugee supporting organisations, and members of the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Steering Group (usually officers and/or councillors who have been through the process themselves). The panel assessment can be thought of as a peer review and usually results in a set of recommendations. Guidance regarding assessment panels can be found [here](#)

Step 7 - When a local authority is able to demonstrate that all of the minimum criteria are met, the council will be awarded a 'Council of Sanctuary' for a 3 year period, and will be given the right to use the 'Council of Sanctuary' logo to recognise their commitment accompanied by the wording:

"X....is a recognised County/District/Borough/City/Unitary/Parish/Town [delete as appropriate] Council of Sanctuary.

Step 8 – A plan should be made for the Award presentation to include an event/ media statement etc. to celebrate the achievement of the council (and local partners) in including and supporting people seeking sanctuary. *Please note that the small application fee must be paid before the Award is made public.*

Step 9 –The recommendations agreed during the appraisal process should be discussed and where possible taken forward during the three-year award period. This will inform a review (re-accreditation) at the end of the three years. A new application has to be submitted to renew the award after three years and if successful an updated certificate of recognition can be issued.

5. Minimum Criteria

This guidance aims to outline the minimum criteria required for the award. We would encourage local authorities to build on these in a way that best reflects their specific context.

Criterion 1: Pass a council motion setting out commitment to being a place of sanctuary, joining the Local authority Network and working toward the ‘Council of Sanctuary’ award at some point in the future.

Criterion 2: Join the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network which includes a pledge to support the vision of City of Sanctuary and an endorsement of its charter.

Criterion 3: Commit to working with the local City of Sanctuary group and/or other refugee supporting organisations and/or networks.

Criterion 4: Show evidence of the work with the local City of Sanctuary group (and/or other refugee organisations/networks) and receive the endorsement from those groups for the award application.

In addition to the **above criteria** all Sanctuary Awards follow the Learn, Embed and Share principles:

- **Learn:** learning about what it means to be seeking sanctuary, both in general, and specifically.
- **Embed:** taking positive action to embed concepts of welcome, safety and inclusion and ensuring this progress remains sustainable.
- **Share:** sharing your vision, achievements, what you have learned, and good practice with other local authorities, the local community and beyond.

The ‘Learn, Embed and Share’ criteria specific to councils are outlined below:

5.1. Learn Criteria

The LEARN element encompasses any activity that seeks to improve awareness of the sanctuary-seeking community and the reasons why people are forced to migrate. Knowledge of the asylum system or of the many challenges and institutional barriers which face people seeking sanctuary can help officers and members to reflect on how they might help and better focus their efforts. This is often best achieved by including people seeking sanctuary and finding ways to learn from them as well as about refugee issues more broadly. To receive an award, the local authority must meet the following LEARN criteria:

Criterion 5: Awareness raising opportunities are provided, and opportunities for discussion around the theme of welcome and sanctuary are facilitated on a community level. This can be via partnership/multi-agency forums

Criterion 6: Evidence of refugee/asylum/migration awareness raising is included into everyday business of the local authority e.g. staff induction/training.

Criterion 7: Commitment to platform and amplify the **voices of people seeking sanctuary**. This can be by including people with lived experience on 'sanctuary forums' or by ensuring meaningful engagement on strategy development.

5.2. Embed Criteria

For City of Sanctuary UK, 'embedding' means that the local authority is taking positive action to implement welcome, safety and inclusion within services and beyond. City of Sanctuary UK would like details on how the local authority will ensure a continuation of support for sanctuary on an ongoing basis. To receive an award, the local authority must meet the following 'embed' criteria:

Criterion 8: Produce a written strategy (either a standalone strategy or as part of a broader strategy e.g. equality, migration etc.) which is publicly available and sets out commitment of the council for at least three years. This should be **co-produced** as far as possible with people seeking sanctuary and organisations representing them.

- As part of the strategy the council should also **have a clear and transparent plan to support people with NRPF.**

Criterion 9: The local authority must **demonstrate how it has embedded the concepts of welcome and inclusion across the organisation.** This should show how the local authority will continue to develop and sustain a culture of welcome beyond the award. Councils often develop internal officer groups bringing together heads of service (or team leads) from various service areas that oversee the delivery of the strategy.

Criterion 10: The council is able to demonstrate a commitment to being an anti-racist organisation and has policies and practice in place that align to their work to become a 'Council of Sanctuary'.

5.3. Share Criteria

City of Sanctuary UK will be seeking evidence that the council shares its experience of sanctuary and welcome with the wider community, local organisations and spreading the word about their welcoming efforts. To receive an award, the local authority must meet the following criteria:

Criterion 11: The local authority publicly highlights its work in support of welcome and inclusion by making it visible on its website and noticeboards NB. Once the sanctuary award is received, we would expect the logo and a link to the webpage on the website.

Criterion 12: Commitment to supporting initiatives that embeds welcome and fosters solidarity between receiving communities and people seeking sanctuary e.g. participation in Refugee Week or other cultural events. As well as promoting sanctuary principles among local statutory and voluntary sector partners.

Criterion 13: Commitment to on-going engagement with the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network. This may include sharing resources, ideas and achievements via the network and City of Sanctuary UK website.

Criterion 14: Work with the national Local Authority network and local partners to identify national policy issues in order to make collective representations to the government to encourage and enable change via contributing to consultations, position statements etc.

6. How to complete your application form?

Your written application needs to include:

- Evidence which demonstrates how the local authority has used the three principles of the process: learn, embed and share and how through following the process the values and principles in the charter are being upheld.
- Evidence can be collected in a variety of ways and can include self- evaluation, photos and testimony, strategic plans, training records, policies and procedures and through consulting with people seeking sanctuary.

- Applications should be concise and focused, including supporting evidence via links or an additional document.

Q: Please provide a summary of how the local authority engages with people seeking sanctuary.

In this section, outline the ways the local authority has engaged with people seeking sanctuary. What schemes is the council participating in? Is the council commissioning any service providers to support people seeking sanctuary. How has the local authority sought to build relationships with local people seeking sanctuary and organisations that work and representing people seeking sanctuary.

Q: Using the 3 principles of the sanctuary award, please reflect on how you have achieved these principles attaching evidence to support your answer.

Here we are looking for evidence of initiatives, projects, policies and progress. Even if something is ongoing, include it as it helps to build a picture of how the local authority is developing its culture of welcome. Try to be concise but don't assume that the appraisal panel has the requisite knowledge (so please explain all acronyms and give context where necessary).

Report to:	Active Health and Communities Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 September 2025
Subject:	Crotlieve Multi-Sports Hub Review
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Conor Haughey, Assistant Director Healthy Living
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Conor Haughey, Assistant Director Healthy Living

For decision	x	For noting only	
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	<u>Purpose</u> To provide members with an update on the progress made since the 2021 on the <i>Multi-Sports Facilities Review for Outdoor Leisure</i> in relation to Crotlieve DEA, and to seek approval to progress future partnership working and investment priorities for association football, Gaelic games, and rugby. <u>Background</u> In 2021, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council commissioned a district-wide <i>Multi-Sports Facilities Review for Outdoor Leisure</i>. The purpose was to: • Audit the existing sports pitch provision across the district, • Assess condition and levels of use across eight core sports: association football, athletics, cricket, Gaelic games, hockey, lawn bowls, rugby, and water sports. • Provide an evidence-based <i>Sports Hub Strategy</i> with recommendations for each sport and for each District Electoral Area (DEA). The 2021 review concluded that there was a significant under-supply of playing facilities in the Crotlieve DEA, particularly for Gaelic games, rugby, and association football, especially regarding training needs. An update of the Facilities Review was undertaken earlier this year, in order to: • Reconsider the facility needs for association football, Gaelic games, and rugby within Crotlieve DEA, • Assess progress made since 2021 in addressing under-supply, • Consider club-led developments, Council partnerships, and school/community projects that have emerged. This update recognises that while significant progress has been achieved, opportunities remain to strengthen provision and to ensure a sustainable balance between club-led growth and wider community access.
2.0	Key issues
2.1	Since 2021, significant voluntary sector investment and Council partnerships have progressed a number of facility developments across Crotlieve DEA: • St Peter's GAC, Warrenpoint – Completion of a second full-sized pitch, addressing immediate demand for training and fixtures.

	• Ballyholland Harps GAC – In development of a second grass pitch, new changing block, walking track, access and parking improvements. • Saval GAC – Purchased Nan Sands Park (former football pitch) to expand club provision for youth training and matches. • St Mary's GAC, Burren – Successfully constructed a third playing surface, supporting rapid growth in female teams. • St Bronagh's GAC, Rostrevor – Planning permission was secured for a second grass pitch, contrary to planning officer's recommendation on the proposal of Councillors, on the basis that the development was essential for the survival / growth of the club and the entire community of Rostrevor and was an exception to policy. A planning application has also been submitted for a 3G small training pitch. • Newry Rugby Club – Secured a long-term lease on adjacent Council-owned land, enabling plans for new rugby pitches to meet membership growth. • St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint – Proposal to deliver a community-accessible 3G pitch, relieving pressure on local Gaelic games and football clubs. Outstanding needs and gaps that have been identified, include: • Continued shortage of all-weather 3G training provision, restricting evening and winter training. • Female participation growth requires enhanced changing, toilet, and ancillary provision across several clubs. • Rugby remains constrained until Newry Rugby Club's new land is developed into playable pitches. • Greater emphasis needed on shared community access agreements to ensure wider public benefit beyond club membership. Council will continue to support partnership working with clubs in the Crotlieve DEA to progress facility development aligned to community need via Councils financial assistance programs. Officers will progress proposals for increasing the funding allocated to Sports Clubs via the Sports Capital Financial Assistance programmes, as part of the rates process. The delivery of a Multi-Sports Hub has not yet been progressed, however there is an opportunity to consider a partnership agreement with St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint for the development of the Multi-Sports Hub provision, which could replicate the successful partnership between Council, the Department of Education and Shimna College in the delivery of the Donard Park Multi-Sports Hub. The St Mark's High School site had planning permission for an all-weather pitch which lapsed in 2015. A review of the site has confirmed that there is an opportunity to develop the MSH proposal in partnership between St Mark's and NMDDC.
3.0	Recommendations

3.1	It is recommended that members note the updated Multi-Sports Facilities Review for Crotlieve DEA, and grant approval for: 1. Council to enter a partnership agreement with St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint to progress the development of an all-weather multi-sport hub utilising the allocated Sports Facility Capital Budget for Crotlieve DEA, including the appointment of a Design Team to progress the project to planning stage. 2. Officers to continue to engage Newry Rugby Club to assist with the delivery of new rugby pitches at Telford Park.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	A Capital budget of £500,000 for the development of a Multi-Sports Facility in Crotlieve DEA has been agreed and is profiled in Council's Capital Programme.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation – N/a</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)

6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐ If no, please complete the following: The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs ☐
7.0	Appendices
	Appendix 1 - Multi-Sports Facilities Review 2025 – Crotlieve DEA
8.0	Background Documents
	N/a

Multi-Sports Facilities Review 2025

Crotlieve DEA



9 September 2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2021 Newry, Mourne and Down District Council commissioned a district-wide Multi-Sports Facilities Review – Outdoor Leisure. The aim of the review was to *‘prepare an overall sport pitch audit inclusive of a sports hub strategy to provide the appropriate evidence-based research to identify the need and provide a series of comprehensive recommendations.’* The facilities under consideration were for the sports of association football, athletics, cricket, gaelic games, hockey, lawn bowls, rugby, water sports. The review was conducted in two parts; the first part was a pitch condition survey and audit of all sports clubs across the eight sports, the second part was a strategy (including recommendations) for each sport and for each District Electoral Area (DEA).
- 1.2 This current review (2025), commissioned by the Council, is to reconsider the need for pitches in Crotlieve DEA for association football, gaelic games and rugby. The review is prompted by recent and ongoing developments across Crotlieve DEA that have significantly progressed the availability of facilities for these three sports since 2021. Whilst key opportunities remain to be supported, the previously identified under-supply of facilities is beginning to be addressed through a combination of voluntary sector investment and Council partnerships.
- 1.3 Crotlieve is one the seven DEAs that make up the district of Newry, Mourne and Down.



Within the district Crotlieve DEA is bounded by the DEAs of Slieve Gullion, Newry and The Mournes. Hilltown is in the east of Crotlieve DEA, approximately nine miles road distance from Newry City; Rostrevor is in the south of Crotlieve DEA, approximately 12 miles road distance from Newry City. To the north of Crotlieve DEA is Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough where the nearest large town to Newry is Banbridge, approximately 14 miles road distance. Crotlieve DEA is land-bound on three sides but has a coastline to the south which takes in Warrenpoint and Rostrevor.

2. Crotlieve DEA in 2021

Adequacy of Provision

2.1 The 2021 audit process, which involved survey work, site inspections and consultation with sports groups, resulted in identification of need for each sport. Need was assessed for association football, gaelic games and rugby through analysis of adequacy of provision following a Sport England methodology, 'Towards a Level Playing Field: Playing Pitch Model'. The following table presents a summary of adequacy of provision in 2021 expressed as 'facility shortfall – yes/no' for the three sports in Crotlieve DEA.

2.2 This summary shows that:



For association football there are sufficient pitches for adult matches and a small shortfall for youth matches. However, for training (1 hour slots Monday to Thursday evenings) there is a shortfall of one hour slots. The shortfall in training provision is not untypical of provision in other local authority areas. There are four association football clubs in Crotlieve DEA, fielding six adult and 42 youth/junior teams, a total of 697 players; there are eight association football pitches in Crotlieve DEA, comprising six full size grass pitches, one small grass pitch and one small 3G pitch.



For gaelic games there is a shortfall of three pitches. Gaelic games pitches tend to be used for training and matches. There are nine gaelic games clubs in Crotlieve DEA, fielding 38 adult and 185 youth/junior teams, a total of 3,398 players; there are 21 gaelic games pitches in Crotlieve DEA, comprising 16 full size grass pitches and five small grass pitches.



For rugby there is an over-supply of one pitch and an under-supply of pitches for training. there is one rugby club in Crotlieve DEA, fielding two adult and nine youth/junior teams, a total of 155 players; the rugby club has two grass pitches.

**Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Multi-Sports Facilities Review – Crotlieve DEA**



Adequacy of Provision – Crotlieve DEA in 2021

Sport	Adequacy of Provision	Facility Shortfall?
Association Football – Matches	Adult plus 3 pitches; Youth minus 1 pitch	Yes
Association Football – Training	Minus 13 one-hour slots	Yes
Gaelic Games	Minus 3 pitches	Yes
Rugby	Matches plus 1 pitch; Training shortfall	Yes

Population

- 2.3** Crotlieve DEA has a total population of 28,770¹ or 15.7% of the district's population, mostly located in the following settlements:

Settlement Hierarchy/Classification	Settlement Name
Tier 1 City and main town	None
Tier 2 Local and small town	Warrenpoint/Burren
Tier 3 Village	Rostrevor Hilltown Mayobridge Ballyholland
Tier 4 Small settlement	Sheeptown

- 2.4** The age profile of Crotlieve DEA residents shows higher percentages in the three age categories up to 65 years of age than in the district as a whole and a lower percentage, by 2.2 percentage points, in the 65+ age category; this is shown in the following table:

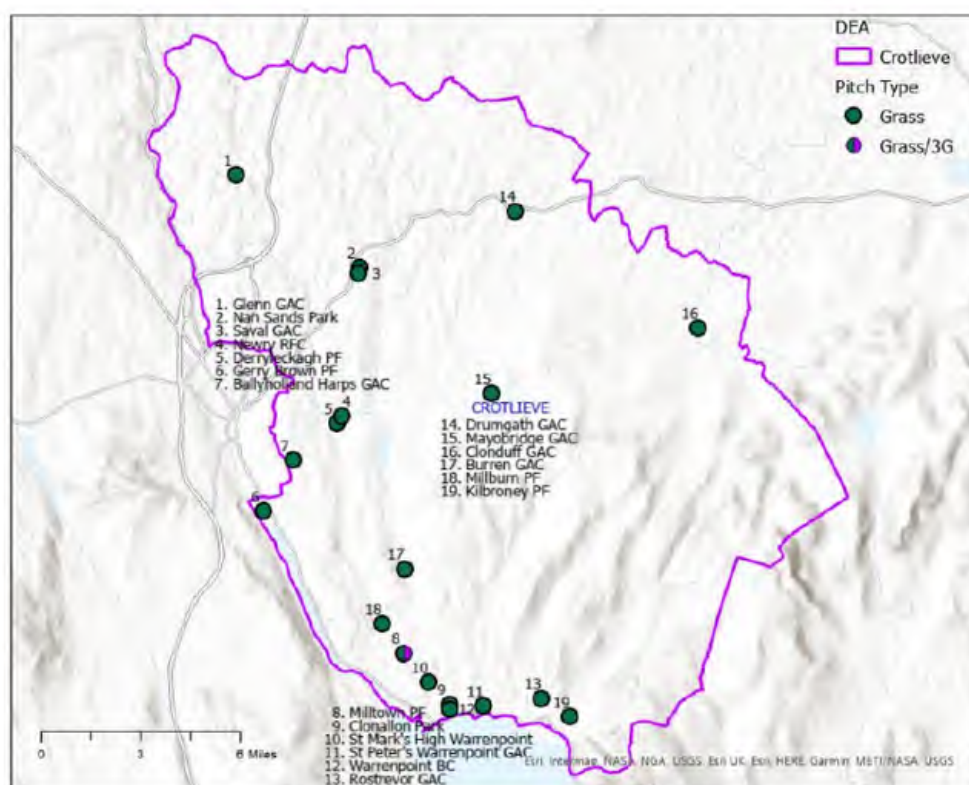
Crotlieve DEA in 2021			NMDDC	
Age	Population	% of Population	Population	% of Population
0-15 yrs	6,670	23.3	40,972	22.6
16-29 yrs	8,730	30.3	53,608	29.6
40-64 yrs	9,420	32.7	57,965	31.9
65+ yrs	3,950	13.7	29,124	15.9
Totals	28,770	100%	181,669	100%

Facilities

- 2.5** Map 2.1 shows the distribution of facilities for pitch-based sports across Crotlieve DEA.

¹ NISRA 2021.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Multi-Sports Facilities Review – Crotlieve DEA



Map 2.1: Crotlieve DEA – Distribution of Facilities

- 2.6** The following table presents a summary of all facilities in Crotlieve DEA across the three sports being considered in this review. These three sports account for all 'pitch-based' facilities in Crotlieve DEA²; 65% of all facilities service gaelic games, 25% service association football, 6% service rugby.

Crotlieve DEA – Facilities in 2021					
	Grass		3G		Total
	Full	Small	Full	Small	
Association Football	6	1	-	1	8
Gaelic Games	16	5	-	-	21
Rugby	2	-	-	-	2
Totals	24	6	-	1	31

Facility Ownership

- 2.7** The following table presents a summary of the ownership of facilities for the three sports, categorised as (i) club/community, (ii) education, (iii) NMDDC.

² Except one lawn bowls facility.

**Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Multi-Sports Facilities Review – Crotlieve DEA**



Crotlieve DEA – Facilities Ownership in 2021							
	Grass			ATP			
	Assoc Football	Gaelic Games	Rugby	Assoc Football	Gaelic Games	Rugby	Totals
Club/Community	-	15	2	1	-	-	18
Education	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
NMDDC	7	4	-	-	-	-	11
Totals	7	21	2	1	-	-	31

2.8 Gaelic games clubs own 15 of the 32 pitches across all three sports whilst the Council owns 11.

Facilities Inventory

2.9 The following table presents an inventory of facilities for the three sports under four categories; (i) Council, (ii) Education, (iii) Leased from Council, (iv) Club/Community.

Crotlieve DEA – Facilities Inventory in 2021			
Ownership	Facility Name	Quantity/Type	Sport
Council	Clonallon Park	1 x Full Grass	Association Football
	Derryleckagh PF	2 x Full Grass 1 x Full Grass	Association Football Gaelic Games
	Kilbroney PF	1 x Training Grass 1 x SSG Grass	Gaelic Games Association Football
	Millburn PF	1 x Training Grass	Gaelic Games
	Nan Sands Park	1 x Full Grass	Association Football
	Warrenpoint BC	1 x Grass Green	Lawn Bowls
School/Public body	St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint	2 x Full Grass 1 x Training Grass	Gaelic Games
Leased from Council	Gerry Brown PF	1 x Full Grass	Gaelic Games – Newry Mitchel's GAC
	Milltown PF	1 x Full Grass	Association Football – Warrenpoint Town FC
Club/Community	Warrenpoint Town FC	1 x SSG 3G	Association Football
	Ballyholland Harps GAC	1 x Full Grass	Gaelic Games
	St Mary's GAC, Burren	2 x Full Grass	Gaelic Games
	Clonduff GAC	2 x Full Grass 1 x Training Grass	Gaelic Games
	Drumgath GAC	1 x Full Grass	Gaelic Games
	Glenn GAC	1 x Full Grass	Gaelic Games
	Mayobridge GAC	2 x Full Grass 1 x Training Grass	Gaelic Games
	St Bronagh's GAC, Rostrevor	1 x Full Grass	Gaelic Games
	Saval GAC	2 x Full Grass	Gaelic Games
	St Peter's GAC, Warrenpoint	1 x Full Grass	Gaelic Games
	Newry RFC	1 x Full Grass	Rugby

Clubs Profile

2.10 The following table and Figure 2.1 present a profile of the teams and players in the clubs in Crotlieve DEA across the three sports. The profile shows that gaelic games accounts for 80% of players, association football accounts for 16% and rugby accounts for 4%.

Crotlieve DEA – Clubs, Teams, Players in 2021									
Sport	No of Clubs	Junior Teams		Adult Teams		Total Teams		Total Players	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Association Football	4	42	18%	6	13%	48	17%	697	16%
Gaelic Games	9	185	78%	38	83%	223	79%	3,398	80%
Rugby	1	9	4%	2	4%	11	4%	155	4%
Totals	14	236	100%	46	100%	282	100%	4,250	100%

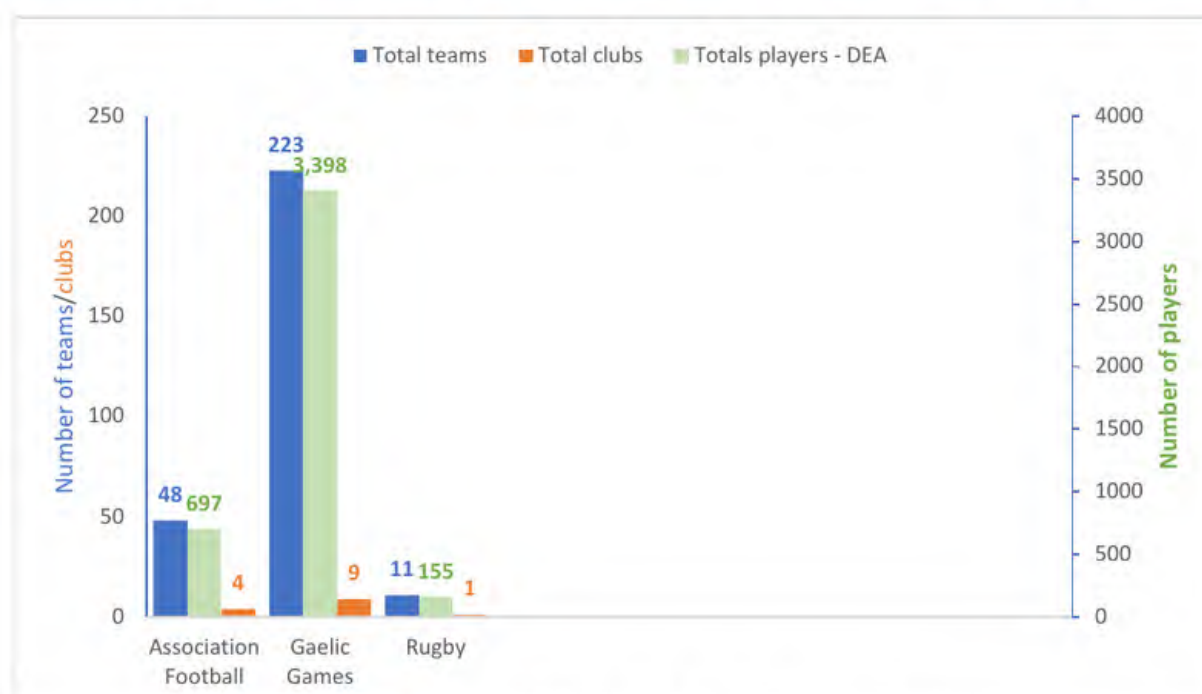


Figure 2.1: Crotlieve DEA – Clubs, Teams, Players in 2021

2.11 The profile of clubs in these three sports across the district in 2021 is as follows:

Newry, Mourne and Down – Clubs, Teams, Players in 2021									
Sport	No of Clubs	Male Teams		Female Teams		Total Teams		Total Players	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Association Football	49	366	89%	46	11%	412	27%	6,618	28%
Gaelic Games	50	614	57%	465	43%	1,079	71%	16,520	70%
Rugby	2	26	90%	3	10%	29	2%	527	2%
Totals	101	1,006	-	514	-	1,520	-	23,665	100%

Recommendation in 2021

- 2.12** The research and consultation carried out in 2021 informed recommendations for each sport across the district. Five strategic recommendations, collectively covering association football, gaelic games and rugby were put forward; one of these recommendations included development in Crotlieve DEA:

Council should continue to encourage and support additional multi-sport provision across the district via the Council's Sport and Community Leasing Policy and Financial Assistance Programme with a weighting system considered to prioritise these types of projects. This process should be considered to designate multi-sports hub provision for Slieve Gullion, Crotlieve, Slieve Croob and Rowallane DEAs.

- 2.13** A further set of recommendations entitled 'Approach to Investment' and specific to each DEA was put forward. The following recommendation was presented for Crotlieve DEA:

Project	Multi-sports pitch
Adequacy of Provision	Gaelic games has an under-supply of 3 pitches, association football has an under-supply of 13 one-hour periods/slots for training and rugby has an under-supply for training. There are 9 gaelic games clubs, 4 association football clubs and 1 rugby club in Crotlieve DEA.
Perceived Benefit	A multi-sports pitch in Newry has the potential to assist the training requirements of the three 'large ball' field sports.
Other Factors	The Council is proposing to develop an association football grass pitch and a gaelic games grass pitch at its Kilbroney Playing Fields site; this will help address matches and perhaps some training during daylight hours. Presently, sports clubs within Crotlieve DEA tend to travel into Newry to access training facilities; in the case of Newry Rugby Club which is located in Crotlieve DEA but close to Newry city, the club uses the 3G pitch at St Colman's College and the Council's AstroTurf training-size pitch at the Ropewalk site.
Summary Comments	The Council is proceeding with a re-development project at its Kilbroney Playing Fields site, providing a full-size gaelic games pitch and an association football pitch, both grass, along with changing accommodation.

3. Crotlieve DEA in 2025

3.1 From 2021 to 2025 a number of club-led facility developments have been progressed, as follows:

- ❖ **St Peter's GAC, Warrenpoint.** In 2021 St Peter's GAC had secured planning permission for a full size grass gaelic games pitch, located beside their existing pitch, and changing accommodation. The club's membership is increasing and a single pitch is not able to adequately address present and future needs. In 2021 the club noted the following:

The club has secured planning permission for a full-sized grass pitch at the Pony Field beside its existing main pitch at Pairc Liam Ui Ir Moygannon and has also secured planning permission for four new dressing rooms and related support service activity (e.g. male, female and disabled toilets; referees rooms, kit /equipment rooms , physio and first aid facilities, team meeting and gym room) which will facilitate male, female and disabled athletes. In addition to service growing needs for recreation and healthy lifestyle needs for younger and older age groups including disabled persons, a new walking track is planned. To enhance safety a new entrance and additional parking has received full planning permission. As highlighted earlier, for a growing club attracting increasing numbers and teams, the current pitch and dressing room facilities are totally inadequate in the context of need.

St Peter's GAC has now completed construction of their second pitch, increasing local match and training provision.

- ❖ **Ballyholland Harps GAC.** This club is in the process of developing a second full size grass gaelic games pitch. Here's what they said in 2021:

The club has a single full-sized pitch, which is currently unable to accommodate all our under-age and senior teams training and fixtures during the playing season March-October, both Gaelic football and camogie. This constraint is further exacerbated by inadequate floodlighting at our club grounds. The club rely on renting council facilities and local school facilities to provide pitches for training and/or matches. The club membership continues to increase annually due to demand. We anticipate another challenging three years to provide venues for our membership. The club has difficulties in booking adequate venues and also paying the increasing fees for these. The situation has also been made more difficult due to pandemic restrictions.

- ❖ **Saval GAC.** This club has two full-sized grass pitches, one assessed by the club as *good* quality, the other as *standard*. The club has purchased an association football pitch from the Council at Nan Sands in order to develop a grass pitch for under-age training and competition. At 34 teams (GoGames, youth adult) in 2022 Saval GAC is twice the size, in terms of teams, of the average gaelic games club in the district; only three clubs have more teams. In 2021 the club expressed an interest in improved floodlighting and an artificial turf pitch.
- ❖ **St Mary's GAC, Burren.** This club, with 26 teams, is one of the larger gaelic games clubs in Crotlieve DEA. In 2021 the club reported the need for a third playing surface and were in the process of purchasing a field adjacent to their two pitches. Growth in player numbers was noted as coming from female teams at all ages; their survey return recorded the same number of female and male teams in the Under 7 to Under 10 and in the Under 11 to Under 18 age categories, with one female adult team to three male adult teams. In 2021 the club also noted:

Our club facilities are also in demand for County Board senior and juvenile activities, GGA and LGFA. Because of our location (close to Newry) we also try to facilitate schools and university games.

Since 2021, St Mary's GAC has successfully constructed a new pitch, further strengthening infrastructure for community sport in Crotlieve DEA.

- ❖ **St Bronagh's GAC, Rostrevor.** In 2021 eight of St Bronagh's 15 teams were youth teams (Under 11 to Under 18), evenly split between male and female. The club then and today operate on a single grass pitch. Back in 2021 the club stated:

While we currently have plans to develop a second pitch, this is currently in the early stages. Looking forward with club growth in mind, even with a second pitch this will still see us under-developed in terms of facilities. Currently our senior teams (one ladies team, two men's teams) are forced to train as late as 10.00pm to facilitate evening training and matches for our under-age groups. With that too in some cases our under-age girls and boys have had to get changed at the side of bushes in Kilbroney Park. During the winter months our pitch is prone to flooding – this renders us unable to use our own facility. This generates additional expense to the club (in hiring off-site facilities) and in many cases forces teams to train or play on substandard facilities or not able to train at all.

The club welcomed the 'vital development of Kilbroney Park for all locals to avail of'. The club has been successful in obtaining planning permission to construct a second

grass pitch – full size – at their Drumsesk ground. The club has also recently submitted a planning application relating to the development of a 3G training pitch to the rear of their clubhouse in Rostrevor.

- ❖ **Newry Rugby Club.** There are two rugby clubs in the district, Newry Rugby Club and Ballynahinch Rugby Club. Newry Rugby Club, Telford park is in Crotlieve DEA, close to Newry city. The club has two full-sized grass pitches, one assessed as *standard* quality the other as *poor*. In 2021, the club had six teams at Under 7 to Under 12, three teams at Under 13 to Under 18 and two adult teams; all the club's players were male. The club reported that membership growth was being constrained by having only two grass pitches and that they aspire to having a third pitch at their Telford Park site. They address this constraint by hiring the 3G pitch at St Colman's College and the AstroTurf pitch at The Ropewalk for mid-week training; neither pitch is marked for rugby. The club's development plan notes their intention to '*acquire an additional field for our expanding club*'. Since 2021 Newry Rugby Club has negotiated a long term lease on Council-owned land. This will enable the club to move forward with the development of additional rugby pitches.

3.2 Developments since 2021 in summary:

- ❖ **St Peter's GAC, Warrenpoint** has completed construction of their second pitch, increasing local match and training provision.
- ❖ **Ballyholland Harps GAC** is in the process of developing a second full-size grass gaelic games pitch.
- ❖ **Saval GAC** has purchased an association football pitch from the Council at Nan Sands Park.
- ❖ **St Mary's GAC, Burren** has constructed a new pitch, further strengthening infrastructure for community sport in Crotlieve DEA.
- ❖ **St Bronagh's GAC, Rostrevor** has obtained planning permission to construct a second full-size grass gaelic games pitch. The club has also submitted a planning application relating to the development of a 3G training pitch to the rear of their clubhouse.
- ❖ **Newry Rugby Club** (located in Crotlieve DEA) has negotiated a long term lease on Council land, enabling the club to move forward with the development of improved provision for rugby.
- ❖ **St Mark's High School, Rostrevor** proposes to develop a 3G pitch at the school site, further relieving pressure on existing gaelic games and association football pitches through community use of the pitch.

Association Football

3.3 There are seven grass pitches for association football in Crotlieve DEA:

Location	Quantity/Type	Quality	Remarks
Clonallon Park	1 grass	Standard	Booked by the Carnbane League – there is also a bowling club, play park, basketball court and Trim Trail.
Derryleckagh Playing Fields	2 grass	1 Standard 1 Good	Home ground to Windmill Stars FC and Church Street FC. The pitches are known as Willie Davis pitch and Olympic Park. The Carnbane League and Mid Ulster League have seasonal lease agreements. Car parking has been recently upgraded.
Kilbroney Playing Fields	1 grass (youth size 83mx64m)	Standard	Pitch sloped and approximately eight minute walk from car park. Home ground to Rossowen FC (in 2021 Rossowen FC recorded 11 youth teams and one adult team, all male players). There is also a training size gaelic games pitch (114m x 74m) adjacent to the association football pitch and, two polymeric tennis courts closer to the car park.
Millburn Playing Fields	1 grass	Standard	No changing/toilets. Hired seasonally by the Carnbane League for matches once a fortnight.
Milltown Playing Fields	1 grass	Standard	Leased to Warrenpoint FC.
Nan Sands Park	1 grass	Good	Rural location next to Saval GAC.

4. Revised Strategic Recommendations for Crotlieve DEA

4.1 Despite recent and ongoing developments, key gaps in multi-sport provision persist especially in relation to accessible match and training venues for association football, gaelic games and rugby across rural areas. Gaps also persist in access arrangements and infrastructure at Council sites. Revised strategic recommendations look to address these gaps in Crotlieve DEA while taking account of club-based developments achieved since 2021 and developments that are being progressed. The approach to investment noted in each of the priority projects described below follows the three-tier approach created for the 2021 report, that is:



4.2 These priority projects comprise the revised strategic recommendations for association football, gaelic games, multi-sports and rugby, as follows:

Sport	Project/Action	Rationale	Investment Approach
Association Football	Upgrade the association football pitch at Kilbroney Playing Fields. - Carry out a full pitch surface refurbishment and subsequent improved maintenance programme, resulting in a better standard surface throughout the playing season.. - Replace goal posts. - Install 1.2m pitch surround fencing.	The existing pitch at Kilbroney is not fit for purpose due to poor drainage, sub-standard goalposts, lack of spectator standing and fencing. This investment will create a sustainable, high quality facility that meets demand and aligns with feedback from planners.	Approach 1 – Council investing in its own facilities.

**Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Multi-Sports Facilities Review – Crotlieve DEA**

Sport	Project/Action	Rationale	Investment Approach
	- Create a formal standing area for spectators. - Council will scope the possibility of delivering changing facilities within Kilbroney Park for users of the grass pitches.		
Gaelic Games	St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint. Enter a partnership agreement with St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint to progress the development of an all-weather multi-sport hub utilising the allocated Sports Facility Capital Budget for Crotlieve DEA, including the appointment of a Design Team to progress the project to planning stage.	The delivery of a Multi-Sports Hub has not yet been progressed, however, there is an opportunity to enter a partnership agreement with St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint for the development of the Multi-Sports Hub provision, which could replicate the successful partnership between Council, the Department of Education and Shimna College in the delivery of the Donard Park Multi-Sports Hub. The site had planning permission for an all-weather pitch which has lapsed.	Approach 2 – Council investing in sports facilities in partnership with other statutory organisations.
Rugby	Support Newry Rugby Club's access to Council facilities. Create a pedestrian walkway through the Derryleckagh complex, linking the rugby clubs leased pitch area to the Council's existing car park at the soccer/gaelic games facility.	The improved access will alleviate parking pressures, increase safety for young players and spectators and strengthen the club's use of Council facilities leased to them. It will enable the club to proceed with pitch upgrade planning approvals and help address under-supply for rugby training.	Approach 3 (i) strengthening the lease agreement between the Council and the club.

Funding Allocation

- 4.3** To deliver on these projects the Council has allocated £500,000 in its capital programme. This allocation reflects a balanced and strategic investment that supports both Council-owned and partner-led sports infrastructure improvements within Crotlieve DEA.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1** The 2021 audit highlighted that the shortfall in pitches for matches was mostly experienced in gaelic games, however, developments since then by Ballyholland GAC, Saval GAC, St Mary's GAC (Burren) and Clonduff GAC have greatly improved provision for gaelic games. Yet there remains a need across all three sports for training facilities. The Council's proposed improvements at Kilbroney Playing Fields to the gaelic games pitch and association football pitch, with both pitches continuing as grass surfaces, will not address the need for training facilities in the Rostrevor/Warrenpoint area. St Mark's High School's proposed development of a 3G pitch will, through community use, address the need for training facilities in the area.
- 5.2** These updates and recommendations reflect a strategic and evidence-based response to evolving facility needs and developments within Crotlieve DEA. Taken together the projects maximise the benefit of the investment amount in terms of the number of participants, estimated to be in the region of 1,100 to 1,500 players across the three sports. The Council's continued commitment to working with sports clubs through three approaches to investment – (i) direct provision by Council; (ii) partnership; (iii) support for community-led projects – is essential to delivering equitable and sustainable sports infrastructure across the diverse area of Crotlieve DEA.

9 September 2025

Otium Leisure Consultancy

Report to:	Active Health and Communities Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 September 2025
Subject:	Upgrade to Pitches at Kilbroney Park, Rostrevor
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Conor Haughey, Assistant Director Healthy Living
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Declan Crilly, Head of Outdoor Leisure

<table><tr><td>For decision</td><td>x</td><td>For noting only</td><td></td></tr></table>		For decision	x	For noting only	
For decision	x	For noting only			
1.0	Purpose and Background				
1.1	<u>Purpose</u> To update members on the status of the proposed upgrade of the existing soccer pitch and construction of a new grass Gaelic pitch at Kilbroney Park, Rostrevor; and to seek approval on the next steps for the project. <u>Background</u> A planning application for the development of the sports pitches and a changing pavilion at Kilbroney Forest Park was submitted in April 2021. Since that time the scheme has been subject to various design changes as a result of feedback received through the planning process (see appendix 1 – timeline). Correspondence received from Council’s Planning Department in December 2024 (appendix 2) indicated that the proposal fails a number of planning policy tests and further information is required, including a revised CEMP, Tree details, further bat survey information, Habitat Retention and Compensation Measures report as well as a Preliminary Ecology Appraisal. The extent of additional work required cannot yet be quantified to address the issues raised by NIEA & failure of planning policy tests. An initial expenditure of c£20-30,000 is required, with further surveys to be fully defined and costed following ‘initial identification surveys.’ To date est. £120,000 has been spent on progressing the scheme through the planning process. The estimated total delivery costs for the scheme was £2.2 million in 2024. Advancing the scheme in its current format may present financial, legal and reputational risks to Council.				
2.0	Key Issues				
2.1	• Kilbroney Park currently accommodates one soccer pitch and a small GAA kick-about area. • Proposals were submitted to upgrade the soccer pitch and provide a new full-size grass Gaelic pitch in April 2021. • A pavilion originally proposed has since been withdrawn following planning concerns. Officers are currently reviewing how this aspect of the proposal could be delivered separately. • c£120,000 has been expended on design fees and surveys, etc to date.				

	NIEA formally requested: • Revised Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). • Tree survey/retention details. • Further bat survey information. • Habitat Retention and Compensation Measures (HRCM) report. • Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA). Additional costs to address these requirements are estimated at £20,000–£30,000. In December 2024 the Planning Department confirmed: • Ground Levels & Fill: Significant increase in levels and fill required with adverse impact on the Historic Parkland, Fairy Glen and AONB. • Policy Failures: Current proposals fail several policy tests: ◦ PPS2 (NH2, NH4, NH5, NH6) ◦ PPS6 (BH6) ◦ PPS8 (OS3) ◦ PPS21 (CTY1) • Even if NIEA requirements are met, this may not overcome policy and landscape objections. Finance & Resource Implications • c£120k costs expended to date. • Further est. £20–30k required to provide additional NIEA reports and surveys. • The estimated total delivery costs for the scheme was £2.2 million in 2024. Risk & Legal Implications • Financial Risk: Further spend of £20–30k unlikely to alter the Planning recommendation. • Legal: Council must demonstrate prudent use of public funds; approval unlikely due to overlapping protections (AONB, Historic Parkland, LLPA, Conservation Area boundary). • Reputational: ◦ Proceeding to Committee may result in public/stakeholder disappointment following refusal. ◦ Withdrawal risks criticism from sports bodies and local community groups. ◦ Continuing to invest despite policy failures could attract scrutiny.
3.0	Recommendations It is recommended that the Committee approve one of the proposed 3 options: 1. Allow the application to proceed to Planning Committee with no further work; 2. Commission further consultancy work, at an initial cost of £20-30k (further costs to be determined) in order to respond to NIEA issues, but fundamental planning policy objections will remain; 3. Withdraw the application and carry out upgrade works to current pitches within Permitted Development at an estimated cost of £300,000 and within this proposal a financial contribution would be available.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	The approved capital budget allowance for the scheme has been exhausted. To date c£120,000 has been spent on progressing the scheme through the planning process. The estimated total delivery costs for the scheme was £2.2 million in 2024.

5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☒ No ☐ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☒
5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation – N/a</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐ If no, please complete the following: The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs ☐

7.0	Appendices
	Appendix 1 – Scheme Timeline Appendix 2 – Correspondence received from Council’s Planning Department
8.0	Background Documents
	None

Appendix 1 – Scheme Timeline

Date	Event	Outcome
30 April 2021	Planning Application submitted	LA07/2021/0804/F see Appendix 1
1 September 2021	Planning request further information and raise concerns over loss of Trees and fauna	
4 October 2021	Alternative draft layout proposal submitted to planning for consideration	Alternative draft site layout and Pavilion details
November 2021 to March 2022	On going consultation with Statutory bodies and Planning	Various reports submitted to Planning
31 March 2022	Amended plans submitted to Planning	New drawings for site layout and Pavilion
April 2022	Planning consideration and consultation to proposed alternative layout	A new process of consultation with public and Statutory bodies
17 September 2022	Planning letter – Concerns over visual impact, Access & hours of operation / usage	Period of further Design consideration, surveys and reports by consultants.
31 March 2023	Information supplied to Planning	Response to planning letter Sept. 2022
6 September 2023	Additional information provided to Planning due to ecological time constraints	Consultant submitted updated drawing package to Planning.
October 2023	Information provided to Planning	Anticipated hours of operation and overall use by clubs.
10 November 2023	Meeting held with Planners	Council officers and Planning officials met to discuss status of application.
7 December 2023	Planning letter requesting further details and information	On going Design work and reports to be submitted.

22 January 2024	Meeting held with Planners	Meeting to discuss status of application. It was agreed to omit pavilion from this application and submit amended planning application.
1 May 2024	Amended plans submitted to Planning	Amended drawings submitted with pavilion omitted from this application and P1 form amended (proposal description and hours of usage amended).
16 October 2024	NIEA Consultation response received.	
9 December 2024	Correspondence received from planning highlighting issues with the current scheme.	
Since January 2025	Engagement ongoing with Crotlieve DEA Councillors, and a meeting held with representatives of St Bronagh's GAC and Rossowen FC to update on the status of the proposal.	

Appendix 2 – Correspondence from Planning December 2024

Sent: 09 December 2024 13:52

Subject: LA07/2021/0804/F

The Planning Department during processing of the application have raised a number of concerns in relation to proposals. Whilst it is acknowledged the efforts made by the Council to address these issues which subsequently resulted in amended plans/ proposal submitted before the Department in May 2024, this required a further period of consultation with statutory consultees.

Following this period of consultation NIEA have requested further information, this was forwarded to you on the 17th October 2024. The information required includes a revised CEMP, Tree details, further bat survey information, Habitat Retention and Compensation Measures (HRCM) report as well as a Preliminary Ecology Appraisal (PEA).

Given the passage of time the Planning Department now require this information to progress the application.

However, it should also be noted that the Planning Department still have remaining concerns in relation to the development due to significant increases in ground levels to facilitate development, the level of fill required with resultant negative impact upon the visual amenity and integrity of the Historic Parkland, Fairy Glen and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The proposals in its current form fail a number of policy tests which include the PPS2 (NH2, NH4, NH5 and NH6), PPS 6 (BH6), PPS8 (OS3) and PPS21 (CTY1). To overcome these concerns the Planning Department in addition to the NIEA comments require further amended plans/ information.

Given the concerns expressed and the level of further detailing/ information required by the Planning Department and the potential costs for the applicant to provide such. Even if the NIEA information is provided this may be insufficient to address not only the Planning Departments concerns but also those of NIEA.

I am seeking confirmation that you wish to provide the additional information required or consider whether or not it is prudent to continue with the application given that current proposals fail against a number of policy tests (that even if information/plans were provided the outcome may not be positive) and on this basis you may wish to consider withdrawal of the application.

Report to:	Active and Healthy Communities Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 September 2025
Subject:	District Electoral Area (DEA) Forums Update Report
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Alison Robb, Assistant Director: Community Development
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Martina Flynn, Head of Engagement

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either: -	
For decision	X For noting only
1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	Purpose - To note the report. - To consider and agree to approve the actions in the Action Sheets attached from the DEA Forum Private Meetings listed in 3.1 below. Background The information in Appendix 1 attached is provided to update the Committee on recent DEA activity and on activity planned to be undertaken by the DEAs.
2.0	Key issues
2.1	None.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	That the Committee: - ➤ Note the report. ➤ Agree to approve the actions in the Action Sheets attached for: - Newry DEA Forum Meeting held on 3 June 2025 - Downpatrick DEA Forum held on 12 August 2025 - Crotlieve DEA Forum Meeting held on 12 August 2025
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	Support and assistance from partners to deliver actions in the DEA Action Plans.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i>

	It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves. ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☒
7.0	Appendices
7.1	Action Sheets from – ➤ Newry DEA Forum Meeting held on 3 June 2025 ➤ Downpatrick DEA Forum held on 12 August 2025 ➤ Crotlieve DEA Forum Meeting held on 12 August 2025
8.0	Background Documents
8.1	None.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

**Action Sheet of Newry District Electoral Area (DEA) Forum Private Meeting
held on 3 June 2025 at 1.00pm in Newry Leisure Centre**

- Chairperson:** Councillor Aidan Mathers
- In Attendance:** Councillor Valerie Harte
- Independent Members:** Raymond Jackson, Confederation of Community Groups
Eamonn Connolly, Newry Business Improvement District
Allison Slater, Bolster Community
Ann Grant, County Down Rural Community Network
Paul McGuinness, NR Partnership
- Council Officials:** Kerri Morrow, Community Engagement & Development Manager
- Others in Attendance:** Josephine Morgan, NIHE
Aisling Piers, NIHE
Pauline McQuillan, EA Youth Service
- Apologies:** Colin Hanna, Newry & Mourne Enterprise Agency
Councillor Geraldine Kearns
Thelma Thompson, Altnaveigh House Trust
Claire Crainey, NIHE

ITEM	SUBJECT	DECISION	FOR COMPLETION – including actions taken/date completed or progress to date if not yet completed
DEA/N/2025/1	Declarations of Interest	No declarations made.	COMPLETED.
DEA/N/2025/2	Matters arising from Action Sheet from meeting held 1 May 2025	Action sheet confirmed as a true and accurate record.	Approved.
DEA/N/2025/3	DEA Co-ordinator's Report	DEA Co-ordinator's update report given.	Noted.
DEA/N/2025/4	Patrick Street site	Update requested in relation to current D1 process.	Engagement & Development Manager to progress.
DEA/N/2025/5	Pride of Place	DEA Coordinator confirm that Davina's Ark had been nominated to represent NMDDC under the City Category for Community Wellbeing.	Co-ordinator to circulate details of the judging schedule in relation to the nomination.
DEA/N/2025/6	Peace Plus	Update on Newry Peace Plus Projects provided. Changemakers Grant funding information to be circulated for information.	Co-ordinator to circulate.
DEA/N/2025/7	Co-ordinators Report	Co-ordinator reported on recent and upcoming activity including Wildlife in the City, Muslim Family Festival and Seniors Programme in partnership with Neighbourhood Renewal.	Noted.

DEA/N/2025/8	Member Update.	Members provided updates as follows: Eamonn Connolly (Newry BID) provided an update on Flood Resilience Partnership, replanting also underway in the city centre. Raymond Jackson (CCG) provided an update on funding being co-ordinated through CCG and partners to support people struggling financially. Pauline McQuillan (EA) provided an update on the variety of thematic and geographic activities being held for young people in the Newry area over the coming Summer months and advised that all promotion will be advertised online. Allison Slater (Bolster Community) invited members to attend the upcoming Bolster Community 20th anniversary event in Buttercrane Shopping Centre. Invite to be circulated.	Noted.
DEA/N/2025/9	Safety and Good Relations	Members raised concerns regarding Anti-Social behaviour particularly in relation to public drinking and requested that public signage be reviewed and reinstated.	Co-ordinator to liaise with relevant department.

The meeting ended at: 2.15pm

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

**Action Sheet of Downpatrick District Electoral Area (DEA) Forum Private Meeting
held on Tuesday 12 August 2025 via MS Teams**

Chairperson:	Councillor Gareth Sharvin
In Attendance:	Councillor Cadogan Enright
Independent Members:	Jim Masson, Down Business Connect, Down Community Health Committee, Jenny Lavery, NI Housing Executive Housing Community Network
Statutory Partners:	None
Council Officials:	Katrina Hynds, Downpatrick DEA Co-Ordinator Barbara Fleming, Assistant Tourism Development Officer
Others in Attendance:	None
Apologies:	Councillor Philip Campbell Councillor Oonagh Hanlon Daniella McCarry, County Down Rural Community Network Dan McEvoy, Downpatrick Housing Community Network Macartan Digney, Downpatrick Community Collective

ITEM	SUBJECT	DECISION	FOR COMPLETION – including actions taken/date completed or progress to date if not yet completed.
DEA/DPK/25/01	Apologies	As recorded above.	Noted.
DEA/DPK/25/02	Declarations of Interest	None were declared	Noted
DEA/DPK/25/03	Action Sheet of Meeting held 10 June 2025	The Action Sheet was Noted	Noted
DEA/DPK/25/04	Update from ERT re Environmental/Regeneration Schemes	The DEA Co-Ordinator provided members with an update on the current and future schemes in the Downpatrick area	Noted
DEA/DPK/25/05	Parking on Lower Green, Strangford	The Assistant Tourism Development Officer advised members that a meeting had taken place regarding the health and safety issues in the Lower Green due to vehicles parking on the green area, area in front of summer seats and blocking of slipway. Proposed deterrent parking measures include: • Removable Bollards along the green area – with section left to enable boats to manoeuvre in and out of water • Planters along the seated area to prevent parking • Upgrading of signage • Signage with contact number for those wishing to haul out their boat up the slipway	Assistant Tourism Development Officer and DEA Co-Ordinator

		The Residents Association, Rowing Club and Festival Committee to be consulted regarding these proposals. Consideration also needs to be given to group/person responsible for removing bollards when needed	
DEA/DPK/25/06	DEA Co-Ordinators Update	The DEA Co-Ordinator presented her report to members	Noted
DEA/DPK/25/07	Date of Next Meeting	Date of Next Meeting has been scheduled for 14 October 2025 at 5.30pm	DEA Co-Ordinator

The meeting ended at 10.50am

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council



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Action Sheet of Crotlieve District Electoral Area (DEA) Forum Private Meeting held on Tuesday 12th August 2025 at 18.00 pm in The Boardroom Warrenpoint Town Hall

Chairperson: Councillor Micky Ruane

In Attendance: Councillor Kate Murphy

Independent Members: Martina Byrne- Hilltown Community Association/Clonduff Development Enterprise/Women of Clonduff
Keith Parke - Ardarragh Accordion Band/Lisnamullion Rural Association/Drumlough & Ballygorian RDA

Statutory Partners: Annie Clarke - Southern Health and Social Care Trust
Carrie Crawford- Education Authority
Aileen O'Callaghan -Education Authority

Council Officials: Shirley Keenan-Hughes – DEA Co-ordinator Crotlieve
Ciara Burns – Community Services Manager
Edel McGeeney – Peace Officer
Bebhinn Clarke- Social Inclusion Support Worker

Others in Attendance: None

Apologies: Councillor Jarlath Tinnelly
Councillor Selina Murphy
Martina Flynn - Head of Engagement
Kerrie Morrow -Engagement and Development Manager
Sergeant Conor Valentine- Neighbourhood Policing Team
Thelma Thompson Little - Altnaveigh House Trust
Connaire McGreevy, Greater Newry Chamber of Commerce
Maureen Larkin, Area Youth Worker EA

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

ITEM	SUBJECT	DECISION	FOR COMPLETION – including actions taken/date completed or progress to date if not yet completed.
DEA/C/26/2025	Welcome and Apologies.	Councillor Ruane welcomed Members and noted apologies.	COMPLETED.
DEA/C/27/2025	Declarations of Interest.	There were no declarations of interest declared.	COMPLETED.
DEA/C/28/2025	Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair.	This matter was deferred until the next meeting given the absence of elected members.	DEFERRED UNTIL NEXT FORUM MEETING.
DEA/C/29/2025	Matters arising from Action Sheet from meeting held 13 th May 2025.	Action sheet confirmed as a true and accurate record.	COMPLETED.
DEA/C/30/2025	Membership Request.	The Forum have been asked to consider a membership request from CCG (Confederation of Community Groups)	NO OBJECTIONS TO THE REQUEST.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council



Comhairle Ceanta
an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin

**Newry, Mourne
and Down**
District Council

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DEA/C/31/2025	DEA Co-ordinators Report.	Update from DEA Co-ordinator Ms S Keenan-Hughes on projects, events and programmes supported by Crotlieve DEA Forum that have taken place from the date of the last meeting. Members were also updated on planned events including: Baton of Hope on 3rd September 2025. Positive Ageing Afternoon Tea Dance 28th October 2025.	NOTED.
DEA/C/32/2025	Participatory Budgeting Events.	DEA Co-ordinator advised that the Crotlieve Event is 4 th October 2025. Members were asked to encourage groups to apply for funding.	NOTED.
DEA/C/33/2025	Good Relations Week 2025.	DEA Co-ordinator advised that the Crotlieve event will be 13 th October and will focus on the Chinese Community. Details of other events in the District provided.	NOTED.
DEA/C/34/2025	Funding Fair 2025.	DEA Co-ordinator advised members that Newry, Crotlieve and Slieve Gullion DEAs are hosting a funding fair 22 nd October 2025 for groups to get information on accessing funding.	NOTED.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council



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DEA/C/35/2025	Peace Plus Update.	Ms E McGeeney provided an update in respect of the delivery of the PEACE PLUS plan. Members were asked to consider where the Re-Imaging Projects could take place. Ms B Clarke was introduced as the Social Inclusion Officer and asked members to contact her in respect of possible projects.	CIRCULATED TO ALL MEMBERS.
DEA/C/36/2025	Education Authority Update.	Ms A O'Callaghan introduced herself as the Senior Youth Officer and advised Members with regards to the Regional Assessment of Need. Ms C Crawford provided an update on all Summer activity across Crotlieve. Young people will also be involved in the Baton of Hope event.	NOTED.
DEA/C/37/2025	Community Services Update.	Ms C Burns introduced herself as the new Community Services Manager and provided her contact details for Members.	NOTED.
DEA/C/38/2025	SHSCT Update.	Ms A Clarke reminded Members to encourage groups to apply for the Participatory Budgeting funding and encouraged involvement in the Baton of Hope event.	NOTED.
DEA/C/39/2025	Date of Next Meeting.	The next meeting date: Tuesday 14TH October 2025 at 6pm in Warrenpoint Town Hall.	DEA Co-ordinator to forward agenda and papers in advance.

The meeting ended at: 7.15pm

Report to:	Active and Health Communities Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 September 2025
Subject:	Consultation on The Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Alison Robb, Assistant Director Community Development
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Alan Beggs, Head of Evidence and Research Martina Flynn, Head of Engagement

For decision	x	For noting only	
1.0	Purpose and Background		
1.1	Purpose The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Active and Healthy Communities Committee to submit the proposed response (in appendix 1) in relation to the Consultation on The Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy (2025-2035).		
1.2	Background Poverty in Northern Ireland continues to affect a significant portion of the population, with thousands of individuals and families struggling to meet basic needs. According to the draft NI anti-poverty strategy: - 1 in 5 people in Northern Ireland live in poverty. - 1 in 4 children are growing up in poverty. - 1 in 3 disabled people live in poverty. - 1 in 4 pensioners are affected by poverty. - 1 in 4 working-age adults in poverty are in work. - 1 in 3 people in poverty live in rural areas. - 1 in 3 people in poverty live in households with someone from a minority ethnic background. The impacts of poverty extend far beyond financial hardship. Poverty affects physical and mental health, limits educational and employment opportunities, and reduces overall wellbeing for individuals and communities		
1.3	The Anti-Poverty Strategy outlines the Northern Ireland Executive's commitment to a joined-up, long-term approach to tackling poverty. It aims to remove barriers and promote equality of opportunity for individuals and families experiencing, or at risk of, poverty. The Strategy provides a framework through which actions will be taken forward in a practical and sustainable manner. The vision underpinning this work is: Working together, poverty and its impacts will be effectively and sustainably eradicated across communities in Northern Ireland. This vision is supported by three key pillars, each underpinned by a range of work areas and strategic actions designed to make a meaningful difference to those affected by poverty. The three pillars are: • Minimising Risks • Minimising Impacts		

	Exiting Poverty
1.4	The Department for Communities are currently consulting on the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy and is inviting feedback on all aspects of the document. The purpose of the consultation is to outline the Executive's proposed actions to meet its statutory obligations under Section 28E of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which requires the development of a strategy to tackle poverty, social exclusion, and patterns of deprivation based on objective need. The consultation seeks views on these proposals to help shape the final Strategy.
2.0	Key issues
2.1	Appendix 2 contains the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy (2025-2035), which has been reviewed by Council Officers.
2.2	A full copy of the proposed response is provided in Appendix 1. Officers Comments Highlight: Support for the Vision The overarching vision is considered appropriate. However, further detail is needed on how collaboration will be embedded and operationalised across sectors. Measurable Outcomes and Accountability All outcomes would benefit from being framed with quantitative, qualitative, and time-bound indicators to enable meaningful evaluation and progress tracking. Addressing Rural Poverty A distinct outcome focused on rurality and rural poverty should be considered to ensure that geographic inequalities are properly acknowledged and addressed. Role of Advice Services The recognition of the importance of advice services is welcomed. These services are essential in helping individuals navigate systems and access entitlements, and will be key to supporting uptake of new programmes and initiatives. Proposed Actions Many of the actions reflect programmes and initiatives that Councils are already familiar with. However, it remains unclear how effectively these programmes work together to address the identified poverty risk factors across the region, or how they complement ongoing work within Council areas and local communities. The Department for Communities should engage meaningfully with all stakeholders to identify gaps, avoid duplication, and co-develop actions that are responsive to local needs and capable of addressing the root causes of poverty. It is considered the Strategy does not adequately reflect the role of local Councils, despite their proven capacity to deliver targeted, responsive support through established programmes. Their experience, local knowledge, and trusted relationships position them well to lead delivery on behalf of Departments across a range of initiatives.

	Community Voluntary Sector Support The vital role played by the Community and Voluntary Sector in supporting those at highest risk of poverty was highlighted. Consideration should be given within the Strategy to how this sector can be financially supported in a reliable and sustainable way, ensuring its continued capacity to deliver essential services and contribute meaningfully to strategic outcomes. Indicators and Data Gaps The proposed indicators are broadly appropriate. However, gaps remain in data relating to carers, health inequalities, and updated deprivation measures. Local Engagement and Delivery There has been limited engagement with local communities and councils during the development of the strategy. A stronger role for Community Planning Partnerships is recommended to support local delivery and ensure relevance to community needs.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	Approval of Council's response to the Consultation on The Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy (2025-2035).
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	None.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐

5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	Appendices
7.1	Appendix 1- Proposed Council Response to the Draft Anti-Poverty Strategy (2025-2035) Appendix 2 - Consultation on a draft Fuel Poverty Strategy December 2024
8.0	Background Documents
	None.

Draft Anti-Poverty Strategy Public Consultation

Introduction

Please indicate whether you are responding on behalf of a:

	Union
	Charity
	Community/Voluntary Group
	Pressure Group
	Member of the public (individual)
	Business/Employer
X	Other

Name of group/business/organisation if relevant

Newry Mourne and Down District Council

Vision

The overall vision of the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy is “*Working together, poverty and its impacts will be effectively and sustainably eradicated across our communities*”.

To what extent do you agree with or disagree with the vision included in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy

	Strongly Agree
x	Agree
	Neither agree nor disagree
	Disagree
	Strongly disagree

Please tell us why

The Council welcomes the overarching vision outlined in the strategy to eradicate poverty and mitigate its impacts. We support the aspiration for collaborative working as set out in the vision. However, we would welcome a clearer articulation of how this commitment will be embedded throughout the strategy.

In particular, we would like to see a stronger reflection of the distinct and complementary roles that stakeholders, including different tiers of government, local authorities, and the voluntary and community sectors, have to play in delivering the strategy. This would help ensure that collaboration is not only a guiding principle but a shared responsibility, grounded in the lived realities and expertise of all partners.

Pillars

The vision is underpinned by three key pillars

Pillar One – Minimising Risk

- We will minimise the risks and root causes of people and their families falling into poverty
- We will work with people to maximise their chances of avoiding these risks and lower their chances of falling into poverty

Pillar Two – Minimising Impact

- Where people find themselves in poverty, we will support them and ensure that inequalities are minimised, and life opportunities are maximised

Pillar Three – Exiting Poverty

- We will support people experiencing poverty and through working together we will provide routes out of poverty

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the importance of the three pillars included in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy?

Pillar	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Minimising Risk		x			
2. Minimising Impacts		x			
3. Exiting Poverty		x			

Pillar 1 Outcomes - Minimising Risks

There are a wide range of risk factors for falling into poverty and every individual story is unique. However, following widespread consultation with stakeholders and analysing the existing research, we have identified several key factors which must be addressed to effectively tackle poverty. Each of these factors has an associated outcome.

Pillar One - Outcomes

- 1. Childhood Education - All children will have maximised opportunities in relation to education, addressing socio-economic gaps in educational attainment.
- 2. Family / Childhood Factors - The benefits of a good family structure will be promoted. Families and young people experiencing disadvantage will be supported, helping them to have fulfilling and complete home and family lives.
- 3. Debt - People will be supported to maximise their financial wellbeing.
- 4. Disability - People with disabilities will be supported to be economically independent, maximising their potential in relation to education and employment.
- 5. Substance Use - Government and key partners will work to support people - and reduce the harms associated with alcohol and drugs.
- 6. Ethnicity - We will take steps to ensure that ethnicity will not increase a person's risk of poverty.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the six outcomes supporting Pillar One of the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy?

Outcomes	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Childhood education		X			
Family Factors		X			
Debt		X			
Disability		X			
Substance use		X			
Ethnicity		X			

Do you have any further comments to make on any of the outcomes listed? (Please reference the outcome)

While we welcome the breadth of risk factors identified within the outcomes, we believe that these outcomes should be framed in a way that enables meaningful evaluation. Specifically, we recommend that they be quantitative, qualitative, and time-bound to allow for robust performance measurement and to clearly demonstrate the impact of strategic actions over time.

Importantly, we believe that these measures should be identified within the Strategy itself, rather than deferred to subsequent action plans. This would provide greater clarity and accountability from the outset, and ensure that the Strategy sets a strong foundation for delivery and evaluation.

Are there any other outcomes you feel should be included under this pillar?

Mitigating the impacts and risks associated with rurality and rural poverty could also be considered as a distinct outcome under this pillar. Recognising the unique challenges faced by rural communities would help ensure the Strategy is inclusive and responsive to geographic inequalities.

Pillar 2 Outcomes - Minimising Impacts

The impacts of poverty are felt across our society and can have devastating impacts on people's health, education and economic outcomes. While this Strategy focuses on how we improve long term outcomes for individuals and society more broadly, it is also essential that we take steps to address the immediate issues and impacts felt by people experiencing poverty. Each of these immediate issues and impacts has an associated outcome.

Pillar Two - Outcomes

1. Access to Resources - Appropriate and effective financial support will be provided to those in our society who are socio-economically disadvantaged. Older people, children and adults with disabilities will be helped to access appropriate support.
2. Access to Education - The costs of accessing and participating in education will be minimised, with consideration given to children from socio-economic disadvantaged families.
3. Physical and Mental Health - Everyone will be supported in improving their mental and physical well-being, with a focus on driving down health inequalities related to socio-economic disadvantage.
4. Exposure to Crime / Safety - We will have safe environments, including in the most deprived areas.
5. The Impact of Place - We will have strong communities with improved physical infrastructure, particularly in areas suffering the highest levels of deprivation.
6. Housing (including Fuel Poverty) - Everyone has access to good quality, affordable and sustainable housing.
7. The Lived Experience of those in Poverty - Policies that are brought forward as part of this Strategy are focused on addressing the real-life impacts of poverty and based on a range of evidence including lived experience.
8. Advice Services - People experiencing or at risk of poverty have access to free, quality-assured advice services.

To what extent do you agree with each of the eight outcomes supporting Pillar Two of the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy?

Outcomes	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Access to resources		X			
Access to education		X			
Physical & Mental Health		X			
Exposure to crime/safety		X			
Impact of place		X			
Housing		X			
Lived experience		X			
Adult services		X			

Do you have any further comments to make on any of the outcomes listed? (Please reference the outcome)

We welcome the range of outcomes identified under Pillar 2, and in particular, we are pleased to see the inclusion of an advice-related outcome. We see this as closely aligned with the access to resources outcome, as demonstrated through initiatives such as the development of Social Supermarkets.

Advice services play a critical role in enabling individuals and families to navigate complex systems, maximise their entitlements, and access essential support. Their integration within the broader strategic framework is vital to ensuring that people are not only aware of available resources but are empowered to make use of them effectively.

We believe these outcomes would benefit from clear and relevant measures identified against each outcome

Pillar 3 Outcomes - Exiting Poverty

To tackle poverty in a long term and sustainable way, it is essential that we work with people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage to help them 'exit poverty'. This can be achieved by government working together with support services and families in a truly collaborative and complementary way. Through this approach we can tackle the long-term consequences of poverty. Each of these long-term consequences has an associated outcome.

Pillar Three - Outcomes

1. Employment / Economic Conditions - A strong and growing economy with a wide range of good jobs across both the public and private sector providing opportunities that are accessible to those in poverty.
2. Gaining employment - People will be able to access clear pathways to work and be supported in developing the skills and behaviours they need to access and prosper in the workplace.
3. Training and further Education - Young people and adults will be able to develop their skills and careers through a range of supported educational initiatives beyond school.
4. Childcare - We will identify ways to assist socio-economically disadvantaged families in addressing gaps in childcare provision to ensure they can maximise their potential in the workplace.

To what extent do you agree with each of the four outcomes supporting Pillar Three of the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy?

Outcomes	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Employment/Economic Conditions		X			
Gaining employment		X			
Training & further education		X			
Childcare		X			

Do you have any further comments to make on any of the outcomes listed? (Please reference the outcome)

We welcome the inclusion of childcare as an important outcome within this pillar. However, we also recognise that all forms of caring responsibilities—such as caring for older people, disabled family members, or others—can significantly impact an individual’s ability to exit poverty.

We also believe these outcomes would benefit from the inclusion of clear and relevant measures identified against each outcome.

Are there any other outcomes you feel should be included under this pillar?

Pillar 1 Actions – Minimising Risks

Outcomes under each of the pillars will be supported by strategic commitments which are to be delivered in the first years of the Strategy.

Pillar One - Actions

Minimising the Risk of Falling into Poverty

- We will continue to deliver the Extended Schools Programme which provides a range of support in the form of breakfast clubs, after school activities, parental engagement, literacy and numeracy support, healthy eating etc.
- We will undertake research to understand the impact of Westminster's two child limit on poverty indicators and call on the government to remove Westminster's Two Child Limit.
- We will deliver the RAISE Programme, a new initiative which aims to raise achievement to reduce educational disadvantage. Funding of £20 million is being provided through the Shared Island Fund for a period of 2 years and a Memorandum of Understanding between Departments of Education north and south has been agreed.
- We will work with delivery partners to scope an NI Debt Respite Scheme.
- We will work with the Money and Pension Service to implement a local delivery plan for the UK Financial Wellbeing Strategy.
- We will develop and implement an Executive Disability Strategy.
- We will develop and implement the Disability Employment Strategy.
- We will deliver a refreshed Healthy Child Healthy Future (HCHF) Programme - the universal child health promotion programme for NI 0-19 years. This will have a strong focus on ensuring every child is given the best start in life with increased support for those families who are most in need because of factors relating to disadvantage. HCHF assesses the child and family holistically and within the wider community and tailors support or signposts accordingly to help address need.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that these actions will deliver the outcomes of Pillar One as laid out in the draft Strategy document?

	Strongly Agree
	Agree
x	Neither agree nor disagree
	Disagree
	Strongly disagree

Do you have any further comments to make on any of the actions listed under this pillar? (Please reference the action)

Many of the actions reflect programmes and initiatives that councils are already familiar with. However, it remains unclear how effectively these programmes work together to address the identified poverty risk factors across the region, or how they complement ongoing work within council areas and local communities.

We encourage the Department for Communities to engage meaningfully with all stakeholders to identify gaps, avoid duplication, and co-develop actions that are responsive to local needs and capable of addressing the root causes of poverty.

DfC's commitment to researching the impact of the two-child limit is noted. However, existing evidence already shows this policy is a major driver of child poverty in Northern Ireland.

Research from NIAPN and others highlights strong correlations between the two-child limit and high poverty rates, with over 45,000 children affected. The financial impact—up to £3,455 per child—has pushed many families into hardship. We urge the Department to use this evidence to inform immediate action, rather than delay progress through further study.

The Council also recognises the vital role played by the Community and Voluntary Sector in supporting those at highest risk of poverty. Consideration should be given within the Strategy to how this sector can be financially supported in a reliable and sustainable way, ensuring its continued capacity to deliver essential services and contribute meaningfully to strategic outcomes.

Consideration should be given to the current limitations of the RAISE programme, particularly as many individuals experiencing poverty do not live in areas included within the program.

Pillar 2 Actions – Minimising Impacts

Outcomes under each of the pillars will be supported by strategic commitments which are to be delivered in the first years of the Strategy.

Pillar Two - Actions

Minimising the Impacts of Poverty

- We will continue to deliver a package of welfare mitigations, keeping the level of support under review as resources and evidence become available, whilst lobbying Westminster on reform as appropriate.
- We will lobby Westminster to maintain the triple lock guarantee in relation to pension payments.
- We will develop and deliver a Fuel Poverty Strategy. We will also design and deliver a new Fuel Poverty Energy Efficiency Scheme – Warm, Healthy Homes.
- We will implement agreed changes that are designed to improve access to and delivery of Discretionary Support.
- We will continue to aid with the payment of upfront childcare costs through the Adviser Discretion Fund.
- We will provide advice, increase awareness and provide focused support to ensure that older people, and children and adults with disabilities can access their full benefit entitlement. This will include a programme of work to promote Pension Credit uptake and delivery of the Make the Call wraparound service.
- The Executive will continue its commitment to ensure the Civil Service is a Living Wage employer. We will ensure that payment of the Living Wage must be included as a condition of contract for all tenders.
- Through a range of actions, we will minimise the cost of school attendance, this will include continued provision of free school meals (FSM) and Uniform Grants (UG).
- We will introduce legislation to ensure that school uniforms are affordable for all families.
- We will develop and deliver a new Safer Communities Strategic Approach, based on Trauma Informed and Public Health approaches, with the aim of increasing community safety and confidence.
- We will develop and deliver a new People and Place Strategic Framework to deliver an effective and more integrated place-based approach to target deprivation, based on objective need.

- We will continue to deliver the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework, which invests in a range of collaborative initiatives to tackle rural poverty, isolation, loneliness and health and wellbeing issues.
- We will deliver the NI Food Strategy Framework to help focus collective efforts addressing significant societal challenges directly and indirectly linked to food. This will have impacts in relation to both people's health and food poverty.
- We will ensure that everyone, including those in or at risk of poverty, has access to good quality, affordable and sustainable homes. This will include work to tackle a range of issues including revitalisation of the Housing Executive and transformation of the Private Rented Sector. We will oversee the development of action plans as part of the implementation of the Executive Housing Supply Strategy.
- We will work with the Transforming Medication Safely NI (TMSNI) programme to support implementation of the Community Development Health Network "Our Lives, Our Meds, Our Health" report to improve safe practices with medicines through addressing health inequalities.
- We will continue the Healthy Start Scheme in Northern Ireland, which provides pre-paid cards for pregnant women and families with young children to access nutritious healthy food. This improves long term health for children and frees up household income for other needs and addresses health inequalities.
- We will continue to work with the Community Development and Health Network (CDHN) through the Building the Community Pharmacy Partnership (BCPP) Programme to strengthen links between community groups and their local pharmacies, with actions targeted at the most deprived and underserved communities to address health inequalities and social determinants of health.
- We will continue to support the advice sector to ensure that high quality, free, independent advice is available to those living in or at risk of poverty. We will refresh the policy framework for delivery of advice in close collaboration and provide more integrated independent advice and set services.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that these actions will deliver the outcomes of Pillar Two as laid out in the draft Strategy document?

	Strongly Agree
	Agree
x	Neither agree nor disagree
	Disagree
	Strongly disagree

Do you have any further comments to make on any of the actions listed under this pillar? (Please reference the action)

The role of local Council's is not well reflected within these actions. Councils have the experience, local knowledge, and trusted relationships needed to deliver both immediate and long-term support to those most in need. There is a well-established precedent for councils delivering local support on behalf of DfC and other departments, including:

- Advice Services*
- Distribution of Covid support and Hardship funding*
- Food poverty initiatives through Social Supermarket funding*
- Labour Market Partnership programmes*

This track record demonstrates councils' capacity to deliver targeted, responsive interventions and should be recognised and built upon within the Strategy.

Pillar 3 Actions – Exiting Poverty

Outcomes under each of the Pillars will [be] supported by strategic commitments which are to be delivered in the first years of the Strategy.

To view further details on each of the actions under Pillar Three of the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy please use the link below or view page 27 of the draft Strategy.

Pillar Three - Actions

Supporting People to Exit Poverty

- We will prepare and deliver a programme which will offer inclusive pathways to work.
- We will address regional imbalance in our economy through the Sub-Regional Economic Plan to ensure that people have access to quality employment regardless of where they live.
- We will improve the quality of employment across the economy through a new Employment Rights Bill, a Good Jobs Charter and by increasing uptake of the Real Living Wage through funding the NI franchise of the Living Wage Foundation.
- We will implement the all age Careers Action Plan.
- We will deliver high quality, industry relevant skills and training programmes. We will implement the Skills, Careers and Apprenticeship Action Plans.
- A budget of £23m has been allocated in 2025/26 to provide a 15% childcare subsidy for working parents eligible to Tax Free Childcare.
- We will bring forward a draft Early Learning and Childcare Strategy for public consultation to Executive colleagues in autumn 2025.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that these actions will deliver the outcomes of Pillar Two as laid out in the draft Strategy document?

	Strongly Agree
	Agree
x	Neither agree nor disagree
	Disagree
	Strongly disagree

*Do you have any further comments to make on any of the actions listed under this pillar?
(Please reference the action)*

Delivery of the actions under Pillar 3 will be heavily dependent on the success of actions across other pillars. Our experience with Social Supermarkets demonstrates that wraparound services are essential to help individuals benefit from opportunities within the proposed activities. These interdependencies and relationships should be more clearly reflected in the Strategy to ensure a joined-up and person-centred approach.

Headline Indicators

To track the overall progress of the Strategy, several headline indicators will be used to monitor progress over time.

- The percentage of individuals living in relative poverty after housing costs (AHC)
- The percentage of children living in relative poverty (AHC)
- The percentage of working age adults living in relative poverty (AHC)
- The percentage of pensioners living in relative poverty (AHC)

To complement these chosen indicators, we will continue to publish or monitor a range of poverty measures including relative poverty before housing costs (BHC), absolute poverty before and after housing costs, children in low income and material deprivation, persistent poverty and food poverty. This will allow the overall story behind the trends to be identified.

Indicators will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate, to identify and address any potential gaps, and to improve or replace existing measures as necessary.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with these headline indicators as laid out in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy document?

	Strongly Agree
	Agree
x	Neither agree nor disagree
	Disagree
	Strongly disagree

Do you have any further comments to make on any of the headline indicators?
(Please reference the indicator)

Relative poverty is an income-based measure that does not account for rising household costs or inflation. However, in the absence of a broader poverty measure, it remains a useful benchmark for comparison across regions.

Are there any other headline indicators you feel should be included here?

The ongoing absence of an updated Multiple Deprivation Measure for Northern Ireland is disappointing. The data contained within its domains and sub-domains would provide valuable headline indicators to support the Strategy.

Pillar 1 Indicators - Minimising Risks

To track the Strategy’s progress against Pillar One - Minimising the Risk of Falling into Poverty, a number of indicators will be used to monitor progress over time.

- **Educational Attainment Gap** - difference between the percentage of non-free school meal entitled (non-FSME) school leavers and the percentage of free school meal entitled (FSME) school leavers achieving at level 2 or above including GCSE English and Maths.
- **Disability Employment Gap** - percentage in employment by disability status.
- **Standardised Admission Rate** - Alcohol related / drug related causes.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that these pillar level indicators appropriately monitor progress towards the Pillar One outcomes as laid out in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy document?

	Strongly Agree
	Agree
x	Neither agree nor disagree
	Disagree
	Strongly disagree

Do you have any further comments to make on any of the pillar one indicators?
(Please reference the indicator)

While admission rate data is relevant, it should be interpreted with caution. Higher rates may reflect improved service availability or referral pathways rather than increased prevalence. We recommend that the Department work closely with the Department of Health to develop appropriate indicators around addiction.

More broadly, indicators should be closely aligned with the stated outcomes under this pillar to ensure meaningful and coherent performance monitoring.

Pillar 2 Indicators – Minimising Impacts

To track the strategy’s progress against Pillar Two – Minimising the impacts of Poverty, several indicators will be used to monitor progress over time.

- **Health Life Expectancy** – gap between the most and least deprived
- Percentage of people who were victims of any NI safe community survey crime
- Number of households in housing stress

To what extent do you agree or disagree that these pillar level indicators appropriately monitor progress towards the Pillar Two outcomes as laid out in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy document?

	Strongly Agree
	Agree
x	Neither agree nor disagree
	Disagree
	Strongly disagree

**Do you have any further comments to make on any of the pillar two indicators?
(Please reference the indicator)**

Other health inequalities data, such as rates of preventable deaths or the prevalence of specific illnesses, may be more relevant than life expectancy alone. These indicators can offer a more immediate and actionable understanding of health-related poverty risks.

Pillar 3 Indicators – Exiting Poverty

To track the Strategy’s progress against Pillar Three – Supporting People to Exit Poverty, a number of indicators will be used to monitor progress over time.

- Percentage of employees earning on or above the Real Living Wage (aged 18 and over)

- Percentage who are economically inactive for any reason other than being a student (aged 16 to 64)
- Proportion of 16- to 24-year-olds not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

To what extent do you agree or disagree that these pillar level indicators appropriately monitor progress towards the Pillar Three outcomes as laid out in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy document?

	Strongly Agree
	Agree
x	Neither agree nor disagree
	Disagree
	Strongly disagree

**Do you have any further comments to make on any of the pillar three indicators?
(Please reference the indicator)**

A specific measure around carers and employment would also be relevant.

Final Comments

Is there anything further you'd like to add or comment on in relation to the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy?

While the Strategy states that the Department for Communities has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including a co-design group, there were limited opportunities for input from local communities and councils. This is a missed opportunity to ensure the Strategy reflects the lived experiences and practical insights of those working directly with affected populations.

We also note the open letter from the Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network and share their concerns that the Strategy must be fit for purpose and include measures capable of driving sustained, long-term reductions in poverty—ultimately working toward its eradication.

Community Planning Partnerships, established in each of the 11 council areas, are well placed to deliver collaborative actions at the local level. These partnerships bring together statutory bodies and the Community and Voluntary Sector to identify local issues and needs, and to deliver joined-up solutions. The Strategy should explicitly reference the role Community Planning Partnerships can play in addressing outcomes under all three pillars, in ways that are tailored to their local context.

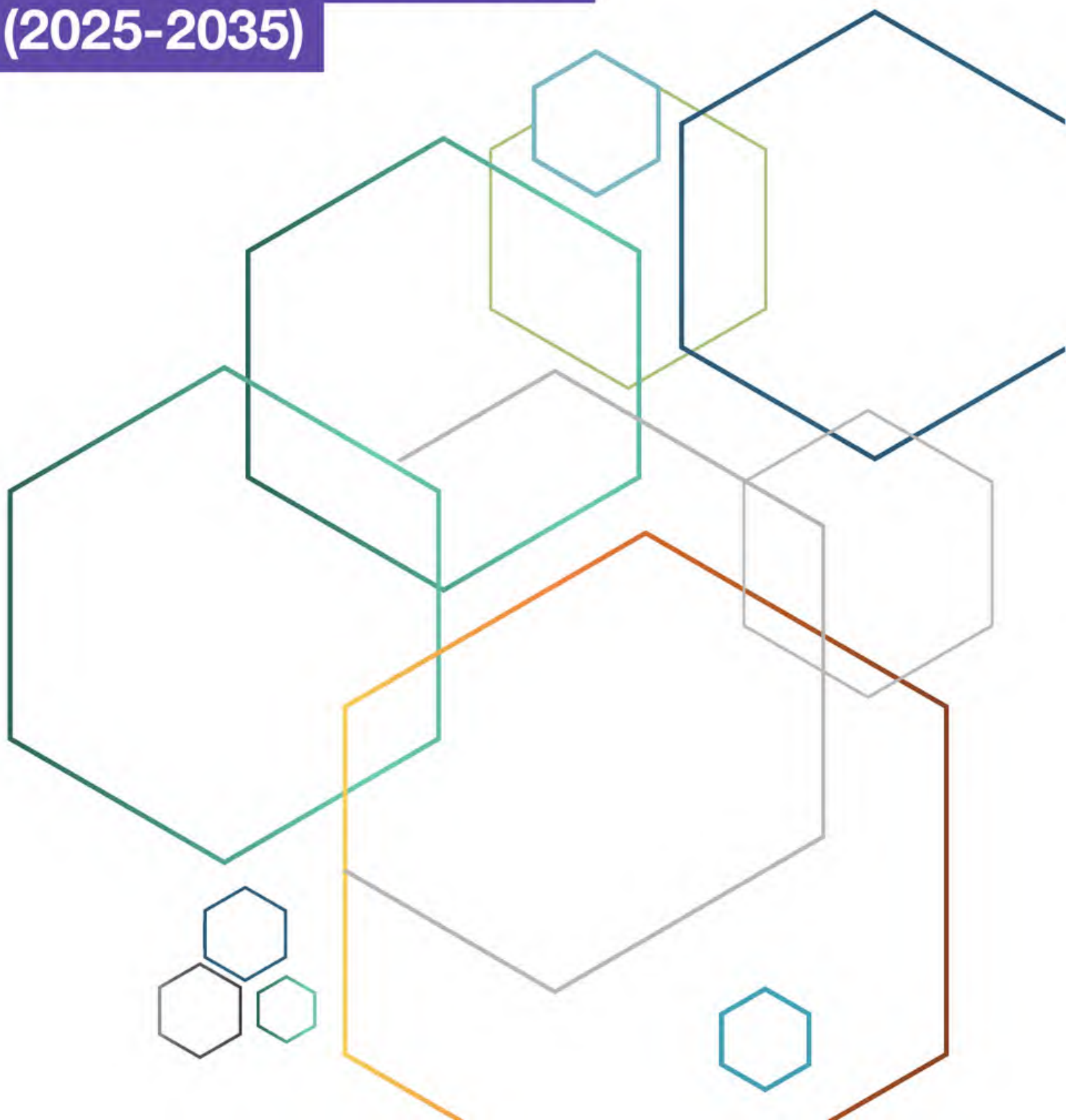
Are there any other comments you would like to make in regard to the consultation process more generally?

Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the draft Strategy. However, we encourage the Department for Communities to engage broadly with all stakeholders, including Local Government and the Community and Voluntary Sector, to ensure that the final Strategy is fit for purpose and delivers real, measurable impacts for those experiencing poverty.



Northern Ireland
Executive
www.northernireland.gov.uk

The Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy (2025-2035)





Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at:

Anti-Poverty Consultation

Department for Communities

Poverty Policy Branch

Level 7 Causeway Exchange

1-7 Bedford Street

Belfast BT2 7EG

Email: AntiPovertyConsultation@communities-ni.gov.uk

This document is also available from our website at:

www.communities-ni.gov.uk

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A hard copy of the report, or a copy in a different format, can be provided on request by e-mailing:

Anti-Poverty Consultation

Department for Communities

Poverty Policy Branch

Level 7 Causeway Exchange

1-7 Bedford Street

Belfast BT2 7EG

Email: AntiPovertyConsultation@communities-ni.gov.uk

Consultation Introduction

The Anti-Poverty Strategy sets out the Executive’s commitment to a joined up, long term approach to addressing poverty. It seeks to remove barriers and support equality of opportunity for those experiencing or at risk of poverty. It sets a clear framework within which actions to tackle poverty will be taken forward in a practical and sustainable manner.

Our vision for this work is as follows: Working together, poverty and its impacts will be effectively and sustainably eradicated across our communities.

This vision is underpinned by three key pillars which will be supported by a range of work areas and key actions. This will allow us to make a difference to those experiencing or at risk of poverty in an effective and sustained manner.

These three pillars are:

- Minimising Risks
- Minimising Impacts
- Exiting Poverty

The Executive is committed to working together to deliver this Strategy and make a long term, sustainable impact on poverty; supporting our people, strengthening our economy, providing effective training and educational pathways and helping to improve and protect health.

Scope of Consultation:

The Department for Communities is consulting on the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy and welcomes your comments on any aspects of this document.

The purpose of this consultation on the Anti-Poverty Strategy is to set out what the Executive proposes to do to fulfil its obligations in respect of compliance with the obligation under s28E of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and gather your views on those proposals.

Duration of Consultation:

The consultation will be open for response from 17 June – 19 September 2025.

For responses to be considered they must be received by the Department by 5pm on 19 September 2025. Responses received will be used to inform the final content of the Executive strategy.

The key documents for your consideration are available at

www.communities-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-ni-executive-anti-poverty-strategy

Documents:

- Draft NI Executive Anti-Poverty Strategy Consultation Document
- Draft Anti-Poverty Strategy EQIA
- Draft Anti-Poverty Strategy Rural Needs Impact Assessment

Ways to respond:

You can respond to this consultation by filling out the survey at the following link
<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfc/anti-poverty-strategy-consultation>.

You are under no obligation to provide personal details in responding to this consultation.

Please note that as responses to publication may be disclosable respondents should not include personal data or names as part of their responses to this consultation.

If you would like to provide a written response to the consultation or have further queries, these can be emailed to AntiPovertyConsultation@communities-ni.gov.uk

Written responses can also be submitted to

Anti-Poverty Consultation

Department for Communities

Poverty Policy Branch

Level 7 Causeway Exchange

1-7 Bedford Street

Belfast

BT2 7EG

Consultation Responses:

We will consider the responses received and, following that, publish a consultation report on the Departmental website, which will outline feedback received and the Department's next steps.

Accessibility:

Documents can be requested in alternative formats. For more information on the alternative formats available and the time scales involved, please contact us at any stage at AntiPovertyConsultation@communities-ni.gov.uk.

Privacy, Confidentiality and Access to Consultation Responses

For this consultation, we may publish all responses except for those where the respondent indicates that they are an individual acting in a private capacity (e.g. a member of the public). Responses from organisations and individuals responding in a professional capacity may be published. We will remove email addresses and telephone numbers from these responses; but apart from this, we will publish them in full. For more information about what we do with personal data please see our consultation privacy notice www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/supplementary-privacy-notice-dfc-business-areas.

Your response, and all other responses to this consultation, may also be disclosed on request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR); however all disclosures will be in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

A summary report and analysis of consultation responses will be published on the DfC website.

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential, so that this may be considered if the Department should receive a request for the information under the FOIA or EIR.

Foreword

As an Executive, there are few issues we face as important as addressing poverty. Poverty impacts every aspect of our society and effectively tackling this issue will lead to benefits not only for individuals and families but will help strengthen our communities and boost our economy. Poverty has a negative impact on physical and mental wellbeing, limiting the ability of people fulfil their potential and achieve their goals and aspirations.

The Executive is committed to working together to deliver this Strategy and make a long term, sustainable impact on poverty; supporting our people, strengthening our economy, providing effective training and educational pathways and helping to improve and protect health.

This Strategy will build on the Executive's work over the last number of years in tackling poverty. While we acknowledge there is much more work to be done, it is also important that we acknowledge and learn from what has been delivered to date. Actions such as the welfare mitigation payments including benefit cap mitigation and offsetting the bedroom tax, show that the Executive has provided a range of programmes and supports that are not always available in neighbouring jurisdictions. Through this Strategy we set out commitments on how we will continue to provide support and assurance to those who need it most.

We will ensure that policies brought forward as part of this Strategy are focused on addressing the real-life impacts of poverty and based on a range of evidence, including lived experience. The Strategy will be delivered over 10 years and is being brought forward at a time of significant budget constraint, therefore it is important that we put in place actions that make the most impact. Some strategic actions can and will be delivered immediately while others will be kept under review and delivered as evidence and budget allows.

This Strategy sets a clear framework within which anti-poverty work will be taken forward in a practical and sustainable manner. We will aim not just to increase people's incomes, but also to ensure there are routes out of poverty. This will mean a focus not only on benefits and wages, but also addressing issues around health, well-being and employment.

It is also essential that we acknowledge that this is not a problem which the Executive can solve in isolation. To truly tackle poverty at a society-wide level will require not only the engagement of the Executive, but also the support of community organisations, businesses, voluntary groups, councils, families and individuals. Tackling poverty in a meaningful way will require more than just Government to play its part.

The Executive is confident that this Strategy will provide an integrated framework within which we can prioritise actions and funding, helping us to work towards a society where we can see the impacts of poverty reduced and improved outcomes that make a real and lasting difference to people's lives.

1. Introduction

This Anti-Poverty Strategy sets out the Executive's commitment to a joined up, long term approach to addressing poverty. It seeks to remove barriers and support equality of opportunity for those experiencing or at risk of poverty. While the Executive has previously taken forward a wide range of initiatives and actions which help support those in or at risk of poverty, this is the first time it has published a Strategy dedicated to tackling this issue in a holistic manner.

This Strategy will drive continuous improvements targeted at making a real difference in the lives of those experiencing or at risk of poverty. It represents the next step in our journey towards a fairer and more inclusive society, where everyone can live their lives with freedom, dignity, choice and control.

How the Strategy was developed

The core values of collaboration and partnership-working were embedded at the heart of the process and have enabled an informed and joined up approach.

Throughout this work the Department for Communities has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders. This work included the establishment and report of an independent Expert Advisory Panel, an Anti-Poverty Strategy Co-Design Group made up of community and voluntary organisations and a Cross Departmental Working Group made up of senior officials from across all Departments.

The Executive acknowledges and draws upon the significant contribution to the development of the Strategy and those who made a valuable contribution to identifying the issues we need to tackle and the actions to successfully address them.

In addition to this work, a Scoping Review of the Literature on Poverty in Northern Ireland¹ was conducted by the Department for Communities to provide an overview and assessment of the available evidence and set out what is known about poverty from existing literature, to identify gaps and make recommendations on further research needed to strengthen the evidence base. In particular, three areas of poverty were explored: **the risk factors for falling into poverty; the major impacts of poverty on people's lives; and the factors that enable people to leave/exit poverty.**

The Executive has taken the time to consider all of the work that has gone before to ensure that the draft Strategy reflects our priorities alongside the ongoing challenges we face. Inevitably, the current fiscal climate has placed limitations on how far we have been able to go on a number of areas, particularly in the first years of the Strategy. We must by necessity, ensure that the impact of every pound spent is maximised to address real, evidenced need.

1: https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/scoping-review-of-literature-on-poverty-ni_0.pdf.

Poverty In Northern Ireland



18%

of the population in
Relative Poverty
(After Housing Costs)



15%

of the population in
Absolute Poverty
(After Housing Costs)



25%

of children in
Relative Poverty
(After Housing Costs)



21%

of children in
Absolute Poverty
(After Housing Costs)



20%

of those individuals living
in families where someone is
disabled are considered to be
in Relative Poverty (AHC).



16%

of adult females were
estimated to be in Relative
Poverty compared to 14% of
adult males (AHC).

Defining Poverty

For the purposes of the Anti-Poverty Strategy, poverty is defined as:

Poverty means that a person or family's income and other resources are not sufficient to meet their basic needs. This includes paying for essentials such as housing, heating, food, clothing and social activities.

Interventions will aim to target objective need. This means that actions delivered as part of the Strategy will be based on a broad evidence base and targeted at an identified need. The evidence base used to assess objective need will be dependent on the subject area and the underlying need to be addressed.

Evidence considered in assessing objective need for the purposes of this Strategy may include, but is not limited to, data published in the annual poverty bulletin, administrative data held by departments, and the population-level indicators assigned to Anti-Poverty Strategy outcomes.

In making decisions on objective need, due regard will be had to Section 75 categories.

The Anti-Poverty Strategy in context

The Anti-Poverty Strategy will form a key part of the Executive's work going forward. The Programme for Government contains a commitment to bring this Strategy forward stating "Tackling Poverty will require all Northern Ireland Departments to work together with their Arms-Length Bodies and delivery partners in order to make a lasting change to our society. Poverty is not a matter for government alone to tackle, but for all public services, the voluntary and community sector and the wider population."

In addition to this, a wide range of other commitments within the Programme for Government will have a direct impact on issues which disproportionately impact those at risk of socio-economic disadvantage including cutting health waiting times, providing affordable social housing and working towards safer communities.

2. Our Approach to Tackling Poverty

This Strategy is built on the co-design work and evidence base highlighted above. The Strategy is focused on three key pillars which will be supported by a range of work areas and key actions. This will allow us to make a difference to those experiencing or at risk of poverty in an effective and sustained manner. This work will be underpinned by actions which will act as levers to reduce poverty and its impacts.

Our vision for this work is as follows –



VISION

“Working together, poverty and its impacts will be effectively and sustainably eradicated across our communities.”

This vision is underpinned by three key pillars –



Minimising Risks

We will minimise the risks and root causes of people and their families falling into poverty.

We will work with people to maximise their chances of avoiding these risks and lower their chances of falling into poverty.



Minimising Impacts

Where people find themselves in poverty, we will support them and ensure that inequalities are minimised and life opportunities are maximised.



Exiting Poverty

We will support people experiencing poverty and through working together we will provide routes out of poverty.

In recognising the cyclical and frequently inter-generational nature of poverty we also recognise that work between these pillars will frequently overlap and that minimising risks, impacts and exiting poverty for groups and individuals will require appropriate interventions. For example, poor health can both be a risk of falling into poverty as well as an impact of experiencing poverty. Equally, how we support lifting children from poverty will require different strategies than those for older people and this understanding is a key underpinning principle of the Strategy. Just as importantly, **the focus across all three pillars will be on identifying and addressing the root causes of poverty with the aim of prevention, where this is possible.**

Through focusing on these three pillars we aim to provide an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty in our society and improve the lives of all.

The Strategy will be underpinned by a Programme of Delivery which will be updated on an ongoing basis. The Programme of Delivery will be reviewed and updated when new issues or opportunities arise and when new potential initiatives are developed. This will ensure that it remains as current as possible and it is able to react to the challenges and changes in society and the economic landscape that lie ahead.

Where people live will also have an impact on how poverty affects them, whether it is in increased transport costs, difficulty in accessing services or being able to find affordable, comfortable and secure accommodation.

Due to the deep and lasting impacts of poverty on people, it is essential that we ensure the rights of those experiencing or at risk of poverty are protected and promoted. Lived experience and the role of civil society in amplifying, advocating for and supporting the voices of those impacted must be used to inform our actions to address poverty and its effects. This can help to ensure that those experiencing or at risk of poverty are able to access the support they need.

The following chapters set out the high-level approach to each of the pillars and how we aim to address the associated issues.

3. Minimising the Risk of Falling into Poverty

What are the risk factors for falling into Poverty?



There are a wide range of risk factors for falling into poverty and every individual story is unique. However, following widespread consultation with stakeholders and analysing the existing research, we have identified a number of key factors which must be addressed in order to effectively tackle poverty.

Childhood Education: There is widespread evidence to show that children's education is one of the key predictive factors for determining their chances of avoiding poverty in the future. This is further compounded by ongoing educational inequalities, which show that coming from a socio-economically deprived background is closely linked to low levels of attainment².



In 2020/21, 60% of school leavers entitled to free school meals achieved at least 5 GCSEs at A*-C standard (including English and Maths), compared to 84% of those who do not receive free school meals³.

Outcome: All children will have maximised opportunities in relation to education, addressing socio-economic gaps in educational attainment.

Family/Childhood Factors: A wide range of family factors impact on the chances both of families being in poverty and also of a child growing up to experience poverty later in life. Research has shown that childhood poverty has a causal effect on children's future poverty status with parental income having one of the strongest associations with children's future income and children's intermediate outcomes.



The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) (2016)⁴ found that **neglect or abuse** as a child can increase the risk of experiencing poverty in adulthood. They specify that impact on mental health can lead to unemployment, low earnings, homelessness and exposure to substance misuse. Family structure is also a significant issue in this area and a variety of research⁵ has shown that family instability and size can be closely associated with a higher risk of poverty.

² The Equality Commission have highlighted that free school meal entitlement is a strong indicator of social disadvantage and is closely linked to low levels of academic achievement - ECNI, 2020, Summary of policy positions relating to poverty and socio-economic disadvantage (equalityni.org)

³ Qualifications and Destinations of Northern Ireland School Leavers (education-ni.gov.uk)

⁴ JRF, 2021. UK Poverty 2020/21, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2020-21>

⁵ HM Government, 2014, "An evidence review of the drivers of child poverty for families in poverty now and for poor children growing up to be poor adults." https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ca9e640f0b65b3de0a616/Cm_8781_Child_Poverty_Evidence_Review_Print.pdf

The Centre for Social Justice (2019)⁶ reports that the break-up of family relationships is one of the quickest routes into poverty. Children in families that break apart are more than twice as likely to experience poverty as those whose families stay together.

Outcome: The benefits of a good family structure will be promoted. Families and young people experiencing disadvantage will be supported, helping them to have fulfilling and complete home and family lives.

Debt: Unsustainable debt can have a severe adverse affect on people's chances of avoiding poverty. The Centre for Social Justice has previously highlighted debt as one of its five 'pathways to poverty', referring to it as both a cause and consequence.



The need to meet day-to-day expenses can often drive those on low incomes into debt. This creates a domino effect, as low income families then have to spend more money to service their debt. Debt not only deepens poverty, but can be a major source of stress and anxiety⁷.

Outcome: People will be supported to maximise their financial wellbeing.

Disability: JRF (2021)⁸ reported that half of all people in poverty either have a **disability** themselves or live with someone who does, compared with just a third of people in non-poor households. Similarly, Barnard (2018)⁹ found strong links between disability and poverty in Northern Ireland with 27% of disabled people and 28% of families that include someone who is disabled being in poverty in 2016/17, compared to 19% of non-disabled people and 16% of people in families which do not include a disabled person.



Deaf and disabled people living in Northern Ireland are twice as likely to be economically inactive as they are to be in employment. Our rate of employment for those who are Deaf and disabled is 32.7%, compared to an employment rate of 81.8% for those who do not have a disability.

Outcome: People with disabilities will be supported to be economically independent, maximising their potential in relation to education and employment.

5 HM Government, 2014. "An evidence review of the drivers of child poverty for families in poverty now and for poor children growing up to be poor adults." https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ca9e640f0b65b3de0a616/Cm_8781_Child_Poverty_Evidence_Review_Print.pdf

6 Centre for Social Justice, 2019. "Why Family Matters". <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/CSJJ6900-Family-Report-190405-WEB.pdf>

7 HM Government (2014) infers a broad causal relationship between problem debt and low income poverty, which is that once in debt, low income families have to spend a higher proportion of their income to service this debt.

8 JRF, 2021. UK Poverty 2020/21, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2020-21>

9 Helen Barnard, 2018. "Poverty in Northern Ireland" (JRF) <https://www.jrf.org.uk/poverty-in-northern-ireland-2018>

Substance Use: Research has shown that addiction can impact people in a wide range of ways in terms of their socio-economic status. Alcohol and drug dependency can affect people's ability to gain employment and to provide support to family members. Most obviously, this has an impact on mental health and physical well-being.



Alcohol and drug related indicators continue to show some of the largest health inequalities monitored, with rates of drug-related deaths in the most deprived areas over four and a half times higher than in the least deprived. Alcohol-related deaths are four times higher in the most deprived areas.¹⁰

Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan (2012) state that in 2006 the Centre for Social Justice highlighted **alcohol and drug addiction** as one of their five 'pathways to poverty' both as a cause and consequence.

Outcome: Government and key partners will work to support people - and reduce the harms associated with alcohol and drugs.

Ethnicity: Recent research has shown that people's ethnicity may impact on their levels of socio-economic disadvantage¹¹. There are a range of reasons for this and we must work to ensure our society is equal and fair for all those who contribute to it.



Wallace, McAreavey and Atkin (2013)¹² suggest that a lack of recognition of overseas skills and qualifications, immigration status, language difficulties and problems in negotiating support services all serve to heighten the risk of poverty for ethnic minority groups. JRF 2016 believes people from ethnic minorities become trapped by limited training opportunities, discrimination and racism with informal cultures and networks within workplaces making it harder for them to progress.

Outcome: We will take steps to ensure that Ethnicity will not increase a person's risk of poverty.

These outcomes will be delivered through a Programme of Delivery which will include a range of actions and be updated throughout the lifespan of the Strategy as appropriate. These will be included in action plans which will be updated on a rolling basis.

¹⁰ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/hscims-report-2022.pdf>, p5

¹¹ JRF, 2021. "UK Poverty 2020/21" states that in work poverty is higher for Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) workers than for White workers and is highest for Pakistani and Bangladeshi workers, which is at about 34% and much higher than the 12% of in-work poverty rate for white households.

¹² A Wallace, R McAreavey and K Atkin, 2013. "Poverty and ethnicity in Northern Ireland. JRF. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/race-and-ethnicity/poverty-and-ethnicity-in-northern-ireland>

Minimising the Risk of Falling into Poverty:

Strategic commitments to be delivered in the first years of the Strategy:

- We will continue to deliver the Extended Schools Programme which provides a range of support in the form of breakfast clubs, after school activities, parental engagement, literacy and numeracy support, healthy eating etc. (Department of Education)
- We will undertake research to understand the impact of Westminster's two child limit on poverty indicators, and call on the government to remove Westminster's Two Child Limit. (Department for Communities)
- We will deliver the RAISE programme, a new initiative which aims to raise achievement to reduce educational disadvantage. Funding of £20 million is being provided through the Shared Island Fund for a period of 2 years and a Memorandum of Understanding between Departments of Education north and south has been agreed. (Department of Education)
- We will work with delivery partners to scope an NI Debt Respite Scheme. (Department for Communities)
- We will work with the Money and Pension Service to implement a local delivery plan for the UK Financial Wellbeing Strategy. (Department for Communities)
- We will develop and implement an Executive Disability Strategy. (Department for Communities)
- We will develop and implement the Disability Employment Strategy. (Department for Communities)
- We will deliver a refreshed Healthy Child Healthy Future (HCHF) programme - the universal child health promotion programme for NI 0-19 years. This will have a strong focus on ensuring every child is given the best start in life with increased support for those families who are most in need because of factors relating to disadvantage. HCHF assesses the child and family holistically and within the wider community and tailors support or signposts accordingly to help address need. (Department of Health)

4. Minimising the Impacts of Poverty



The impacts of poverty are felt across our society and can have devastating impacts on people’s health, education and economic outcomes. While this Strategy focuses on how we improve long term outcomes for individuals and society more broadly, it is also essential that we take steps to address the immediate issues and impacts felt by people experiencing poverty.

Access to Resources: Most measures of poverty are defined by low levels of resource. In order to minimise the impact of poverty, it is essential that we ensure a range of safety nets are in place to make sure that all people have access to a minimum level of resource.



An individual is considered to be in relative poverty if they are living in a household with an equivalised income below 60% of UK median income. In 2022/23 the relative poverty threshold (BHC) for a couple with no children was an income of £373 per week.

Food insecurity is an issue that cuts across all age groups, on every day of the year including weekends, when a child is sick and also during school holidays. If a child is in food insecurity, it is inevitable that his or her wider family is also in food insecurity.

Outcome: Appropriate and effective financial support will be provided to those in our society who are socio-economically disadvantaged. Older people, children and adults with disabilities will be helped to access appropriate support.

Access to Education: As already noted in this Strategy, education is a key issue in relation to the prevention of poverty. In addition, living in poverty can also impact on the wider benefits that can be achieved through education.



Therefore, it is important that we work to ensure that attending school is as close to cost neutral as possible to maximise the benefits delivered to all our children. Buttle UK (2019)¹³, found that out of 1,200 frontline workers, 79% reported regularly seeing parents who are struggling to afford the costs associated with school which at its most extreme is being unable to afford school uniforms or the correct equipment resulting in children not being able to take certain subjects, or even attend certain schools.

The correlation between pupils' entitlement to free school meals and achieving lower outcomes in exam results has long been established across the UK.

Outcome: The costs of accessing and participating in education will be minimised, with particular consideration given to children from socio-economic disadvantaged families.

Physical and Mental Health: Health inequalities are the differences in health outcomes experienced by different socio-economic, demographic or population groups. Differences in health outcomes highlight the unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population, and between different groups within society. Health inequalities can arise because of the conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work and age. These conditions influence our opportunities for good mental health, physical health, and wellbeing.



Health inequalities also drive poorer health outcomes for our wider population, increase demand on health services and increase costs and public expenditure in Northern Ireland. They also impact economic growth, unemployment, productivity, community cohesion, the justice system, community wellbeing, families, and individuals. To address health inequalities, we need to adopt a whole of Government approach and work with key stakeholders, including local government and the Community and Voluntary sector.

The health and wellbeing outcomes of people who live in deprived areas are often substantially worse. In 2018-20, life expectancy for men living in the 20% most deprived areas of NI was 74.5 years – this was 6.9 years less than those living in the 20% least deprived areas. Female life expectancy in the 20% most deprived areas was 79.3 years, 5 years fewer than women in the 20% least deprived areas¹⁴.

¹³ Buttle UK, 2019. "The Experiences of Education for Children and Young People in Poverty in the UK in 2019." <https://buttleuk.org/our-research/research-reports/back-to-school-an-unequal-education-for-children-in-poverty/>

¹⁴ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/hscims-life-expectancy-ni-2018-20.pdf>, p14

A research paper from the British Medical Association (BMA 2017¹⁵) also stated that poverty, unemployment and social isolation are associated with higher prevalence of schizophrenia and rates of admission to specialist psychiatric care. Fitzpatrick et al. (2018)¹⁶ found that the impact of destitution on people's mental health was clearly significant with people whose mental health has been affected by destitution being implicated in a vicious cycle, whereby their poor mental health inhibited job-seeking and other actions that might help them escape destitution.

Outcome: Everyone will be supported in improving their mental and physical well-being, with a focus on driving down health inequalities related to socio-economic disadvantage.

Exposure to Crime/Safety: Poverty can expose people to a higher risk of negative life experiences, including an increased likelihood of experiencing the impacts of crime.



JRF (2016) highlights that living in poverty or a deprived neighbourhood makes both offending and being the victim of a crime involving property or violence much more likely.

Research has identified that children in poverty are much more vulnerable to criminal exploitation and becoming involved in gangs¹⁷.

Borysik (2020)¹⁸ identifies a pattern in childhood experiences, including being blighted by poverty, that lead to an adult becoming stuck in a revolving door of crisis and crime. She cites that the Ministry of Justice research in 2019 found that though only 15% of all pupils were eligible for free school meals, they made up over two-fifths (43%) of prolific offenders and a third (32%) of non-prolific offenders.

Outcome: We will have safe environments, including in the most deprived areas.

The Impact of Place: Those who are most likely to suffer from poverty are also the most likely to live in deprived environments or suffer from social isolation. People in poverty may experience worse environments which are poorly served by services, shops and public transport.¹⁹



This can often exacerbate the impact of living in poverty. Where there is a lack of essential services such as a post office, primary school, supermarket or a Doctor's Surgery, people have the added expense of paying for transport to access support.

15 BMA, 2017. "Health at a Price" <https://www.bma.org.uk/media/2084/health-at-a-price-2017.pdf>

16 S Fitzpatrick, G Bramley, F Sosenko, J Blenkinsopp, J Wood, S Johnsen, M Littlewood and B Watts (2018). "Destitution in the UK 2018. JRF. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/cost-of-living/destitution-in-the-uk-2018>

17 Buttle (2019) states that children in poverty are much more vulnerable to criminal exploitation and becoming involved in gangs; explaining that some of the reasons for this include high levels of exclusion from school, a lack of afterschool activities and difficulties accessing further education.

18 Borysik, 2020. "New Generation : Preventing young adults being caught in the revolving door. Revolving Doors Agency.

19 Maitre, Russell and Smyth (2021) state that while poor families are geographically dispersed and many do not live in disadvantaged areas, they are more likely than high-income families to live in neighbourhoods with problems of crime, poor services and environmental pollution. B Maitre, H Russell, E Smyth, 2021. "The dynamics of child poverty in Ireland : Evidence from the Growing Up in Ireland survey." ESRI Research series 121 May 2021. <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS121.pdf>

Often, areas of multiple deprivation face the loss of basic services and amenities such as banks and post offices, and large retailers may be reluctant to locate in poorer areas.²⁰ Those living in rural areas also face a range of issues related to place. Many areas face high levels of fuel poverty and limited access to health, recreational and educational centres. For those with limited resources this can be made worse by a limited public transport network in many rural or isolated areas. This is an issue in particular for those who lack access to a car or have mobility issues.²¹

As the Social Mobility Commission stated in its annual report **“there is a particular challenge for people living in neighbourhoods and places where, for a whole variety of reasons, educational and economic outcomes appear to be poor across generations.”**²²

Outcome: We will have strong communities with improved physical infrastructure, particularly in areas suffering the highest levels of deprivation.

Housing (including Fuel Poverty): Growing up in poverty too often means living in poor quality housing which can have an impact on children’s health, well-being and education²³. Good quality housing is essential to people’s health and wellbeing. There is a clearly evidenced relationship between housing and poverty. These links are embedded throughout the poverty measures that we use, with figures available before and after housing costs. In 2019/20, individuals living in the social housing were at the highest risk of relative poverty, both before and after housing costs, at 25% and 32% respectively.



A range of research highlights that families on low incomes are more likely to live in overcrowded homes, with overcrowding being four times as prevalent in social-rented housing compared to owner occupation. The British Medical Association (2017) has also highlighted that many individuals on low incomes face ‘fuel poverty’, which results in them living in a cold, damp home leading to a higher risk of poor health outcomes as well as increased morbidity and mortality. This leads to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and mental health problems, as well as increased minor illnesses and exacerbation of existing conditions such as arthritis and rheumatism. Fuel poverty levels in Northern Ireland have fluctuated from 27% in 2001, to 44% in 2009 and 22% in 2016 as reported in the NI House Condition Survey. The most recent modelled fuel poverty estimate using the 2016 baseline data estimated a fuel poverty figure of 27% in 2022²⁴.

Outcome: Everyone has access to good quality, affordable and sustainable housing.

20 Dowler, Elizabeth, (2008) ‘Health and inequalities the challenge for sustaining just consumption’, Local Environment Vol 13 No 8 pp 759-772.

21 https://pureadmin.qub.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/234832021/Ryan_McGuire_Thesis.pdf

22 State of the Nation 2022 : A fresh approach to social mobility

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1084566/State_of_the_Nation_2022_A_fresh_approach_to_social_mobility.pdf, p3

23 As stated in L Pople, L Rodrigues and S Royston, 2013. “Through Young Eyes.” The Children’s Commission on Poverty. <https://production.basw.co.uk/policy-and-practice/resources/through-young-eyes-childrens-commission-poverty>

24 <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/working-with-us/research/house-condition-survey>

The Lived Experience of those in Poverty: Our stakeholders have told us that maximising the use of appropriate evidence in developing and implementing anti-poverty interventions and policies are essential in ensuring that supports are targeted at the areas where they will have the greatest impact. This was reflected in both the Expert Panel's report²⁵ and the Co-design Group's report²⁶.



We will take steps to involve those experiencing or at risk of poverty by taking forward policies and programmes within this strategy. This work will be delivered through a number of initiatives.

Outcome: Policies that are brought forward as part of this Strategy are focused on addressing the real life impacts of poverty and based on a range of evidence including lived experience.

Advice Services: Good quality advice services can help people find their way out of poverty. Common areas where advice is sought include welfare benefits, debt, housing, childcare and employment.



The JRF²⁷ has also stated that the voluntary sector, community groups and faith organisations offer lifelines enabling people to escape poverty and have a vital role in facilitating and enabling communities and individuals to reduce poverty locally. They explain that frontline providers of services and community and voluntary sector organisations are usually the first point of contact for people in poverty.

Outcome: People experiencing or at risk of poverty have access to free, quality-assured advice services.

²⁵ Report from the Anti-Poverty Strategy Expert Advisory Panel | Department for Communities

²⁶ <https://www.nicva.org/article/members-of-the-dfc-anti-poverty-strategy-co-design-group-produce-key-recommendations-paper#:~:text=Members%20of%20the%20Department%20for%20Communities%20%28DfC%29%20Anti-Poverty>

²⁷ JRF. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2016 . "We can solve poverty in the UK – a strategy for governments, business, communities and citizens."

Minimising the Impacts of Poverty:

Strategic commitments to be delivered in the first years of the Strategy:

- We will continue to deliver a package of welfare mitigations, keeping the level of support under review as resources and evidence become available, whilst lobbying Westminster on reform as appropriate. (Department for Communities)
- We will lobby Westminster to maintain the triple lock guarantee in relation to pension payments. (Department for Communities)
- We will develop and deliver a Fuel Poverty Strategy. We will also design and deliver a new Fuel Poverty Energy Efficiency Scheme – Warm, Healthy Homes. (Department for Communities)
- We will implement agreed changes that are designed to improve access to and delivery of Discretionary Support. (Department for Communities)
- We will continue to provide assistance with the payment of upfront childcare costs through the Adviser Discretion Fund. (Department for Communities)
- We will provide advice, increase awareness and provide focused support to ensure that older people, and children and adults with disabilities can access their full benefit entitlement. This will include a programme of work to promote Pension Credit uptake and delivery of the Make the Call wraparound service. (Department for Communities)
- The Executive will continue its commitment to ensure the Civil Service is a Living Wage employer. We will ensure that payment of the Living Wage must be included as a condition of contract for all tenders. (Executive/Department of Finance)
- Through a range of actions we will minimise the cost of school attendance, this will include continued provision of free school meals (FSM) and Uniform Grants (UG). (Department of Education)
- We will introduce legislation to ensure that school uniforms are affordable for all families. (Department of Education)
- We will develop and deliver a new Safer Communities Strategic Approach, based on Trauma Informed and Public Health approaches, with the aim of increasing community safety and confidence. (Department of Justice)

- We will develop and deliver a new People and Place Strategic Framework to deliver an effective and more integrated place-based approach to target deprivation, based on objective need. (Department for Communities)
- We will continue to deliver the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework, which invests in a range of collaborative initiatives to tackle rural poverty, isolation, loneliness and health and wellbeing issues. (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs)
- We will deliver the NI Food Strategy Framework to help focus collective efforts addressing significant societal challenges directly and indirectly linked to food. This will have impacts in relation to both people's health and food poverty. (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs)
- We will ensure that everyone, including those in or at risk of poverty, has access to good quality, affordable and sustainable homes. This will include work to tackle a range of issues including revitalisation of the Housing Executive and transformation of the Private Rented Sector. We will oversee the development of action plans as part of the implementation of the Executive Housing Supply Strategy. (Department for Communities)
- We will work with the Transforming Medication Safely NI (TMSNI) programme to support implementation of the Community Development Health Network (CDHN) 'Our Lives, Our Meds, Our Health' report to improve safe practices with medicines through addressing health inequalities. (Department of Health)
- We will continue the Healthy Start Scheme in Northern Ireland, which provides a pre-paid card for pregnant women and families with young children to access nutritious healthy food. This improves long term health for mothers and children and frees up household income for other needs and addresses health inequalities. (Department of Health)
- We will continue to work with the CDHN through the Building the Community Pharmacy Partnership (BCPP) programme to strengthen links between community groups and their local pharmacies, with actions targeted at the most deprived and impoverished communities in order to address health inequalities and the social determinants of health. (Department of Health)
- We will continue to support the advice sector to ensure that good quality, free, independent, advice is available to those living in or at risk of poverty. We will refresh the policy framework for delivery of advice to enhance collaboration and provide more integrated independent advice and debt services. (Department for Communities)

5. Supporting People to Exit Poverty



In order to tackle poverty in a long term and sustainable way, it is essential that we work with people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in order to help them 'exit poverty'. This can be achieved by government working together with support services and families in a truly collaborative and complementary way. Through this approach we can tackle the long-term consequences of poverty.

Employment/Economic Conditions: Work has been identified as the most effective long-term way out of poverty for working age people, but to help ensure these routes are available we need to take steps to build our economy, grow productivity and create good quality jobs.



JRF (2021) states that **in-work poverty** has largely continued on an upward trend and stood at almost 13% in 2018/19. Research has stated that Northern Ireland's issue in relation to low pay relates to the private sector. Whereas jobs in the public sector paid on average the same as Great Britain, private sector pay was 16% lower²⁸).

Sissons, Green and Lee (2017)²⁹ present research that demonstrates there is a significant proportion of the workforce who are employed in **insecure and poor quality jobs**. This issue is further complicated by the number of people working on **temporary** and **zero hour contracts**.

Outcome: A strong and growing economy with a wide range of good jobs across both the public and private sector providing opportunities that are accessible to those in poverty.

28 T MacInnes, H Aldridge, A Parekh and P Kenway, 2012. "Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland." <https://www.jrf.org.uk/monitoring-poverty-and-social-exclusion-in-northern-ireland-2012>

29 P Sissons, A E Green and N Lee, 2018. "Linking the sectoral employment structure and household poverty in the United Kingdom." Work, Employment and Society, 32(6), pp1078-1098. https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/84204/7/Lee_Linking-the-sectoral.pdf

Gaining employment: There is no doubt that for those who can work, employment presents one of the best, most effective and sustainable routes out of poverty.³⁰



Research³¹ has noted that a father's and mother's entry into full time employment is significantly related to the chances of children exiting economic vulnerability. Barnard (2018) found that Northern Ireland had higher **worklessness** and **lower employment** than elsewhere in the UK and that the proportion of people in poverty in workless households, in contrast with the UK, has increased slightly over time.

Outcome: People will be able to access clear pathways to work and be supported in developing the skills and behaviours they need to access and prosper in the workplace.

Training and further education: While the importance of childhood education has already been referenced, it is also important to highlight that further education provides a route for adults to develop their skills and potentially exit poverty through higher paid employment. This also more broadly benefits us as a society by developing a more productive and competitive economy.



ONS 2015³², found that the level of qualifications an individual holds is related to their likelihood of exiting poverty when entering employment. Crisp, Gore and Pearson (2014)³³ state that in general terms, improved qualifications lead to better wages, and this can lift people out of poverty.

The Social Mobility Commission has also highlighted that participating in more training significantly increases the chances of escaping from low pay. However, low paid workers with limited or no qualifications, are significantly less likely to undertake training³⁴.

More recently in research published in February 2023, the Social Mobility commission highlighted that studying for a qualification in higher education (HE) or further education (FE) positively correlates with someone's future earnings³⁵.

Outcome: Young people and adults will be able to develop their skills and careers through a range of supported educational initiatives beyond school.

30 The Joseph Rowntree Foundation in their 2016 paper "We can solve poverty in the UK – A Strategy for governments, businesses, communities and citizens" clearly state that being in a job generally offers the best route out of poverty. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/we-can-solve-poverty-in-the-uk>

31 Maitre, Russell and Smyth (2021)

32 Office for National Statistics, 2015. Poverty and Employment Transitions in the UK and EU : 2007-2012. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/povertyandemploymenttransitionsintheukandeu/2015-03-10#:~:text=The%20percentage%20of%20people%20who,73%25%20in%202010%20to%202012.>

33 R Crisp, T Gore, and S Pearson, 2014. "Reducing poverty in the UK: A collection of evidence reviews." Joseph Rowntree Foundation. <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/22579/1/Reducing-poverty-reviews%20JRF.pdf>

34 Social Mobility Commission October 2020. Learning Ladders – The Role of Adult Training in supporting progression from Low Pay. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/learning-ladders-adult-training-and-progression-out-of-low-pay/learning-ladders-the-role-of-adult-training-in-supporting-progression-from-low-pay>

35 Social Mobility Commission February 2023. Labour Market Value of Higher and Further Education Qualifications : A Summary. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/labour-market-value-of-higher-and-further-education-qualifications-a-summary-report/labour-market-value-of-higher-and-further-education-qualifications-a-summary-report>

Childcare: Supporting those with caring responsibilities, and in particular children, is also a key issue. By ensuring affordable childcare is available we can assist in enabling working families to increase the hours they work, playing an important part in helping them escape poverty³⁶.



HM Government (2014) claims that there is evidence of higher rates of worklessness in larger families, citing a combination of higher childcare costs and issues of co-ordination between different agencies (for example school, nursery and childminder) as factors likely to deter mothers of large families from entering the labour market.

Outcome: We will identify ways to assist socio-economically disadvantaged families in addressing gaps in childcare provision to ensure they can maximise their potential in the workplace.

Supporting People to Exit Poverty:

Strategic commitments to be delivered in the first years of the Strategy:

- We will prepare and deliver a programme which will offer inclusive pathways to work. (Department for Communities)
- We will address regional imbalance in our economy through the Sub-Regional Economic Plan to ensure that people have access to quality employment regardless of where they live. (Department of Economy)
- We will improve the quality of employment across the economy through a new Employment Rights Bill, a Good Jobs Charter and by increasing uptake of the real Living Wage through funding the NI franchise of the Living Wage Foundation. (Department of Economy)
- We will implement the all-age Careers Action Plan. (Department of Economy)
- We will deliver high quality, industry relevant skills and training programmes. We will implement the Skills, Careers and Apprenticeship Action Plans. (Department of Economy)
- A budget of £23m has been allocated in 2025/26 to provide a 15% childcare subsidy for working parents eligible to Tax Free Childcare. (Department of Education)
- We will bring forward a draft Early Learning and Childcare Strategy for public consultation to Executive colleagues in autumn 2025. (Department of Education)

6. Monitoring, Reporting and Governance

As the Strategy clearly demonstrates, dealing with poverty is not something that can be taken forward by one Department, or even the Executive, acting in isolation. It is only through meaningful and sustainable co-operation across all of society that we will be able to deliver on our strategic vision.

It is also essential that we acknowledge that this is a long term Strategy, and therefore it is important that we build flexibility and resilience into our governance and monitoring mechanisms which will allow us both to monitor the effectiveness of actions, but also update and react to changing circumstances and developments in the data available for tackling poverty.

Governance Structures

The Anti-Poverty Strategy remains an Executive Strategy and as such will be overseen at NICS level by a single **Anti-Poverty Strategy Board**. This Board will be Chaired by the Head of the Civil Service and attended by Senior Civil Service representatives from all Departments. This Board will meet regularly and will assess the effectiveness of the Strategy, agree changes and updates to the actions plans and sign off on formal reports.

The **Anti-Poverty Strategy Board** will be supported in this work by three **Pillar Sub-Committees**. These will be responsible for delivery under each of the Strategy’s three pillars and will be chaired by a representative nominated by the Permanent Secretary for the relevant Department. **(Appropriate Department to be determined)**

- Minimising Risks (XX)
- Minimising Impact (XX)
- Exiting Poverty (XX)

Each Pillar Sub-Committee will be responsible for monitoring their progress on the action plan, identifying and adding new actions where this is appropriate and providing information as requested to the Anti-Poverty Strategy Board.

Consideration will also be given to how best to involve those with lived experience of Poverty and supporting organisations.

Monitoring

Each outcome will be underpinned by the action plan which will be updated on an ongoing basis.

To track the Strategy’s progress against its vision and pillars, a number of indicators will be used to monitor progress over time.

Monitoring will also be undertaken at the levels of pillars. However, this will be undertaken in a pro-active and flexible manner. Each Sub-Committee will identify and source appropriate statistics

which match the current actions captured within their pillars. This will ensure a 'live' approach which allows for monitoring to reflect the current prioritised actions within each pillar.

Proposed Measures

Vision/Overall Strategy

- The percentage of individuals living in relative poverty after housing costs (AHC).
- The percentage of children living in relative poverty (AHC).
- The percentage of working age adults living in relative poverty (AHC).
- The percentage of pensioners living in relative poverty (AHC).

Pillars/Outcomes

1. Minimising the risk of falling into poverty

- Educational Attainment Gap – Difference between the percentage of non-free school meal entitled (non-FSME) school leavers and the percentage of FSME school leavers achieving at level 2 or above including GCSE English and Maths.
- Disability Employment Gap – Percentage in employment by disability status.
- Standardised Admission rate – Alcohol related/drug related causes.

2. Minimising the impacts of poverty

- Healthy life expectancy – (Gap between most and least deprived).
- Percentage of people who were victims of any NI safe community survey crime.
- Number of households in housing stress.

3. Supporting people to exit poverty

- Percentage of Employees earning on or above the Real Living Wage (aged 18 and over).
- Percentage who are economically inactive for any reason other than being a student (aged 16 to 64).
- Proportion of 16 to 24 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

While indicators are included under a particular pillar, it is expected that some indicators will inform aspects relevant to other pillars, and poverty overall.

Actions

While the high-level Strategy indicators outlined in the above section will provide a useful tool to monitor societal trends, it is important to recognise that they will also be influenced by many factors outside of the control of the Strategy. Therefore, it is also important to monitor the impact/effectiveness of each action within the strategy, as these are the activities which Departments control and can be held accountable for. Monitoring at action level also allows for earlier feedback, providing insight on what is working, allowing decisions to be taken quickly to amend actions if they are not producing the desired results.

Individual actions will be reported on by the owning Department.

Quality of the Indicators

All of the indicators are composed of official statistics produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). Official statistics adhere to the Code of Practice for Statistics which outlines principles and practices to follow when producing statistics to ensure high quality, reliable outputs.

The indicators have been identified by NISRA statisticians in collaboration with policy colleagues to ensure they are relevant to demonstrate progress.

Where relevant, indicators have been chosen to match those included in the NI Executive's PfG Wellbeing Framework.

Reporting on Progress

Performance is assessed by comparing the most recent data point for an indicator with the baseline figure.

DfC will report annually on the progress of each indicator, the timing of which will be dependent on when additional data becomes available.

Future Development

The Department will engage with stakeholders and users to gather feedback on the current indicators. Indicators will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate, identify and address any potential gaps, and to improve or replace existing measures as necessary.

For example, the Department is working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to develop a new measure of poverty, called "Below Averages Resources", which takes account of inescapable costs such as childcare. If development is successful, then this measure will be considered for inclusion.

To complement the chosen indicators, the Department will continue to monitor and publish a range of poverty measures including; Relative Poverty Before Housing Costs for individuals, children, working age adults and pensioners; Absolute Poverty Before and After Housing Costs for individuals, children, working age adults and pensioners; Children in low income and material deprivation; Persistent Poverty (published by DWP) and Food Poverty (published by DfC and Trussell). This will allow the story behind the overall trends to be identified.

In addition to this, work will continue with DWP and other colleagues in considering developing new, broader measures of poverty to help enhance our overview of this important area of the Executive's work.

Review

A formal mid-point review of the Anti-Poverty Strategy will be carried out by the Department for Communities and other Executive departments during its fifth year of operation. The findings of this report will be approved by the Executive and published on the Department for Communities website. This allows the Strategy to be flexible and reactive to emerging issues and needs.

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Report to:	Active and Healthy Communities Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 September 2025
Subject:	Newcastle Centre Site Selection
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Conor Haughey, Assistant Director Healthy Living
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Kerri McConnell, Head of Indoor Leisure (Acting)

<table><tr><td>For decision</td><td></td><td>For noting only</td><td>x</td></tr></table>		For decision		For noting only	x
For decision		For noting only	x		
1.0	Purpose and Background				
1.1	<u>Purpose</u> To note the contents of this report on the development of the Newcastle Centre as the preferred site for the redevelopment into a modern leisure complex. <u>Background</u> The development of a new centre in Newcastle has been under consideration prior to the reform of Local Government in 2015. Other sites have been considered for the location of a new leisure facility in Newcastle, including a green-field site in Donard Park, and legacy Down District Council’s proposed purchase of the former St Mary’s PS site in Newcastle was unsuccessful. Council had also considered the sale of the current Newcastle Centre site for a hotel development. Over the past two decades, multiple feasibility studies and appraisals have identified the urgent need for replacement leisure facilities in Newcastle. Reports undertaken include: • 2000: Newcastle 2000 Feasibility Study (KPMG) • 2002: Mourne Gateway Recreation Centre Concept (Deloitte) • 2007: Redevelopment of the Annesley Buildings, Newcastle Centre and Tropicana Pool (Kennedy Fitzgerald & Associates) • 2011: Economic Appraisal for Newcastle Leisure Centre (BDO) • 2016: Newcastle Centre Feasibility Study (WDR & RT Taggart) • 2017: NMD Council Sports Facility Strategy (in partnership with Sport NI) • 2019: Newcastle Community/Leisure Provision Feasibility Study (Insight Business Services) These reports consistently confirmed the inadequacy of existing facilities and the requirement for modern wet and dry leisure provision. The Newcastle Centre site was agreed as the most appropriate location for this redevelopment.				
2.0	Key issues				
2.1	Historical studies (KPMG 2000, Deloitte 2002, Kennedy Fitzgerald 2007, BDO 2011, WDR & RT Taggart 2016, Sport NI 2017, Insight Business Services 2019) have consistently identified the Newcastle Centre as the site for investment in modern leisure facilities. Newcastle Community/Leisure Provision Feasibility Study evidenced strong support, representing over 3,200 users, with the Newcastle Centre identified as the preferred location.				

	Newcastle Centre offers regeneration potential, aligning with Council's Corporate Plan to promote healthier lifestyles and enhance town centre vibrancy. The site can provide opportunities for a mixed-use approach, including leisure, cultural, and commercial facilities, maximising benefits to residents, visitors, and the local economy.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	To note the contents of this report.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	N/a
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation – N/a</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)

6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐ If no, please complete the following: The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs ☐
7.0	Appendices
	None
8.0	Background Documents
	None

Report to:	Active and Healthy Communities Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 September 2025
Subject:	Good Relations Programme Update
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Alison Robb, Assistant Director Community Development
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Martina Flynn, Head of Engagement

For decision	For noting only	x
1.0	Purpose and Background	
1.1	Purpose - To note the report. - To note the update provided on the District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP) 2025/26. Background The Executive Office (TEO) provides funding on an annual basis to support delivery of the Council Good Relations Action Plan. Good Relations Week Good Relations Week 2025 takes place from 13 to 19 October, with the theme "Connect", recognising that the foundation of a better community is built on People, Planet and Prosperity. Events celebrating Good Relations will take place across the District including Historical Talks, Funding Fayres, free tours of both Downpatrick and Newry & Mourne Museums, and Newry Diwali Festival. All events will be profiled on Council social media channels. A 'Celebration of Good Relations' event will take place on 16 October in the Canal Court Hotel, Newry. The evening will include a panel discussion, performances from local groups in receipt of Good Relations funding from Council and presentations from a range of funders on potential sources of financial support for Good Relations projects. Additional funding from TEO to support Good Relations programme delivery NMDDC were recently successful in securing additional funding of £20,000 from The Executive Office (TEO) to deliver projects to support social and racial cohesion as part of wider delivery under the District Councils Good Relations Programme. The additional funding will support the delivery of awareness training, confidence building events and support to existing cultural festivals & events across the District. Awareness training will be delivered to Council staff, Elected Representatives and community groups. The training will look at the impact and challenges of immigration at a local level, and challenge myths and misinformation around immigration and migrant communities. The workshops will be delivered by an experienced facilitator.	

	Minority communities' support and confidence building sessions will be organised with support from the Council's Ethnic Minority Support Centre. At these sessions there will be an opportunity for minority communities / newcomer families to be introduced to local support services available across the District, as well as a chance to meet key contacts within their local community. The funding will also support local communities to share their culture and traditions in a public platform, building confidence in the local community and addressing stereotypes. The calendar of festivals will include Newry Mela, Diwali, Eid Festival, Chinese New Year as well as plans to incorporate cultural elements into existing local community festivals.
2.0	Key issues
2.1	None
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	That the Committee: • Note the report. • Note the update provided on the District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP) 2025/26.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	All costs provided for within the DCGRP budget for 2025/26.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐

5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation – N/a</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	Appendices
7.1	None.
8.0	Background Documents
8.1	None.

Report to:	Active and Healthy Communities Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 September 2025
Subject:	Play Strategy Programme of Works for Year 2 and Year 3
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Conor Haughey, Assistant Director healthy living
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Declan Crilly, Head of Outdoor Leisure

For decision		For noting only	X																		
1.0	Purpose and Background																				
1.1	Purpose To note the contents of this report on the agreed programme of works for Years 2 and 3 of the Council’s Play Strategy. Background The Play Strategy sets out a plan for the refurbishment and development of play parks across the district, prioritising sites based on need, condition, and community demand. Following completion of Year 1 works, Officers have developed the detailed programme for Years 2 and 3 which is included in this report for Members’ information.																				
2.0	Key issues																				
2.0	The programme of works identifies the play parks scheduled for refurbishment during Year 2 (2025/26) and Year 3 (2026/27), and the budget was approved at AHC in May 2025 for the works. The works will be delivered in phases to minimise disruption and ensure value for money. Contract periods for each site have been identified and are summarised in the table below.																				
3.0	Recommendations																				
3.1	Programme of Works (Years 2 and 3) <table><tr><th>Play Park</th><th>Start Date</th></tr><tr><td>Bishopscourt, Downpatrick</td><td>25/08/2025</td></tr><tr><td>Derrybeg, Newry</td><td>01/09/2025</td></tr><tr><td>Ardross, Crossmaglen</td><td>06/10/2025</td></tr><tr><td>Island Park, Newcastle</td><td>13/10/2025</td></tr><tr><td>Rathview, Crossmaglen</td><td>10/11/2025</td></tr><tr><td>Lismore, Crossmaglen</td><td>26/01/2026</td></tr><tr><td>Mourneview, Newry</td><td>16/02/2026</td></tr><tr><td>Bridge Street, Downpatrick</td><td>13/10/2026</td></tr></table>			Play Park	Start Date	Bishopscourt, Downpatrick	25/08/2025	Derrybeg, Newry	01/09/2025	Ardross, Crossmaglen	06/10/2025	Island Park, Newcastle	13/10/2025	Rathview, Crossmaglen	10/11/2025	Lismore, Crossmaglen	26/01/2026	Mourneview, Newry	16/02/2026	Bridge Street, Downpatrick	13/10/2026
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Bridge Street, Downpatrick	13/10/2026																				

4.0	Resource implications
4.1	Capital: All projects will be delivered within the agreed Capital Programme budget.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
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6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐ If no, please complete the following:

	The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs	☐
7.0	Appendices	
	None	
8.0	Background Documents	
	None	