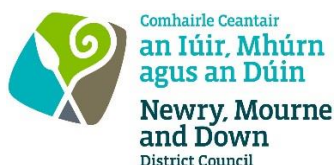


Policy title: Bilingualism Policy



Policy Control

Policy reference:	CS2
Title of Policy:	Bilingualism Policy
Version:	3
Directorate / Departmental ownership:	Corporate Services / Legal & People / Corporate Policy Section
Officer responsible:	Colin Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy
Date of ratification:	7 October 2014
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Equality screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed by:	Colin Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy
Equality screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment date:	Equality screening – 4 July 2025 Rural Needs Impact Assessment – 19 June 2025
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1. Title of policy

Bilingualism Policy

2. Statement

The Bilingualism policy sets out the Council's commitment to facilitate and encourage the promotion and use of both the Irish language and the English language in the Council area.

Council approves this policy to ensure linguistic equality for all who avail of and/or provide Council services as far as is reasonably possible.

3. Aim

The aim of this policy is to build on the Council's commitment to celebrate diversity by:

- i. The delivery of equality of opportunity for all who avail of and / or provide Council services using progressive realisation
- ii. To fulfil Council's obligations as contained in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

4. Scope

The Bilingualism Policy applies to all Council Departments with regard to the functions they deliver and applies to all communication and engagement between internal and external stakeholders.

The policy objectives are to:

- a) Enable everyone who receives or uses Council services, or contributes to the democratic process, to do so through the medium of Irish or English, according to personal choice and active offer;
- b) To foster and promote the use and visibility of Irish in the internal administration of Council, in its dealings with other public bodies and also with bodies that provide services to the public in the District;
- c) Recognise that members of the public, Council members, management and employees can express their views and needs better in their preferred language;
- d) Recognise that enabling the public to use their preferred language is a matter of good practice and customer care and not a concession;
- e) Seek to remove, where possible, restrictions which would discourage or work against the maintenance or development of the language.

5. Related policies and legislation

- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Development Naming Postal Numbering and Erection of Nameplates Policy and Procedures
- Irish Language Strategy 2024-2027
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Brand Identity Guidelines
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Bilingualism Procedures

- Guidelines for the Use of the Irish Language in Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998)
- The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
- The Belfast Agreement / Good Friday Agreement 1998
- St Andrews Agreement
- New Decade, New Approach (2020)
- Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022

6. Definitions

Progressive Realisation

The Council will take steps with a view to achieving progressively the full realisation of the Bilingualism Policy using affordable resources.

This is known as the principle of "progressive realisation". It acknowledges that some of the actions may be difficult in practice to achieve in a short period of time and be subject to resource constraints, but requires the Council to act as best it can within its means to achieve real and measurable progress with respect to Council functions.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) is a European treaty (CETS 148) adopted in 1992 under the auspices of the Council of Europe to protect and promote historical regional and minority languages in Europe.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998)

The statutory duties under Section 75 require public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and also to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations.

The Belfast Agreement / Good Friday Agreement

The Belfast Agreement / Good Friday Agreement was signed in Belfast on 10 April 1998 (Good Friday) by the British and Irish governments and endorsed by most Northern Ireland political parties. The concord was endorsed by the voters of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in separate referenda on 23 May 1998.

St Andrews Agreement

The St Andrews Agreement was an agreement between the British and Irish Governments and the political parties in relation to the devolution of power to Northern Ireland. The agreement resulted from multi-party talks held in St Andrews, Fife, Scotland from 11 October to 13 October 2006, between the two governments and all the major parties in Northern Ireland.

New Decade, New Approach (2020)

The New Decade, New Approach agreement was announced by the Irish and British governments on 9 January 2020 and endorsed by all the main political parties in Northern Ireland (NI) on 10 January.

Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022

This Act delivers on the legislative commitments on identity and language set out in New Decade, New Approach (NDNA), the document which was the basis on which the five main parties in Northern Ireland agreed to form an Executive in January 2020. The Act provides for a balanced package of identity and language measures that were carefully negotiated by the parties.

7. Department and Officer responsible

Directorate / Department	Corporate Services / Corporate Planning & Policy
Officer(s) responsible for developing the policy	Colin Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy Louise Smith, Irish Language Unit Manager

8. Policy approval process

Meeting	Date
Governance Committee Meeting	9 September 2014
Monthly Council Meeting	7 October 2014

9. Review Date

The policy will be reviewed in line with the Council's agreed policy review cycle i.e. every 4 years (as per Council's Equality Scheme commitment 4.31), or sooner to ensure it remains reflective of legislative developments.

10. Procedures and arrangements for monitoring the implementation and impact of the policy

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Irish Language Strategy, Bilingualism Procedures. Six-monthly reports on implementation of Council's Irish Language Strategy are tabled for consideration at the Irish Language Strategy Cross Party Working Group.

11. Equality Screening

The policy has been equality screened and the decision is that it not be subject to an EQIA (with no mitigating measures required).

12. Rural Needs Impact Assessment

Due regard to rural needs has been considered and a rural needs impact assessment completed.