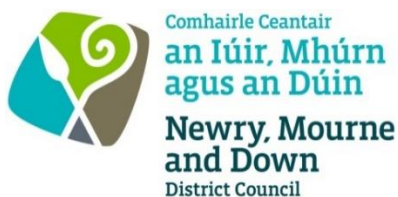


Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership

Action Plan 2025 - 2027



NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN
Labour Market Partnership
Working Together



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1. Introduction

Based on Newry Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership Action Plan 2024/2025, a review of the strategic assessment was undertaken to identify key changes to the local employability and labour market conditions as previously identified, resulting in updating the strategic priorities and themes for the 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 periods.

Strategic priorities for the 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 Action Plans identifies a number of themes, aims and key activities which are evidence based and focused on outcomes which aim to improve employability and labour market conditions across the District.

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

Engagement

In developing the Strategic Assessment and Action Plan for 2025/26 and 2026/2027, NMD LMP reviewed key strategic and policy documents; enrolled the services of Ulster University Economic Policy Centre to undertake a desktop review of existing evidence available; and held direct individual meetings with a number of LMP strategic partners, which concluded with collective engagement sessions with all partners of the NMD LMP.

The aim of the engagement process was to:

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

Implementation of the process culminated in the agreed themes, objectives, activities, and indicators as outlined in the NMD LMP Action Plans 2025/2026 and 2026/2027.

2. Executive Summary

Action Plans 2025/26 and 2026/2027

The Action Plans set out within section 7 and 10 of this document, are based on the assumption of an available operational budget as outlined in section 8 and 11 being available for the entire 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 periods. Any variance to these components will impact the level of activity and performance measures achieved.

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

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

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

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

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

A Summary of actions outlined in section 7	
SP1	
LMP Delivery and Development	
1.1 Effective delivery of NMD LMP	Ensure the delivery of the 2025/2026 Action Plan and respond to new challenges in the labour market.
1.2 Develop Action Plan for 2026/2027	A consultation exercise will be undertaken to update research, identify and inform current and future employability and skills supply, to aid in the scoping of interventions to meet skill gaps, vacancies and recruitment challenges for a future 2026/2027 Action Plan.
SP2	
To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally	
Economic Inactivity Theme	
2.1 Get Work Ready: pre-employment support	Personalised employment pathways programme to support participants into employment, education or training.
2.2 Enterprise Pathway Programme	Specialised mentoring and business support for participants between 'Go Succeed' participation and

	establishing a trading business which offers either PT or FT self-employment for the business owner.
Unemployed Theme	
2.3 Employability Academies	Identify, design and deliver a range of employment academies for skill interventions in sectors and occupations where opportunities for employment is identified with local employers.
2.4 A Place to Work	<p>Build on the 'Place to Work Campaign' which promotes NMD as a good place to work with opportunities for career pathways and progression.</p> <p>Promoting improved information on local employers, employment opportunities and career pathways, building on linkages with schools / job seeker and local businesses to promote the district as a leading employment location, creating awareness of key sectors, employment and upskilling opportunities.</p>
Disability Theme	
2.5 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Employer Engagement Workshop	Engage with local SME employers from various sectors to explain to and update on disability employment issues and outline the variety of supports available to them. Provide advice and updates on disability legislation and employment issues enabling people with disabilities to gain employment.
2.6 Diversity Participant Programme	Support unemployed or economically inactive participants with a disability closer to employment by identifying training needs and potential suitable employers. Participants to receive a dedicated personalized plan, one-to-one mentoring, to include CV development and identify potential placement opportunities.
Skilled Labour Supply	
2.7 Upskilling for Growth	Meeting employer needs and supporting career progression by upskilling employees. Provide support to employers to upskill staff to enable career progression for those in employment to facilitate vacancies and opportunities for those entering the labour market.
2.8 Skills Conference	Conference for businesses, careers teachers, school principals, training providers, recruitment consultants and academics from across Newry Mourne and Down District Council area and further afield, to develop a cohesive strategy to identify current and future skills gaps across all sectors to develop short, medium and long-term solutions to meet local skills and staff shortages.
SP3	
To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision either regionally or locally	
Increased Awareness	

3.1 Employment Pathway Events	Support delivery of Jobs Fairs and Career Fairs and events, including sectoral focused events where scope and opportunity exists.
3.2 Promote apprenticeships, traineeships and placements as pathways to employment	Promote the benefits of recruiting through opportunity pathways, such as Apprenticeships, Traineeships, and work experience placements to employers.
3.3 Increased awareness of employability and skills programmes	Increase awareness among job seekers and those who wish to upskill, of the range of employability and training support there are available.

NMD LMP will report to DfC regarding the Action Plan as requested on a quarterly basis.

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

3. Policy Context

Policy Content at a Regional level

The overarching policy context that the Labour Market Partnership Action Plan sits within remains similar to that outlined in the NMD LMP Action Plan 2024/2025.

Additional relevant policies for 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 which align to the work of the Labour Market Partnership in create challenges and opportunities with respect to strategic direction and coordination include:

Northern Ireland Draft Programme for Government – 2024 - 2027

The PfG plan is an ambitious agenda for change in NI made through partnership working to upgrade the infrastructure, grow the economy and protect the environment. Working to make sure everyone has the best possible opportunities regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, who they are, or where they live, and to enable people to live with dignity in safe communities. PfG will open doors through proposed initiatives to deliver more affordable childcare, new skills funds, and apprenticeship programmes.

Based on three missions both for now and the future and driving ambition and the lens for prioritisation to ensure delivery of better wellbeing, long-term sustainability, and a thriving economy through:

1. People: Working to support everyone at all stages of their life to ensure they have the chance to succeed by improving life opportunities.
2. Planet: Harnessing the potential of a green growth economy while ensuring we provide an equitable transition to a sustainable and affordable society as we take responsibility for decarbonising our economy and society.
3. Prosperity: Improving our economic productivity while making sure that we have an economy that works for everyone and our story continues to be an inspiration to others.

Department of Economy Sub-Regional Economic Plan

In collaboration with regional stakeholders, the plan aims to deliver regional balance across Northern Ireland through four main objectives of:

1. To increase the number of working age people in good jobs
2. To promote regional balance
3. To raise productivity
4. To reduce carbon emissions

Department of Economy Digital Skills Action Plan 2024-2034

Identifying the three levels of digital skills to include Digital Citizen, Digital Worker and Digital Maker with the pathways to achieving digital qualifications and breaking down barriers for individuals whilst addressing the labour market needs of the sector.

Local Economic Partnerships

Establishment of Local Economic Partnerships throughout Northern Ireland in collaboration with DfE and Invest NI to identify suitable projects and develop proposals for accessing dedicated funding of £45m over the next three years for capital and resource.

Local Economic Partnerships will have a key role in delivering regional balance, by bringing together central and local government, with other relevant stakeholders to create improved economic prosperity at a local level.

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

Remains as previously outlined in Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership Action Plan 2024/2025, with the addition of:

NMDDC Corporate Plan 2024-2027

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

Eight strategic objectives, aligned to the five themes of the Community Plan will be delivered in collaboration and partnership with a range of stakeholders and include:

1. Support the continued growth and development of our local economy
2. Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the district
3. Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future
4. Support regenerative tourism opportunities which promote our culture, heritage and environment
5. Empowering communities to play an active part in civic life
6. Develop and revitalise our district
7. Deliver sustainable services
8. Represent the voice of the district with our partners

4. Strategic Assessment: Key Findings

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

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

Summary of findings

Key Finding 1:

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

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

Key Finding 2:

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

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

Key Finding 3:

Low growth forecast to 2027 regarding new jobs being created

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

Key Finding 4:

Skills demand will be for Level 4 qualifications and above

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

Key Finding 5:

Higher female inactivity rates in NMD

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

Key Finding 6:

Higher disability employment rates in NMD

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

Key Finding 7:

Low level of unemployment in NMD

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

Key Finding 8:

Economic inactivity reducing in NMD

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

Key Finding 9:

Caring duties and long-term sickness reasons

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

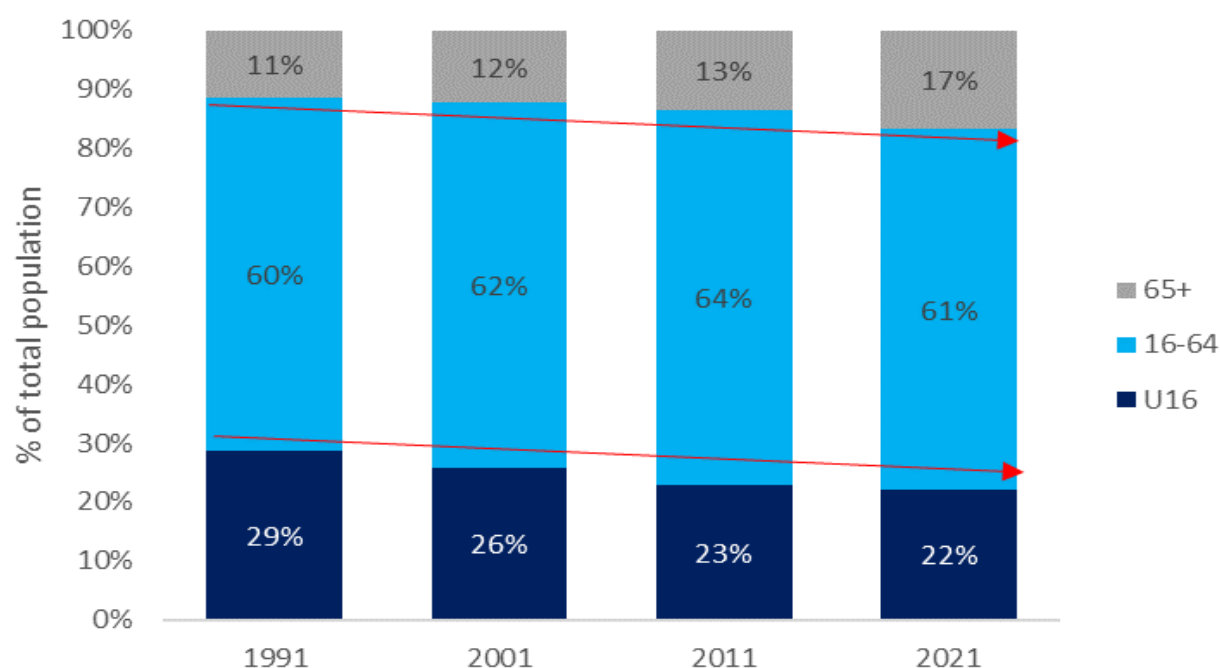
Strategic Assessment: Detailed statistical audit into the Newry Mourne and Down District Local Labour Market Structure, outlook to 2027 and possible areas of work for the Labour Market Partnership

3.1 Labour Market Overview

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

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

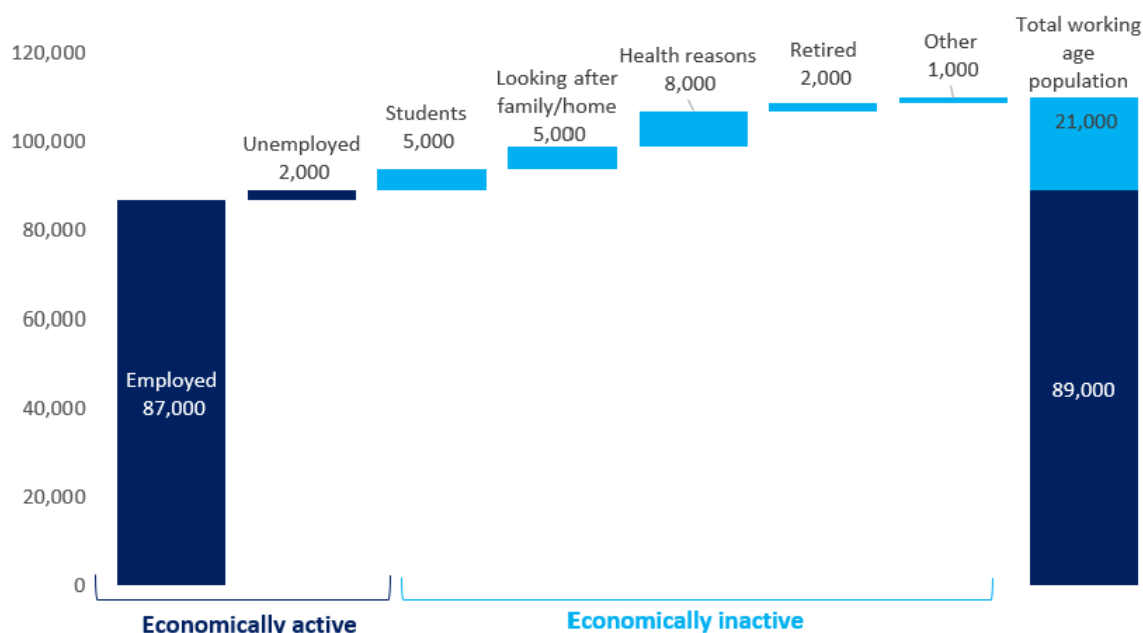
Figure 1.1: Population by age group (%), Newry, Mourne & Down, 1991-2021



Source: NI Census 1991-2021

Figure 1.2 below shows the tightness of the local labour market in NMD. In 2023 the working age population in NMD was made up of 89,000 economically active, a further 21,000 inactive (26,000 if students are included).

Figure 1.2: Profile of working age population (16-64), Newry, Mourne & Down, 2023



Source: NISRA, UUEPC analysis

3.2 Employed

The employment rate in NMD has been a particularly volatile one with some annual swings of 5-6 percentage points between 2012 and 2023. Fluctuations of this size are relatively unique to the Council area and are not mirrored across most other LGDs where employment rates move more closely in line with the NI average changes. In 2023, NMD ranked 2nd and the volatility can be further seen as the Council was down at 9th in 2021, but 3rd the year before.

Figure 1.3: Employment rate (16-64 yo), NMD vs. NI, 2011-2023

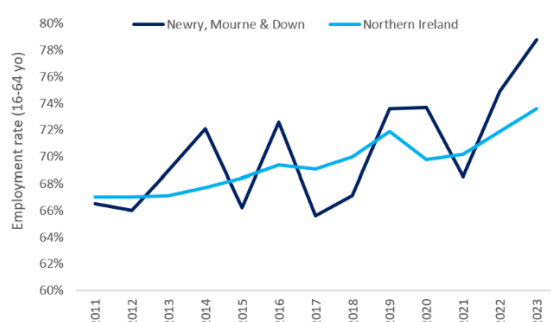
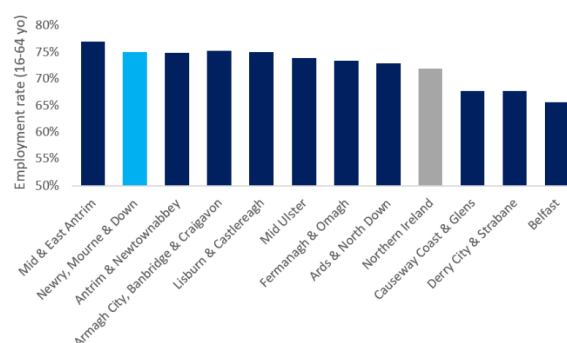


Figure 1.4: Employment rate (16-64 yo), NI LGD's, 2023



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

Employee jobs

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

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

Figure 1.5: Employee jobs by sector (%), Newry, Mourne & Down, 2022

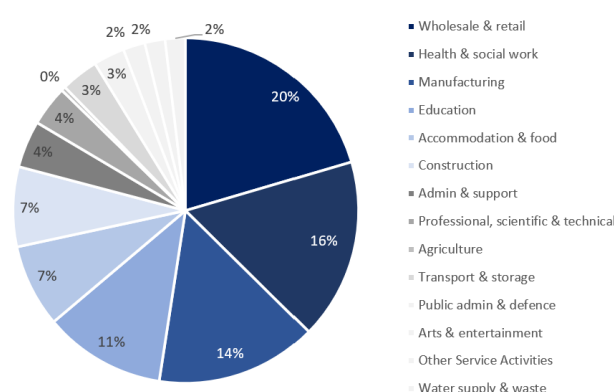
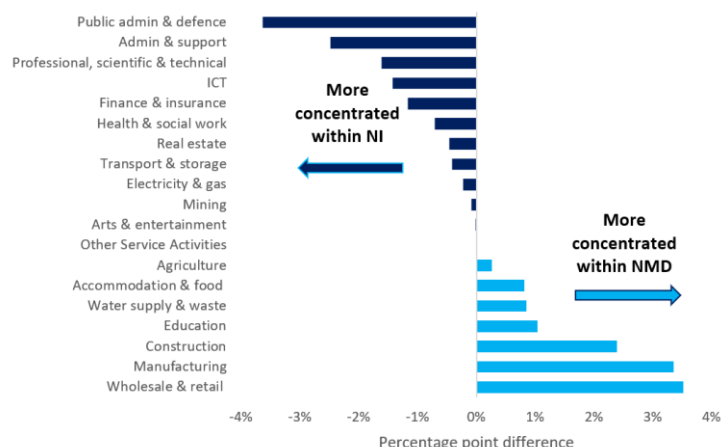


Figure 1.6: Percentage point difference in sectoral concentration, Newry Mourne & Down vs. NI, 2022



Source : BRES, UUEPC analysis

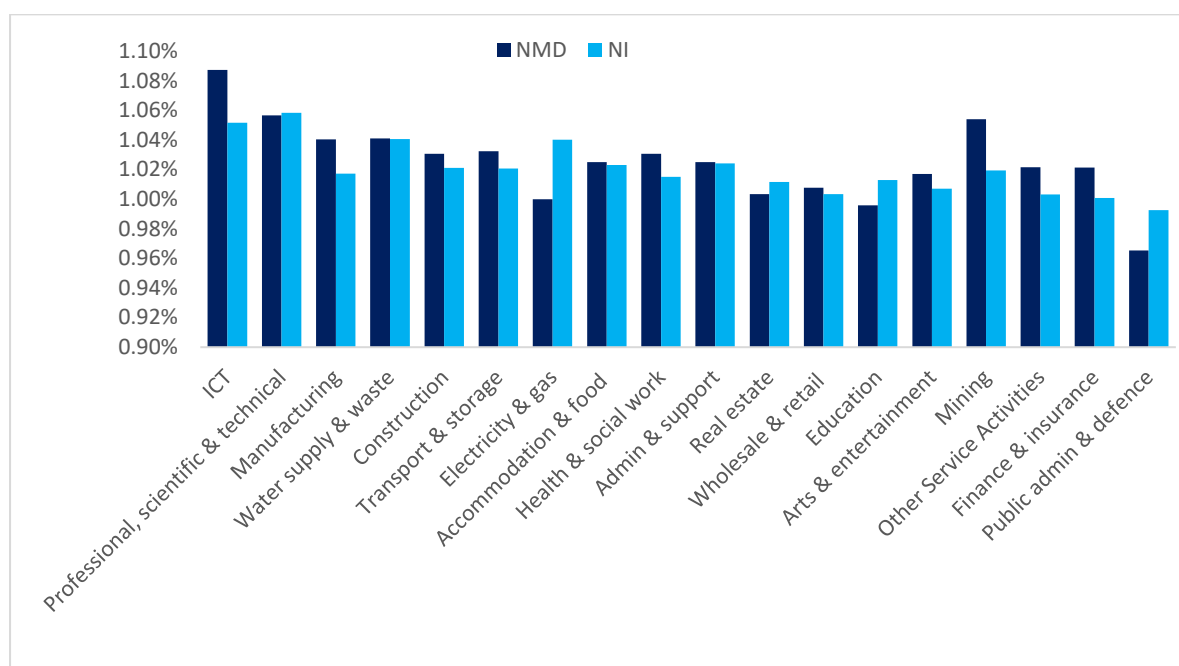
Note: Sectors with less than 1% representation have been omitted from Figures 1.5 and 1.6

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

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

Figure 1.7 compares growth rates within the sectors across the last decade. Several sectors (ICT, Professional Services and Manufacturing) have grown strongly both in the post-2008 recovery and then also during the pandemic. They have also kept pace or grown faster than the NI average, something which the Healthcare, Construction and Transport sectors have also seen.

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



Source: BRES, UUEPC analysis

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

Unemployment was much higher after the 2008 financial crisis, so there were available people to fill jobs as businesses increased their workforce to meet the steadily increasing demand they were experiencing after 2015. Migration was also an indicator working in the favour of a buoyant labour market, especially in the 2000s. The number of non-UK nationals applying for National Insurance numbers has slowed in recent years due to Brexit and the pandemic but has picked up again in 2022 and 2023, close to the heights of 2008, albeit there are now fewer EU nationals and more non-EU.

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

The number of vacancies are one signal of an active local labour market. For the period 2014/15 to 2023/24 the number of vacancies referred to the Jobs & Benefit Offices in NMD have averaged 3,300 a year or around 7% of total vacancies in NI. The last two years have seen 4,300 and 4,000 vacancies in each year, higher than average and a sign of the recovery from the pandemic, and reflecting newer, tighter pressures on the labour market. However, the most recent year's data (2023/24) (at 3,300 vacancies) suggests a return to previous trends and a cooling of the post-pandemic drive.

Disability

The tighter labour market further highlights the opportunities from improving the lower employment rates of the disabled and women. The disability employment rate in NMD was 40.3% in 2023, which is lower than the NI average (42%) but close to the 5-year moving average of 39.5%. The gap to the employment rate of those without disabilities (85%) is stark, suggesting you are more than twice as likely to be employed if you have no disability than if you have.

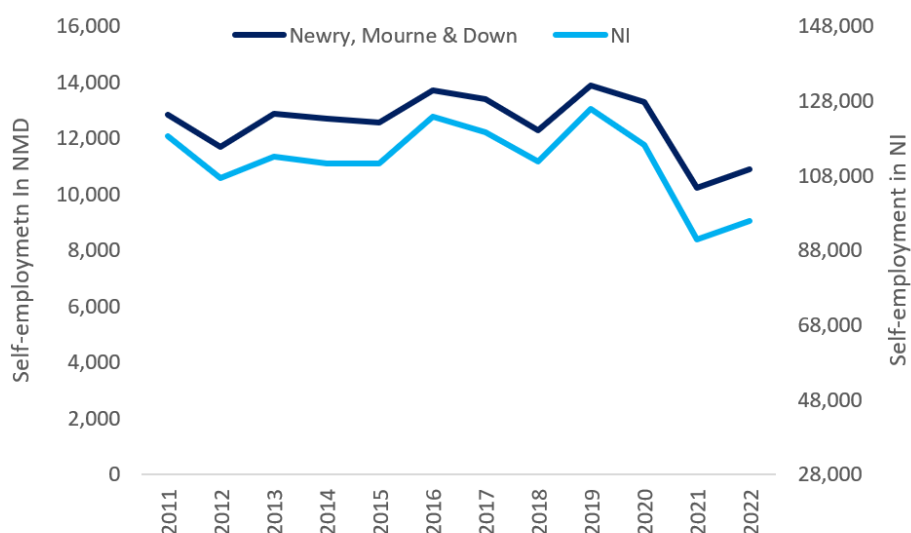
Worryingly, the disability employment rates in NMD have also been declining in recent years, which may be a knock-on effect of the pandemic though it has happened to a greater extent than in other LGDs and should be monitored closely. More widely, Northern Ireland continues to have both the lowest employment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

Self-Employed

Self-employment trends in NMD have moved in tandem with the NI average over the last decade peaking at 13,900 in 2019 and dropping to 10,900 in 2022. This was the clearest employment effect of the Covid-19 pandemic in NI (as well as GB and the Republic of Ireland) and appears to have produced a transfer across to 'employed' status opposed to self-employed.

At council level NMD experienced a slightly smaller contraction with self-employment declining by 22% over 2019-2022 compared to a 30% decline at NI level. The 2022 recovery in self-employment at the NI level has also been repeated in the Council area.

Figure 1.8: Number of self-employed, Newry, Mourne & Down vs. NI, 2011-2022



Source: UUEPC local model

The decline in self-employment in NMD – down 2,400 on two years previously – was concentrated in three main sectors: Construction (23%), Agriculture (20%) and Retail

(12%). Employee jobs within NMD account for 8% of overall employee jobs in NI whereas **self-employment within the council area accounts for 11% of total self-employed jobs showing the continuing importance of this group to the local economy.**

Underemployed

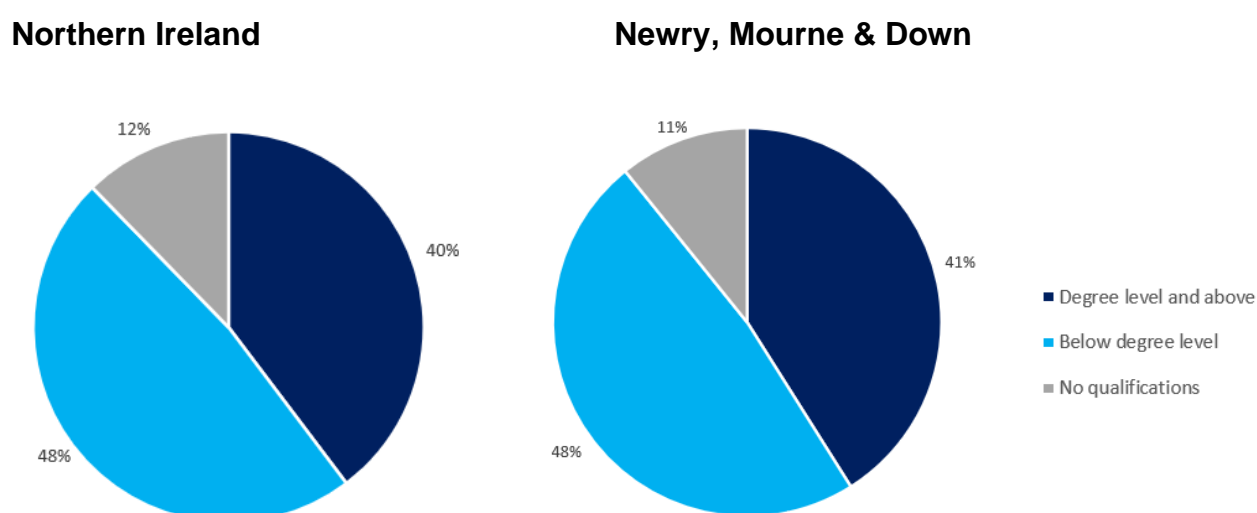
The most recent analysis of underemployment in NI from 2019¹ identified that NMD **had a higher rate of those who are underemployed** (7.7%) compared to the NI average (6.4%). If that share of those in employment still holds that would equate to approximately 6,700 individuals who have capacity to take on more hours of paid work.

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

3.3 Qualifications

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

Figure 1.9: Qualification level, NI vs. Newry, Mourne & Down, 2023



Source : NISRA (LFS Annual 2023)

Figure 1.10 illustrates how these qualification levels have changed over the recent time period (2017-2023). The proportion of people with below degree level

¹ The definition of underemployment is an individual who is employed but would like to work more hours through their current job, a supplementary job, or in a new job; see NISRA, *Underemployment in Northern Ireland* (October 2020).

qualifications has barely changed and the big structural alteration has been between those with no qualifications (a fall of 11 pp) and those with a degree level or above qualification (up 12 pp). This shows a general **increase in the qualification level of residents over time**.

The trend in qualification levels in NMD mirrors what is happening across the rest of NI. As illustrated in Figure 1.10, considerable progress has been made between 2017-2023 regarding degree level qualifications. In 2017 a 3.4p.p gap existed between Newry, Mourne & Down and the NI average, by 2022 (after a number of years of ebb and flow, the gap is **0.9 p.p gap below the NI average**. This is an important indicator to monitor across the next number of years as it points to the qualification levels among local residents and available to employers.

Figure 1.10: Resident qualification levels (%), Newry, Mourne & Down, 2017-2023

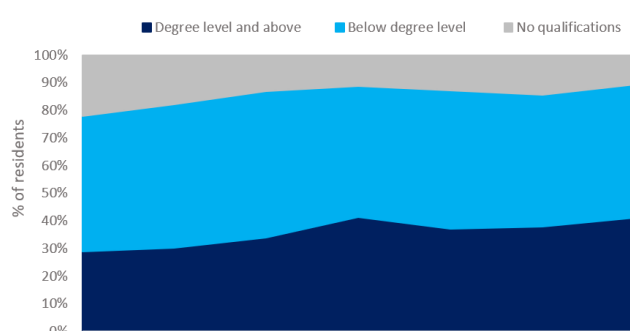
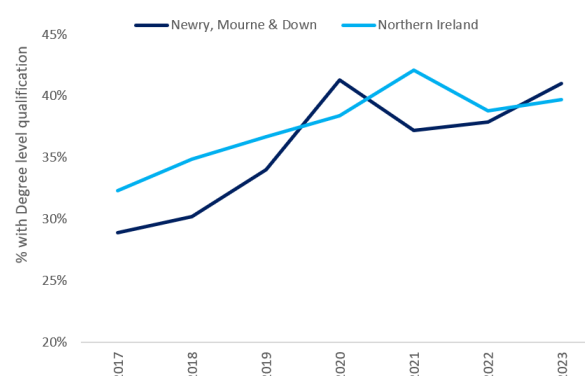


Figure 1.11: % of residents with degree level qualifications, Newry Mourne & Down vs. NI, 2017-2023



Source: NISRA (LFS annual reports)

Apprenticeships

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

Further Education

Further Education enrolments within NMD have accounted for 11%-12% of total enrolments across 2012-2023. In 202/23 this translated to approximately 10,400 students². In 2021/22, 6,605 students enrolled in Higher Education institutes were from addresses in NMD, 10% of all NI HE students. The **vast majority of these**

² These are FE enrolments within the NMD area, rather than enrolments of NMD residents within FE institutions.

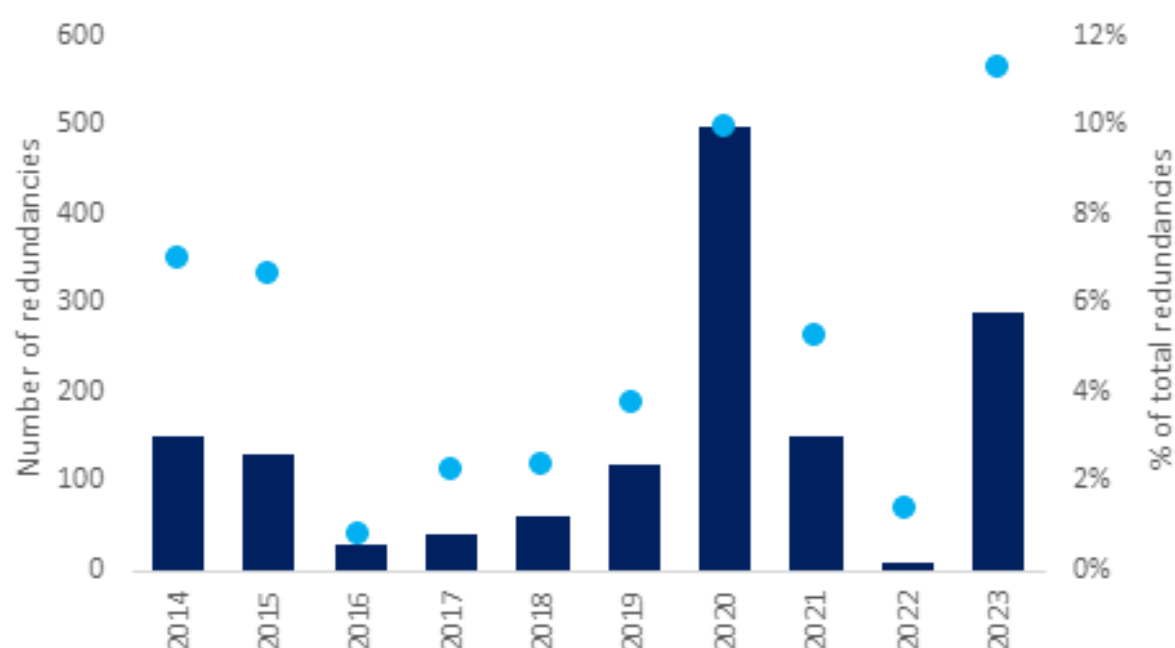
students (77%) attend HE institutions in Northern Ireland compared to 23% in GB/ other.

3.4 Unemployment

The claimant count unemployment rate in Northern Ireland and, more locally, in NMD, has returned to the historic pre-pandemic low rate of close to or below 3%.

These rates increased during the Covid-19 pandemic reaching 4.6% in 2020, as reported redundancy numbers rose. In 2020, NMD saw 500 confirmed redundancies, a considerable increase on previous years as illustrated in Figure 1.12. This figure made up 10% of total layoffs, with only three other Council areas in NI experienced greater levels of redundancies in 2020. This effect was relatively short-lived, with confirmed redundancies falling equal to and below the pre-pandemic levels in 2021 and 2022. However, there was another sharp increase in 2023 with 290 confirmed redundancies, second only to Belfast in terms of numbers.

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



Source: NINIS

The claimant count numbers provide a good indicator of both short and long-term movements in the labour market. The sharp rise between March and May 2020 can be seen in Figure 1.13, as the claimant count rate increased sharply from 2.2% to 5.9% within NMD. This type of increase was seen across all council areas in NI at the time. At the peak in May 2020, 6,600 people were registered on claimant count in NMD. As a variety of support interventions were introduced and Covid-19 restrictions eased the claimant count rate began to fall steadily.

Figure 1.13: Claimant count rate (%), Newry, Mourne & Down, January 2015 – September 2024



Source: Department for Communities

As Figure 1.13 shows the rate seems to have settled at around 3.5% in NMD, a little above the NI average and revealing the same trend of settling above the previous 2019 average rate. This increase from the 2018/19 average of 2.1% is more likely to be a permanent effect from Covid-19, and appears to be one caused by working fewer hours than not working at all. The increase in the claimant count rate translates to **around an additional 700 registered on claimant count in the council area** with a total of 3,905 recorded in September 2024.

Individuals who have been ILO unemployed for more than one year are classified as **long term unemployed**. The long term unemployment rate for NI had been declining over time, particularly since 2013's height and fell as low as 0.8% in Q2 2020, before picking up during the pandemic. The rate began to fall again in 2022 and has gone back below 1% since Q2 2023. Although this data is not available at LGD level, it is probably fair to assume (given the wider mirroring of trends) that it will have fallen in NMD also.

Graduate unemployment figure are not available at LGD level but the wider NI trends show that these levels have been the same as wider UK ones, and in 2021/2022 only 3% graduates from Higher Education institutions in NI were classed as unemployed. The proportion of graduates entering employment (74%) and continuing with further study (15%) were also very similar for NI and the UK.³

3.5 Economic inactivity

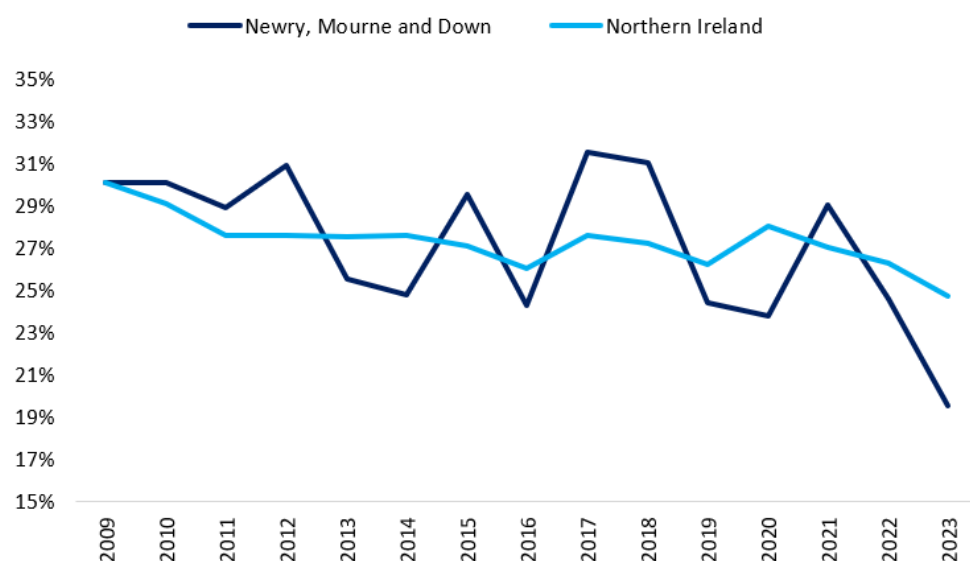
The trends for economic inactivity are volatile but point in a downward direction over time in NMD, similar to NI more generally. As Figure 1.14 shows the rate of inactivity

³ HESA, 2020/2021 graduate outcomes (2023). There are other concerns about over-qualification of graduates in employment which are more to do with work quality as opposed to the availability of work itself.

in 2023 was well below the peak of 31.5% in 2017, and the previous 2019 low of 24.4%.

The 19.5% rate in 2023 is equivalent to 22,000 individuals. The Council area is now among a broad group of councils within a 10% gap to three Councils (Belfast, Derry City & Strabane and Causeway Coast & Glens) having significantly higher rates closer to 30%.

Figure 1.14: Economic inactivity rate, Newry Mourne & Down vs. NI, 2011-2023

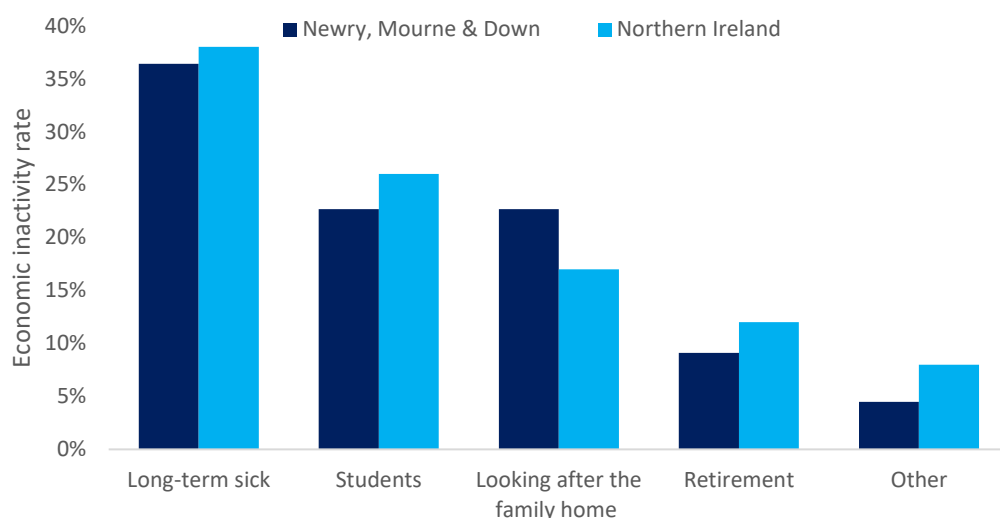


Source: NISRA, LFS Annuals

There are five different reasons given for economic inactivity, shown in Figure 1.15.

The inclusion of students can raise questions on the basis that they are outside the labour force but in full-time education to develop qualifications and skills. In 2023 NMD had a slightly lower proportion of students among the inactive to the NI average in 2023 (23% vs. 26%), with these shares varying from year to year depending on the ability of students to find part-time work. When students are excluded from the economically inactive group, the NMD inactivity rate in 2023 stands at 14.8%.

Figure 1.15: Economic inactivity by reason, Newry Mourne & Down vs. NI, 2023



Source: NISRA, LFS user requested data

The largest group of economically inactive, the long-term sick, has grown as a share and in absolute numbers. In 2019 7,000 individuals in NMD were inactive for health reasons and this has increased to 8,000 in 2023 (36% of the total inactive in the Council area). Several factors are coming into play for this category, not just in NMD or NI or the UK, but across many advanced economies, even if to a lesser extent elsewhere.

First, the growth in the number of long-term sick is likely to be connected to more limited access to patient diagnosis, treatment and wider healthcare during the pandemic. Second, there is a growing shift in the types of health conditions behind long-term sickness, from muscular-skeletal conditions to those more broadly connected with mental health conditions. This may be tied to a third factor, where mental health conditions are both more likely to now be presented by patients and diagnosed.⁴

When looking at economic inactivity due to long-term sickness the key appears to be early interventions to reduce or limit the number of people moving from claimant count into inactivity due to health reasons, as the likelihood of returning to the workforce once entering this category is low even though, at the NI level, one in five of those inactive due to sickness say they would like a job.⁵ What also seems to work are health-led initiatives to help those inactive for health reasons to re-enter the labour market. Finally, flexibility among employers is key to retaining people within the workforce once they have a health diagnosis.⁶

⁴ For this see UUEPC, *Economic Inactivity: Who, what, where and why?* (Jan. 2024), available at <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/epc/publications>

⁵ For further information on the wider picture see UUEPC, *Disability and the Labour Market* (2022), available at <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/epc/publications/2022>

⁶ For more on this see UUEPC, *Sickness Absence: Lessons for Northern Ireland businesses and managers* (2023), at https://www.ulster.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/1588629/Sickness-Absence-Dec-23-Final.pdf

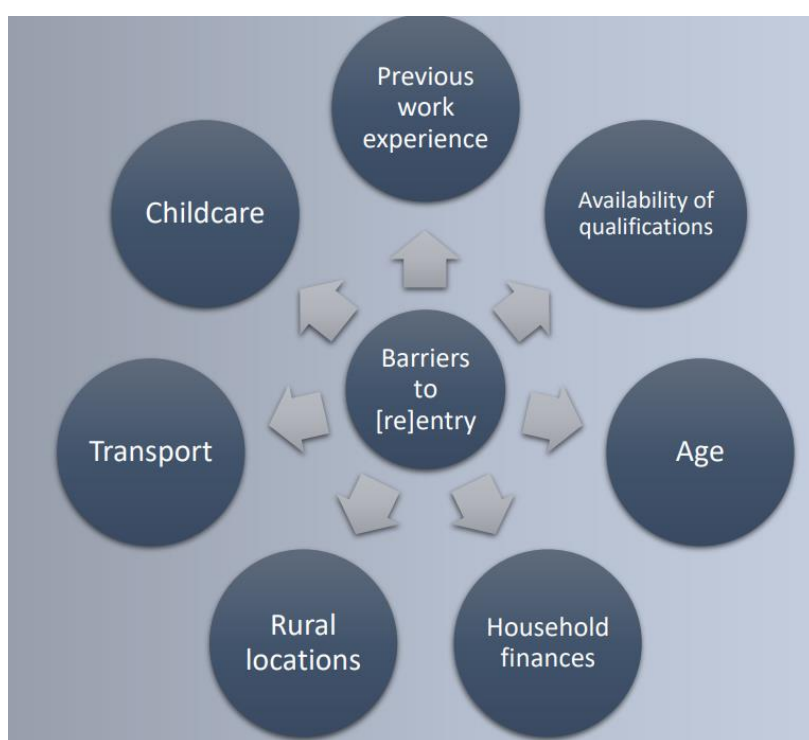
The numbers of those who are economically inactive to “look after the family/home” has been falling steadily over time as female participation in the workforce has grown. In NMD the same trend is evident with an inactivity rate for this reason of 22.7% in 2023 is above the NI average (16.9%).

The difficulties around affordable and accessible childcare, transport and flexible employment opportunities will also contribute to the significant (9.4 percentage points) gender gap in employment rates for men and women in the council area, closely aligned with many other councils in NI with large rural areas.

Previous research by UUEPC in NMD identified the local barriers that might prevent the inactive re-entering the labour market, if they were in a position to do so.⁷

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

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



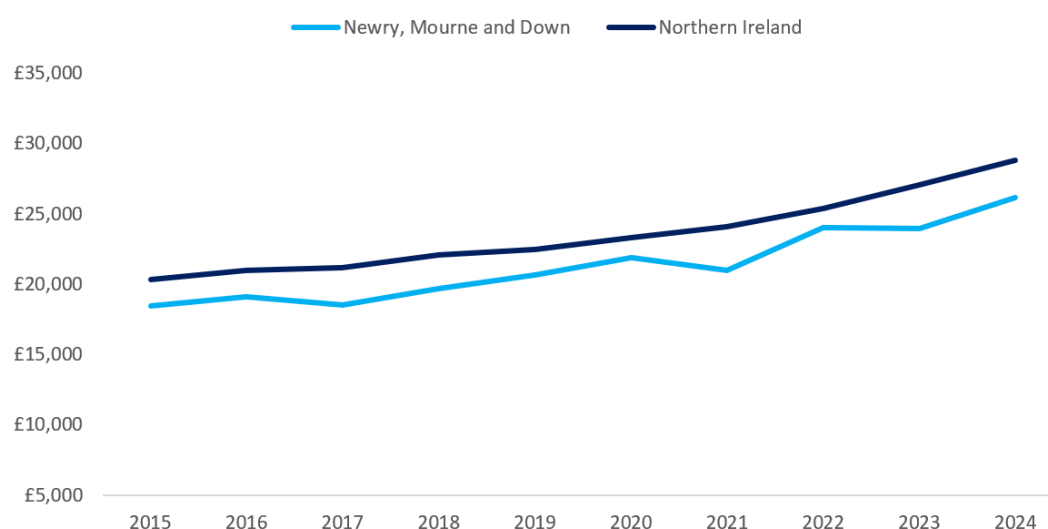
3.6 Wages, work quality and training

The median wage, paid in workplaces in NMD and those received by NMD residents working either in the Council area or elsewhere, tend to be lower than the NI average, respectively by around £2,000 and £3,000 annually.

⁷ UUEPC, *Analysis of the Newry, Mourne & Down labour market* (May 2023), available at <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/epc/publications>

One reason for this is that the annual growth in wages in NMD since 2015 has been a full percentage point less than in other parts of NI, largely because a gap opened up in 2015-18 that has remained since. In addition average wages in 2024 increased slightly more than they did in NMD, further widening the gap.

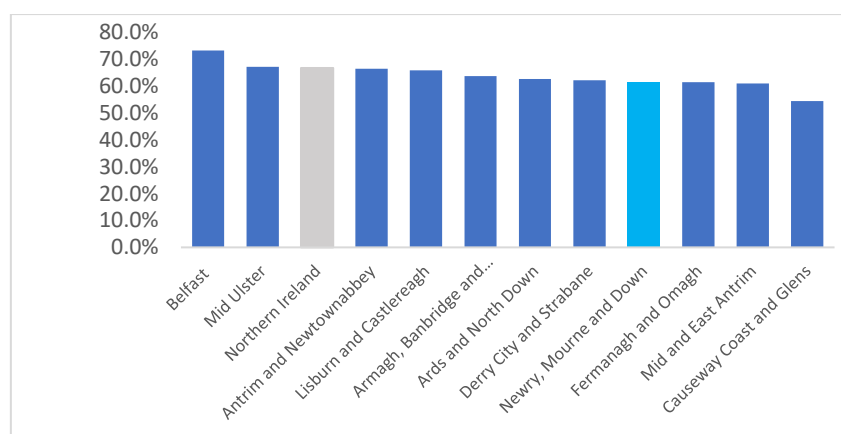
Figure 1.16: Median annual workplace wages, NMD vs. NI, 2015-24



Source: NISRA, ASHE

From previous data released by NISRA NMD was generally in line with the NI averages across the different elements which make up work quality⁸. Recent data for 2024 (see Figure 1.17) shows that in most LGDs the proportion of jobs that can be classified as 'good jobs'⁹ range between 60% and 66%, NMD is in this group with only Belfast above and Causeway Coast and Glens below.

Figure 1.17: Proportion of good jobs, LGDs, 2024

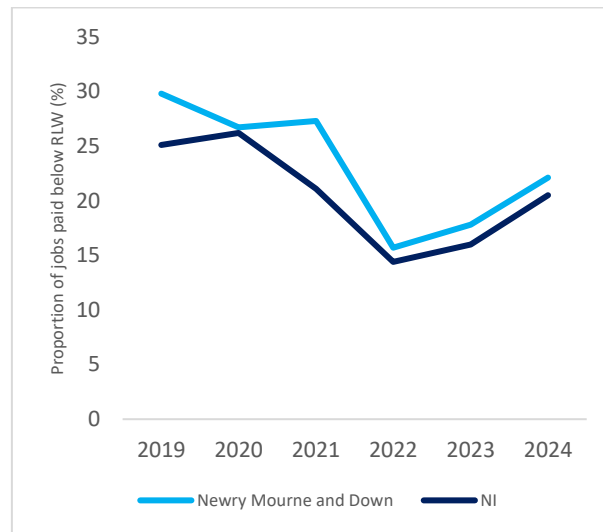


Source: NISRA, ASHE

⁸ Including proportions of employees earning low pay, under-employed, in secure employment, reporting job satisfaction or opportunities for progression, involved in decision-making, work being meaningful and flexible.

⁹ Includes jobs paid above the RLW, on permanent contracts and without zero hours contracts.

Figure 1.18: Proportion of jobs below RLW, NMD and NI 2019-2024

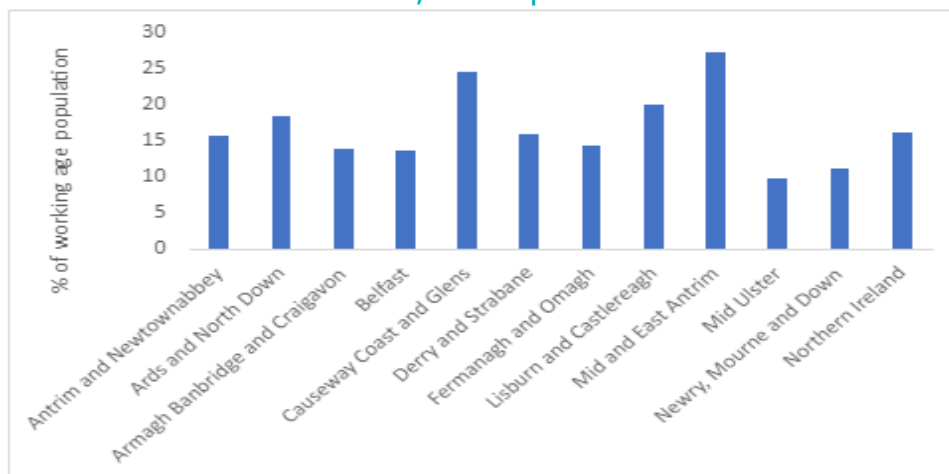


Source: NISRA, ASHE

In terms of the low pay picture, this has been an improving picture in NI until 2022 and has since dis-improved, using the proportion of jobs paid below the Real Living Wage (RLW)¹⁰ as a measure. In NMD, the proportion has been slightly above the NI average – the gap is explained by the proportion of male jobs being higher – and in 2024 22.1% of employee jobs were paid below the RLW. (See Figure 1.18)

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

Figure 1.19: Proportion of 16-64 year olds receiving training in work, LGDs, Jan-Sep 2021



Source: NISRA, LFS

¹⁰ The RLW is tied to cost of living measures and generally close to £1 above the National Living Wage.

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

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

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

Source: NISRA, ASHE; NI Multiple Deprivation Measure

3.7 Labour market outlook

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

The short-term outlook is that the labour market will not see a 'hard' landing of significant levels of redundancies and a sharp increase in unemployment rates that would be associated with a recession. However, instead the NI economy is likely to experience something of a softer and more stagnant period ahead.

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

In Newry, Mourne & Down the labour market outlook remains positive and indeed resident employment rates will continue to increase. Even if workplace job growth is low out to 2027 the cross-border labour market remains strong and opportunities will exist there. Therefore, unemployment rates will stay low (hardly moving from the current very low levels) and the pressure will be one of increasing supply of skills at all levels to match local demand for workers.

Data availability

Data type	NMDDC Data	NI Data	Latest NMD Data
Population by age	Y	Y	2021
Profile working age population	Y	Y	2023
Employment rate (% of 16-64 yo)	Y	Y	2023
Employee jobs	Y	Y	2022
Annual average growth by sector	Y	Y	2022
Self-employment	Y	Y	2022
Qualifications	Y	Y	2023
Redundancies	Y	Y	2023
Claimant Count	Y	Y	2024
Economic inactivity rate	Y	Y	2023
Proportion of good jobs	Y	Y	2024
Real Living wage	Y	Y	2024
Deprivation	Y	Y	2017
Training in work	Y	Y	2021

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

5. Baseline Information

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

Strategic Priority 1: To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area		
Indicators to which Local LMP contribute (Source)	2025/26 Baseline	
% LMP members who feel the local LMP is making a positive contribution and delivering effectively <i>Source NMD LMP</i>	% LMP members who feel the local LMP is making a positive contribution and delivering effectively	
	Year	LMP Members (%)
	2019	0 (no baseline data)
	2020	0 (no baseline data)
	2021	0 (no baseline data)
	2022	100%
	2023	100%
	2024	100%

Strategic Priority 2: To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally		
Indicators to which Local LMP contribute (Source)	2025/26 Baseline	
Theme 1: Economic Inactivity		
Economic Inactivity Rate – Excluding Students; % Working Age (aged 16- 64) <i>Source LMI Portal</i>	% Working Age Economic Inactivity Rate – Excluding Students	
	2016	18.4%
	2017	24.1%
	2018	24.0%
	2019	18.7%
	2020	18.5%
	2021	18.7%
	2022	18.6%
	2023	14.6%
Theme 2: Unemployment		
Claimant Count (%)	% Claimant Count	

<i>Source DfC</i>		
	2017	2.2%
	2018	2.1%
	2019	2.2%
	2020	4.6%
	2021	4.2%
	2022	2.9%
	2023	2.9%
Theme 3: Disability		
Employment Rate of people with Disabilities (% of working age) <i>Source NISRA Labour Force Survey</i>	% Employment rate of people with disabilities	
	2017	30.1%
	2018	31.2%
	2019	42.3%
	2020	45.2%
	2021	37.1%
	2022	32.6%
	2023	40.3%
Theme 4: Skilled Labour Supply		
No Qualifications (% Working Age): <i>Source NISRA – Labour Force Survey</i> # All Persons Median Wage (Resident based) <i>Source NISRA LMI Portal</i>	% Working Age: No Qualifications	
	2016	16.1%
	2017	22.1%
	2018	17.9%
	2019	13.0%
	2020	11.1%
	2021	12.9%
	2022	14.3%
	2023	10.8%
	# All Persons Median Wage	
	2018	£20,767.00
	2019	£21,161.00
	2020	£21,942.00
	2021	£22,621.00
	2022	£24,247.00
	2023	£25,113.00
	2024	£27,248.00

Strategic Priority 3:

To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision either regionally or locally		
Indicators to which Local LMP contribute (Source)	2025/26 Baseline	
Theme: Increased awareness		
Increased awareness of existing regional/local employability or skills provision <i>Source NMD LMP</i>	# of those surveyed who have an increased awareness of regional/local employability and skills provision	
	Year	LMP Members (%)
	2021	0 (no baseline data)
	2022	0 (no baseline data)
	2023	770
	2024	905

6. Turning the Curve Methodology

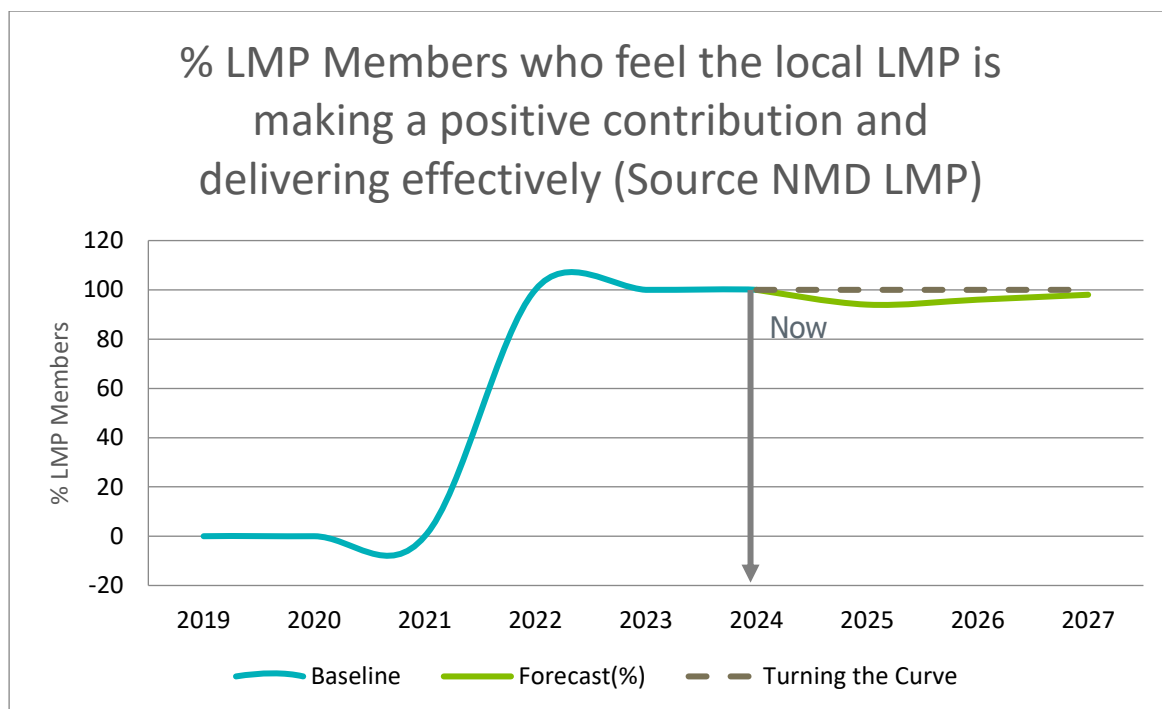
At the heart of the NMD Labour Market Partnership is the need to ensure that a quality skills provision is driven by demand for skills in the local economy, leading to reduced economic inactivity and unemployment at a local level. This approach has been consistently adopted by NMD LMP with a concerted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

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

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

NMD LMP will ensure the delivery of the 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 Action Plans, whilst being agile in response to new challenges in the labour market. Regular meetings of NMD LMP and relevant subgroups will contribute to the % of LMP members who feel the LMP is making a positive contribution. NMD LMP partners involved will be monitored throughout the year and regularly updated regarding changes to personnel or inviting other partners to participate if applicable.

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



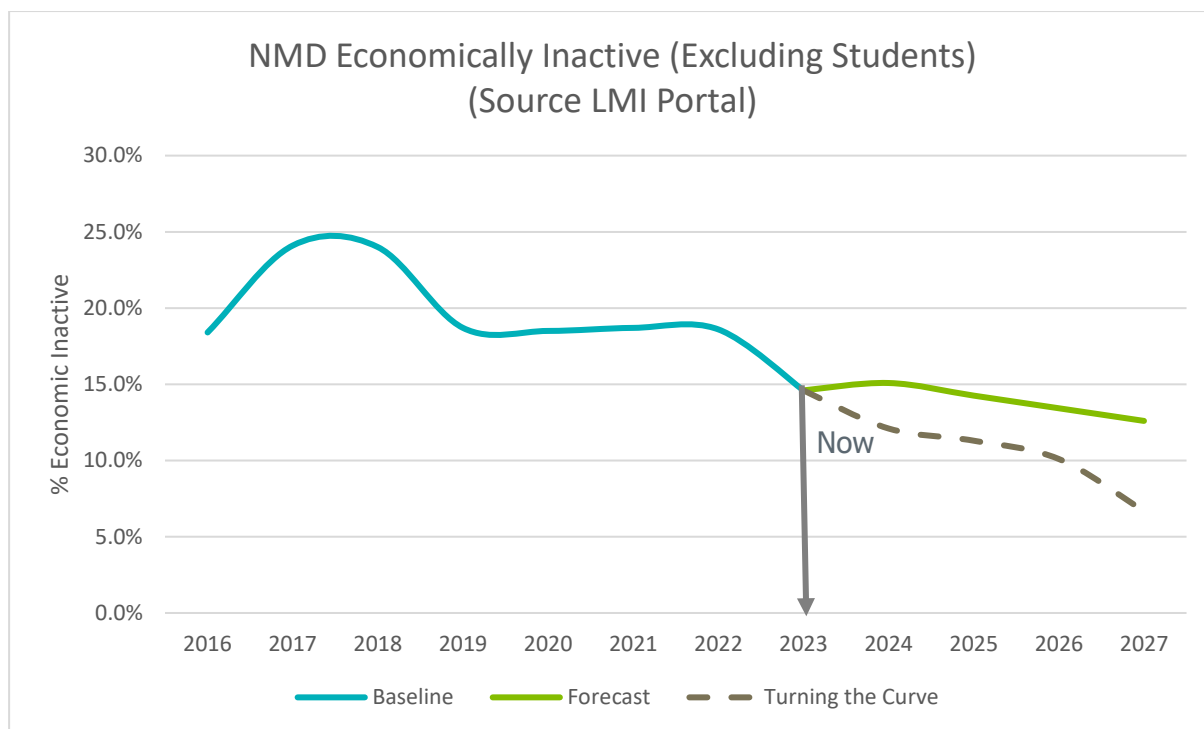
SP2 To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally focusing on the following themes:

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

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

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

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

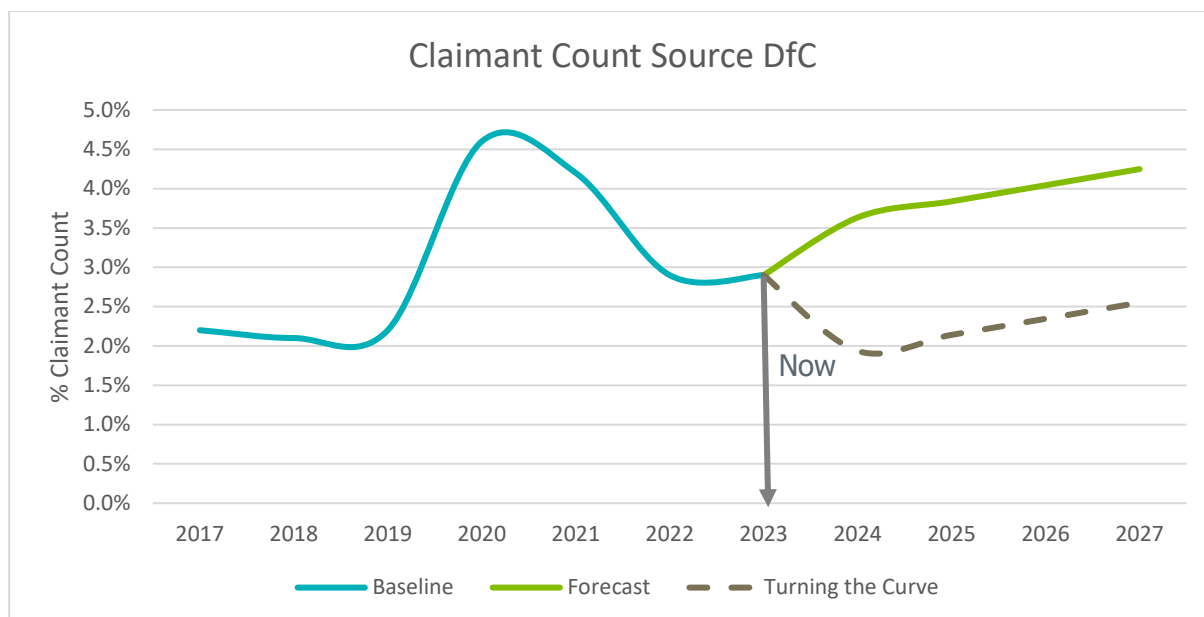


Turning the Curve – Claimant Count %; Source DfC

NMD Claimant Count sits at 3.5% (3,905 people) which is below the NI average in Northern Ireland of 3% and considerably less than the 4.6% and 4.2% rates in 2020 and 2021 respectively. Although the claimant count is reducing in NMD, it remains above the pre-pandemic rate of 2.1% (2510 people).

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

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



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

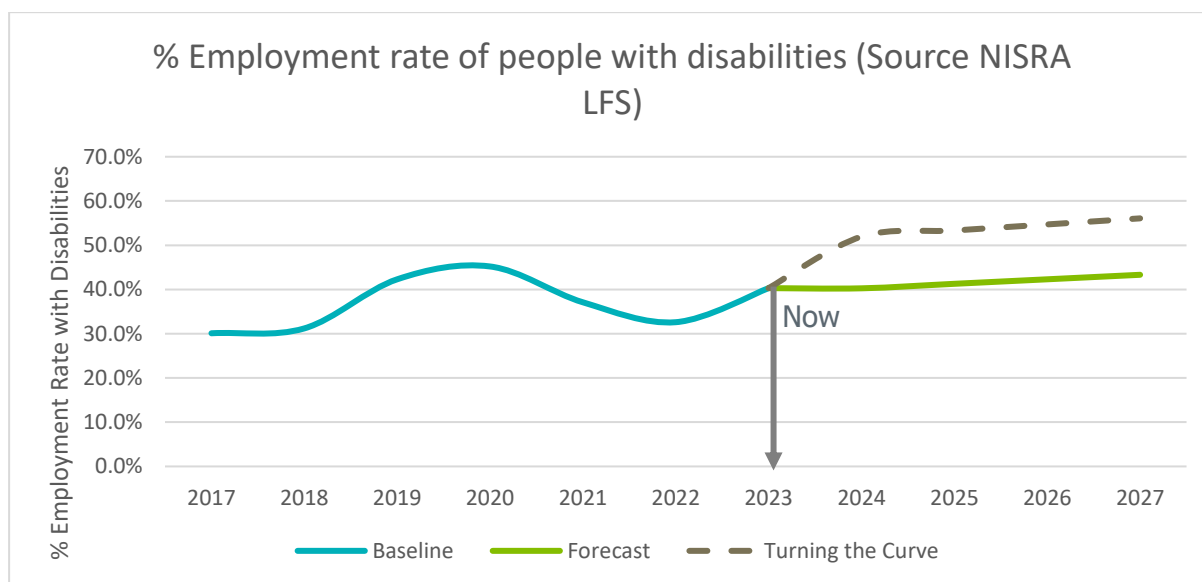
The relationships between work/unemployment, poverty and health are well scripted. People with a disability are more likely not to be working and not actively looking for work than people without disabilities, consequently, they are much less likely to be in employment than people without disabilities.

- In 2023 the NMDDC employment rate for people with disabilities was 40.3% (up from 32.6% in 2022), but lower than the Northern Ireland average of 42%. The employment rate for people without disabilities was 73.6% in 2023, resulting in a disability employment rate gap of 33.3 percentage points (pps).
- Employment rate fell lower in 2022 to 32.6% in NMD for people with disabilities, in comparison to an increase for those without disabilities to 71.9%.
- The disability employment gap for NI in 2021 was 44pps, compared to 29pps for the whole of the UK. Since 2014, the disability employment gap has consistently been higher in Northern Ireland than the rest of the UK.
- The disability employment gap was lowest for those aged 16 to 24 (when compared with other age groups) in 2020, at 25.0pps. This is consistent with trends since 2014 and is due to lower employment rates for those aged 16 to 24 without disabilities.

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

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

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



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

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

Having the right skills is a key driver of productivity and is important to individuals, businesses and the macro economy. Skills benefit individuals through increased probability of being in employment and receiving higher wages; as individuals with higher levels of qualifications tend to earn more. Businesses and employers benefit from having a more highly skilled workforce which in turn increases output and productivity.

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

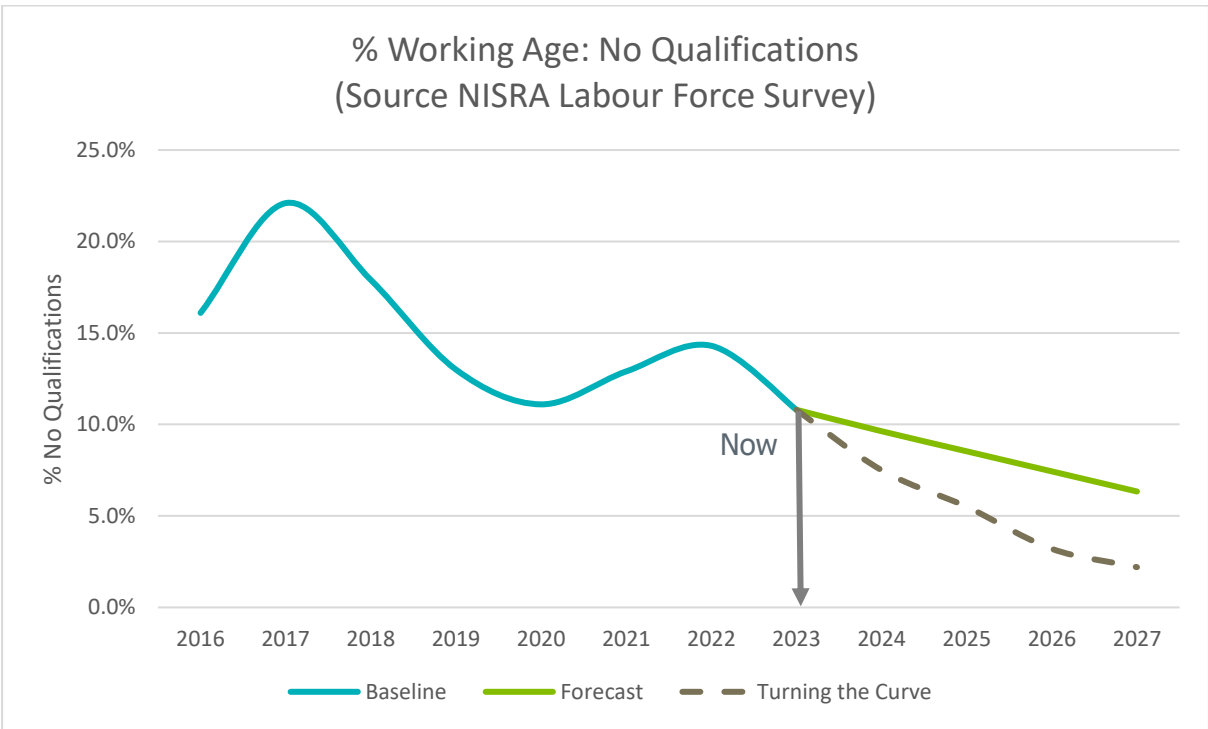
With this information in mind NMD LMP understands the importance of offering the correct level of qualifications both vocational and practical and putting in place a

system of care to ensure that each participant feels supported and encouraged to reach their full potential.

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

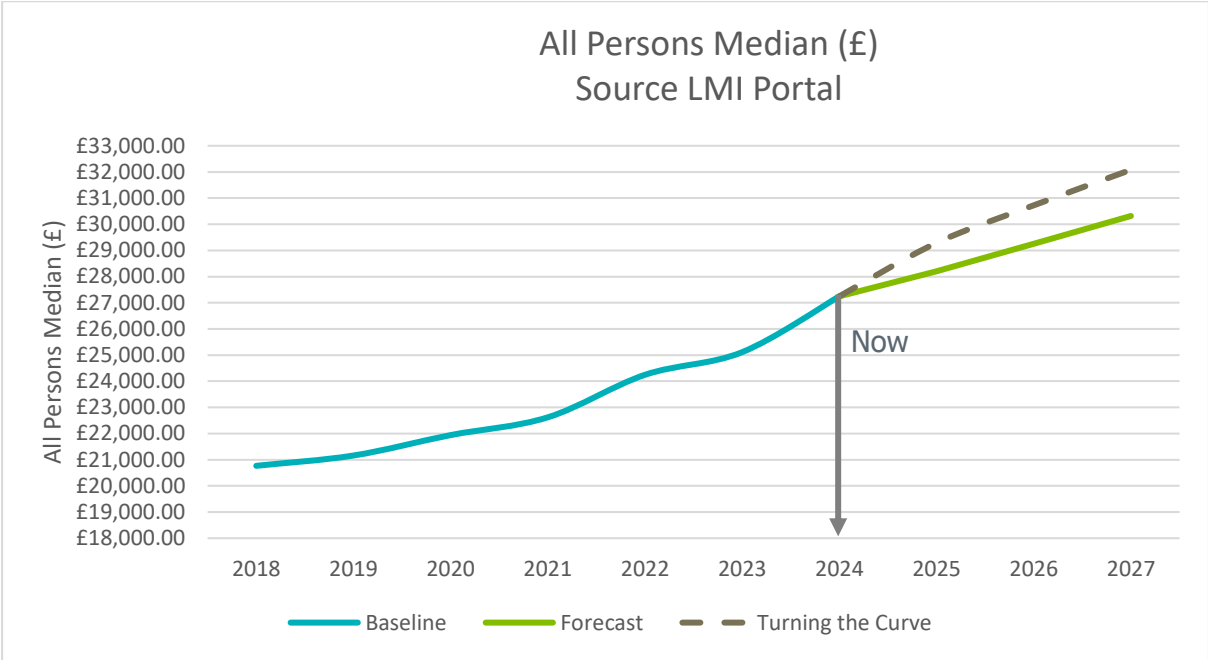
A combination of economic factors including Brexit, continuing legacy of Covid 19 and a cost of living crisis have impacted on the economy and pose great difficulties for businesses and residents of NMD.

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



The UUEPC Skills Barometer research from 2019 suggests qualifications required by employers in NMD were below those held by the population. NMD statistics typically mirror at of NI on the whole which has an oversupply of L1&L2 and an undersupply at L3&4. Based on 2023 figures, the number of people with degree level qualification has increased by 1 p.ps, showing a general increase in the qualification level of residents over time.

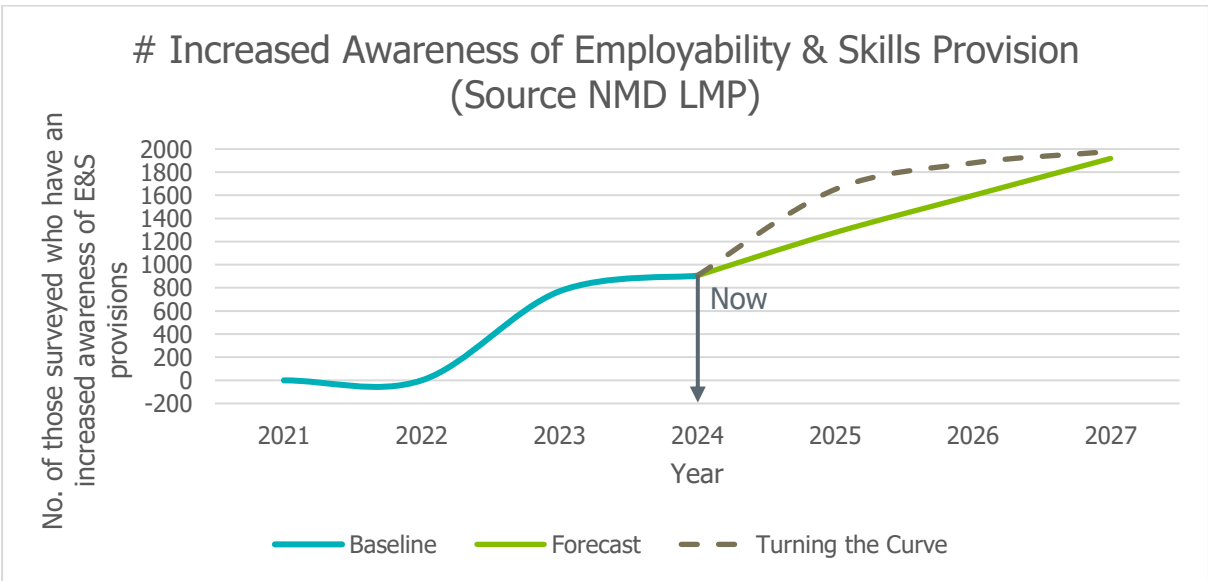
In addition to increasing the number of people with qualifications it will be important to examine the correlation between the increase in employees with qualifications and increase in wages and as such we expect to see the earning potential increase for NMD residents as shown in the Turning the Curve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



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

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

1. Theme: Support Regional Employability Programmes



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

- An opportunity for local employers to showcase their current and future skills needs to help secure future capacity and capability. This element will be promoted across all themes and target groups and include raising awareness of regional employability programmes and opportunities including Apprenticeships.
- A further aim is to create opportunities for young people, parents and schools to be better informed, speak to employers, explore options and be better equipped to secure employment locally. In addition to educating businesses to better understand the labour market in the Newry, Mourne and Down area and seek to provide the offering to enable employment positions to be filled.
- NMD LMP takes account that it needs to do as much as it can to reduce economic inactivity and long-term unemployment within the district. It recognises there is no single silver bullet or 'programme', instead we need a joint effort on several fronts. Working in partnership with strategic partners to deliver on Job and Career Events, provide career guidance and stimulate self-employment are all initiatives proposed in the NMD Action Plan for 2025-2026 and subsequent Action Plans for 2026-2027.

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

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

7. Action Plan 2025/2026

Strategic Priority 1: To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area						
Indicators		% LMP members who feel the local LMP is making a positive contribution and delivering effectively				
Theme	Title of Programme	Key Activities, Project Aims and Description	Start Date	End Date	Performance Measures	Delivery Quarter
LMP Delivery and Development	1.1 LMP Delivery	<p>Ensure the delivery of the 2025/2026 Action Plan</p> <p>To be agile in response to new challenges in the labour market.</p> <p>Facilitate meetings of the NMD LMP and relevant subgroups.</p> <p>Establish external delivery contracts to ensure effective management and delivery against the LMP Action Plan.</p> <p>Issue quarterly progress returns on LMP activity.</p>	01 Apr 25	31 Mar 26	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 x LMP meetings held <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall total 90/120 and 75% attendance of LMP member organisations at meetings <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16/20 and 80% of LMP members who feel that they are contributing to the delivery of the LMP. 16/20 and 80% of LMP members who think that the LMP is making a positive difference. <p><u>Note</u></p>	Q1,2,3,4

					20 organizational members * 6 meetings per year = 120 member attendances	
	1.2 Development of Action Plan	<p>Develop 26/27 Action Plan</p> <p>Using research, identify and inform current and future employability and skills supply and demand. Develop initiatives to meet skill gaps, vacancy and recruitment challenges for a future 2026-2027 Action Plan.</p> <p>Action Plan to identify potential opportunities for new sectoral Academies and Upskilling programmes.</p> <p>Consultations will be conducted with regional colleges and other key strategic stakeholders to create a common approach to local labour market intelligence and improvement of employability outcomes in NMD.</p>	01 Dec 25	31 Mar 26	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of LMP Action Plan 2026/2027 to address local needs and ensure approved by Regional LMP <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18/20 and 90% of LMP Members who feel that their views have been taken into account with regard to the Action Plan <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18/20 and 90% of LMP members reporting increased awareness of local employability and labour market issues 	Q4
Strategic Priority 2: To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally						
Indicators		Theme 1: Economic Inactivity Economic Inactivity Rate - % Working Age				

		<p>Source NISRA - Labour Force Survey</p> <p>Theme 2: Unemployment Claimant Count Source % Claimant Count (NMD) - LMI Portal</p> <p>Theme 3: Disability Resident Employment rate of people with disabilities - % of working age Source NISRA - Labour Force Survey</p> <p>Theme 4: Skilled Labour Supply No Qualifications - % Working Age Source NISRA - Labour Force Survey</p> <p># All Persons Annual Median Wage (Resident based) Source NISRA – Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings</p>				
		Theme 1: Economic Inactivity (Access to Work)				
Theme	Title of Programme	Key Activities, Project Aims and Description	Start Date	End Date	Performance Measures	Delivery Quarter
Economic Inactivity	2.1 Get Work Ready: Pre-employment support	<p>Get Work Ready aims to provide targeted, personalised, effective employment assistance and advice to job seekers.</p> <p>The desired impact is to support participants to find fulfilling, lasting, paid work and for those claiming Universal</p>	01 Apr 25	31 Mar 26	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80 participants enrolled on programme <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 64/80 and 80% participants who enrolled completed the project 	Q1,2,3,4

		<p>Credit and in poorly paid jobs to get better paid work.</p> <p><u>Target participants</u></p> <p><u>Out of Work Participants</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job seekers with a resident location in the District • 18 to 24-year-olds unemployed 6+ months • 25+ year-olds unemployed 12+ months (long term unemployed) • 18+ year-olds economically inactive <p><u>Underemployed Participants</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Credit claimants who are in low paid employment and who want to increase their income • Those at risk of losing their job • Others that although not long-term unemployed are considered by the LMP to warrant the provision of intensive employment support services. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 51/64 and 80% of completers who reported satisfaction with the LMP project <p><u>Is anyone better off?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48/64 and 75% of completers gaining new employment • 32/48 and 67% of participants still in employment 6 months after finishing participation • 56/64 and 88% of completers who reported feeling more confident regarding their employability as a result of participation on the project 	
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		<p>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •75%: Job Entry Rate That is the proportion of all participants who secure employment by 31st March 2025. Employment must be for at least 16 hours per week at, or above, the National Minimum Wage. •66%: Sustained Job Rate The proportion of Job Entries which are sustained in employment for 12 weeks. •15%: Earnings increase In-work UC claimant participants to increase their earnings (with current or new employer) by over 15% by 31st March 2025. Measured by delivery agent. <p>Programme Components – 16 Weeks Maximum Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The duration of service a participant is entitled to will be a <u>maximum of 12 weeks</u> of intensive and personalised support to find employment. 				
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For those that secure employment a <u>maximum of 4 weeks additional</u> follow-up advice will be offered, including in-work support. <p>Implementation – Core services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one meeting with a Caseworker • Personalised Action Plan (PAP) • One-to-one review meetings with participants • Employability Skills Support • On-going Job matching support <p>Implementation – Wrap Around service</p> <p>Wraparound targeted services are provided on an “as-needed basis” to help participants overcome individual barriers to employment.</p> <p>Signposting</p> <p>Signposting and referrals will include DfE Career Service, DfC Work Coaches, health service</p>				
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		initiatives and other community services as appropriate.				
	2.2 Enterprise Pathways Programme	<p>Enterprise Pathways Programme provides specialised, mentoring and business support between 'Go Succeed' participation, establishing and growing a new-start business which offers more sustainable employment for the participant. (i.e. PT or FT self-employment for the business owner).</p> <p>A programme of mentoring support will be offered for up to 3 months along the business start-up journey.</p> <p>Eligible participants will have completed the Go Succeed Programme and be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economically inactive • Unemployed • Under-employed <p>(Under employed: those who would like to work more hours either in their current job, a supplementary job, or in a new job)</p>	01 Apr 25	31 Mar 26	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 entrepreneurs enrolled on the programme <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32/40, and 80% of participants who completed the project. • 26/32, and 81% of completers who reported satisfaction with the project. <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall total 26/32, 81% of completers reporting they have commenced self-employment. • Overall total 21/26 and 81% of participants still in self-employment 6 months after finishing participation. 	Q1,2,3,4

		<u>Business Start-up Fund</u> To operate a start-up fund which provides financial assistance towards business startup costs. Participants on the programme can apply for financial assistance to assist with start-up costs aligned to the business startup.				
Theme 2: Unemployment (Place to Work)						
Theme	Title of Programme	Key Activities, Project Aims and Description	Start Date	End Date	Performance Measures	Delivery Quarter
Unemployment	2.3 Employability Academies	Identify, design and deliver a range of employment academies for skill interventions in sectors and occupations where opportunities for employment is identified with employers. Potential delivery of Academies to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warehousing and Forklift • Transport • Childminding Assistant • Digital Skills • Hospitality Academy • Health 	01 Apr 25	31 Mar 26	How much did we do? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 94 participants enrolled How well did we do it? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75/94 and 80% of participants successfully complete the academy • 70/75 and 93% of completers reporting satisfaction with project. Is anyone better off? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60/75 and 80% of completers who gained a qualification as a 	Q1,2,3,4

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing <p>Final academies delivered will be determined following consultation with stakeholders and employers to ascertain demand.</p> <p>NMD LMP will also seek to include interventions which meet recommendations of regional LMP including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting action on climate change by enabling green jobs; • Consider growth sectors; • Addressing the disability employment gap; • Utilizing opportunities arising from City and Growth deals; • Supporting the aims and implementation of the Skills Strategy; and • Promoting diversity and inclusion <p>Target groups will be: unemployed; economically inactive; underemployed; at risk of redundancy.</p>			<p>result of participation on the project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 56/75 and 75% of completers gaining new employment • 37/56 and 66% of completers still in employment 6 months after finishing participation 	
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		Mentoring support and guidance to be available to participants to support their engagement throughout their participation on the academy and follow on support to create a steppingstone into employment or further training.				
	2.4 A Place to Work	<p>A Place to Work aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the district as employment location • To create awareness of the key sectors • To create awareness of local employers • To create awareness of and access to career pathways • Promote NMD as a good place to work with opportunities for progression. <p><u>To deliver an engagement 'Place to work' Campaign that will</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of the range of career opportunities available locally and the pathways to access jobs. 	01 Apr 25	31 Mar 26	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 employers engaged • 250 attendees engaged <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12/15 and 80% of employers reporting satisfaction with project • 100/125 and 80% of attendees reported satisfaction with the project <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12/15 and 80% of employers who reported feeling more confident that their business would be more successful 	Q1,2,3,4

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Particularly targeting job seekers, economically inactive, students, and graduates. • Promote employers and showcase local employment opportunities across NMD. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100/125 and 80% of attendees feel more informed of career opportunities • 75/100 attendees reported increased awareness of NMD LMP 	
Theme 3: Disability						
Disability	2.5 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Employer Engagement Workshop	<p>Host a workshop to engage local SME employers from various sectors to explain to and update on disability employment issues and outline the variety of supports available to them.</p> <p>Provide advice and updates on disability legislation and employment issues enabling people with disabilities to gain employment.</p> <p>Workshop to highlight provisions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workable • Work Experience Programme • Condition Management Programme 	01 Apr 25	31 Mar 26	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 employers engaged <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8/10 and 80% of employers reporting satisfaction with project <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8/10 and 80% of employers have increased awareness of disability and employment issues • 4/10 and 40% of employers commit to supporting job seekers with a disability to 	Q3/4

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Work • Jobstart 			<p>access employment opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4/10 and 40% of employers participating reported the event would assist in filling vacancies 	
	2.6 Inclusion Participant Programme	<p>Support unemployed or economically inactive participants with a disability closer to employment by identifying training needs and potential suitable employers.</p> <p>Participants who are not suited to other existing provisions to receive a dedicated personalized plan, one-to-one mentoring, to include CV development and identify potential placement opportunities.</p>	01 Apr 25	31 Mar 26	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 participants enrolled on programme <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8/10 and 80% participants who enrolled completed the project • 6/8 and 80% of completers who reported satisfaction with the LMP project <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6/8 and 80% of completers gaining new employment • 3/6 and 50% of participants still in employment 6 months after finishing participation 	Q1,2,3,4

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6/8 and 80% of completers who reported feeling more confident regarding their employability as a result of participation on the project 	
Theme 4: Skilled Labour Supply (Skills for Work)						
Skilled Labour Supply	2.7 Upskilling for Growth	<p>Employee Upskilling: Meeting employer needs and supporting career progression</p> <p>Supporting employers to upskill staff to enable career progression for those underemployed or employed and seeking career progression; creating employment vacancies and opportunities for those entering the labour market.</p> <p>Engagement Engage with local employers to identify their upskilling requirements and address their skills shortages via progression opportunities for existing staff.</p>	01 Apr 25	31 Mar 26	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40 employers engaged 108 participants enrolled <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 32/40 and 80% of employers reporting satisfaction with project 86/108 and 80% of participants enrolled who completed the project 69/86 and 80% of completers reporting satisfaction with project. <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30/40 and 75% of employers have 	Q1,2,3,4

		<p>Support the upskilling of employees which enables job and career progression.</p> <p>Employers will be asked for the number of vacancies that may be realized.</p> <p>Delivered in partnership with SRC, SERC and delivery agents, to include a range of upskilling/reskilling opportunities from L2 to L7 in response to employer need and demand.</p> <p><u>Examples of training may include</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Assistant • Transport • Leadership and Management • Strategic Management • Project Management • Reducing Carbon Footprint 			<p>created new jobs as a result of the support received</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 86/108 and 80% of participants gained a qualification as a result of participation on the project • 43/86 and 50% of completers moved into higher paid employment as a result of participation on the project 	
	2.8 Skills Conference	Host a Skills Conference for businesses, careers teachers, school principals, training providers, recruitment consultants and academics from across Newry Mourne and	01 Apr 25	31 Mar 26	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100/200 and 50% attendees engaged <p>How well did we do it?</p>	Q3

		<p>Down District Council area and further afield, to develop a cohesive strategy to identify current and future skills gaps across all sectors to develop short, medium and long-term solutions to meet local skills and staff shortages.</p> <p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the development of a district-wide skills strategy through regular engagement between local employers and skills developers/schools and training organisations. Provide a platform for information flow and discussion between employers and those tasked with meeting the skills need across the District. Provide a platform for all stakeholders to hear details of the NMD LMP Strategic Assessment Research report 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80/100 and 80% of attendees reported satisfaction with project <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80/100 and 80% of attendees reported feeling more confident for their business/employment future 80/100 and 80% of attendees reported increased awareness of NMD LMP 	
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		<p>compiled by Ulster University.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance membership, engagement and scope of the NMD LMP, whilst outlining delivery of initiatives to date. • Provide opportunities for Industry Clusters to meet regularly to discuss potential solutions to recruitment and skills challenges. • Promoting NMD as a great place to work, in partnership with NMD LMP and provide exposure for NMD LMP. • Create a Skills Forum tasked with implementing the outcomes and actions from the Conference. 				
Strategic Priority 3: To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision either regionally or locally						
Indicators		1. Increased awareness of existing regional/local employability or skills provision (LMP)				
Theme	Title of Programme	Key Activities, Project Aims and Description	Start Date	End Date	Performance Measures	Delivery Quarter

Increased awareness	3.1 Employment Pathway Events	<p>Support delivery of 3 Jobs and Careers fairs and events, including sectoral focused events where scope and opportunity exists.</p> <p>Opportunity to showcase key sectors, and career opportunities.</p> <p>Enhanced Career Guidance aligned to local opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Jobs Fair promoting NMD wide employment opportunities • Two career fairs for pupils, teachers and principles 	01 Apr 25	31 Mar 26	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,500 attendees at events • 140 employers participating <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 400/500 and 80% of attendees rated the events as helpful for finding work / training • 40/50 and 80% of employers reporting satisfaction with event <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 375/500 and 75% of attendees feel more informed of career opportunities • 375/500 and 75% of attendees feel more informed of NMD LMP • 38/50 and 76% of employers participating reported the event 	Q1&4
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					would assist in filling vacancies	
	3.2 Promoting apprenticeships, traineeships and placements as pathways to employment	<p>NMD LMP will work with DfC, DfE and Colleges, to increase the number of employers offering placements, traineeships and apprenticeship opportunities.</p> <p>NMD LMP will promote the benefits of recruiting through opportunity pathways, such as Apprenticeships, traineeships, and work experience placements, to employers. NMD LMP will aim to increase the number of school leavers considering apprenticeships as a pathway to employment. The campaign will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bust myths • Target parents & schools • Promote value of employer engagement. <p>Communication channels will include events, social media, print, and digital platforms.</p>	01 Apr 25	31 Mar 26	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 students attending events • 40 employers engaged <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200/250 and 80% of attendees at events report that the event was informative • 23/30 and 77% of employers reported the event was a good platform to showcase their sector <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200/250 and 80% of attendees feel more informed of career opportunities • 200/250 and 80% of attendees reporting the events increased their knowledge of the work of the LMP/Employability NI 	Q4

	3.3 Increased awareness of employability and skills programmes	<p>Increase awareness among job seekers and those who wish to upskill of the range of employability and training support there is available through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events targeting participants and employers • Regular updating to local JBO's on NMD LMP Programmes 	01 Apr 25	31 Mar 26	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 attendees at supported events <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80/100 and 80% attendees reporting satisfaction with events <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75/100 and 75% of attendees reporting the events increased their knowledge of the work of the LMP/Employability NI 	Q1,2,3,4
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8. Action Plan 2025/2026 - Outputs

Outputs	Participants - directly supported	Employers - directly engaged	Events	Participants attending events	Value of financial support £	Comments
Strategic Priority 2						
Theme 1: Economic Inactivity						
2.1 Get Work Ready	80					
2.2 Enterprise Pathways Programme	40				20,000	Business Start Up costs
Theme 2: Unemployed						
2.3 Employability Academies	94					
2.4 A Place to Work		15	3	250		
Theme 3: Disability						
2.5 Employer Disability Advice Workshop		10	1	20		
2.6 Inclusion Participant Programme	10					
Theme 4: Skilled Labour Supply						
2.6 Upskilling for Growth	108	40				
2.7 Skills Conference			1	200		
Strategic Priority 3						
3.1 Employment Pathway Events		140	3	2500		
3.2 Opportunity and Apprenticeship awareness		40	2	500		
3.3 Increased awareness				100		
Outputs	322	245	10	3550	£20,000	

10. Action Plan 2026/2027

Strategic Priority 1: To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area						
Indicators		% LMP members who feel the local LMP is making a positive contribution and delivering effectively				
Theme	Title of Programme	Key Activities, Project Aims and Description	Start Date	End Date	Performance Measures	Delivery Quarter
LMP Delivery and Development	1.1 LMP Delivery	<p>Ensure the delivery of the 2026/2027 Action Plan</p> <p>To be agile in response to new challenges in the labour market.</p> <p>Facilitate meetings of the NMD LMP and relevant subgroups.</p> <p>Establish external delivery contracts to ensure effective management and delivery against the LMP Action Plan.</p> <p>Issue quarterly progress returns on LMP activity.</p>	01 Apr 26	31 Mar 27	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 x LMP meetings held <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall total 90/120 and 75% attendance of LMP member organisations at meetings <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16/20 and 80% of LMP members who feel that they are contributing to the delivery of the LMP. 16/20 and 80% of LMP members who think that the LMP is making a positive difference. <p><u>Note</u></p>	Q1,2,3,4

					20 organizational members * 6 meetings per year = 120 member attendances	
	1.2 Development of Action Plan	<p>Develop 27/25 Action Plan</p> <p>Using research, identify and inform current and future employability and skills supply and demand. Develop initiatives to meet skill gaps, vacancy and recruitment challenges for a future 2027-2028 Action Plan.</p> <p>Action Plan to identify potential opportunities for new sectoral Academies and Upskilling programmes.</p> <p>Consultations will be conducted with regional colleges and other key strategic stakeholders to create a common approach to local labour market intelligence and improvement of employability outcomes in NMD.</p>	01 Dec 25	31 Mar 26	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of LMP Action Plan 2027/2028 to address local needs and ensure approved by Regional LMP <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18/20 and 90% of LMP Members who feel that their views have been taken into account with regard to the Action Plan <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18/20 and 90% of LMP members reporting increased awareness of local employability and labour market issues 	Q4
Strategic Priority 2: To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally						
Indicators		Theme 1: Economic Inactivity Economic Inactivity Rate - % Working Age				

	<div>Source NISRA - Labour Force Survey</div> <div>Theme 2: Unemployment Claimant Count Source % Claimant Count (NMD) - LMI Portal</div> <div>Theme 3: Disability Resident Employment rate of people with disabilities - % of working age Source NISRA - Labour Force Survey</div> <div>Theme 4: Skilled Labour Supply No Qualifications - % Working Age Source NISRA - Labour Force Survey</div> <div># All Persons Annual Median Wage (Resident based) Source NISRA – Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings</div>					
	Theme 1: Economic Inactivity (Access to Work)					
Theme	Title of Programme	Key Activities, Project Aims and Description	Start Date	End Date	Performance Measures	Delivery Quarter
Economic Inactivity	2.1 Get Work Ready: Pre-employment support	<p>Get Work Ready aims to provide targeted, personalised, effective employment assistance and advice to job seekers.</p> <p>The desired impact is to support participants to find fulfilling, lasting, paid work and for those claiming Universal Credit and in</p>	01 Apr 26	31 Mar 27	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">80 participants enrolled on programme <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">64/80 and 80% participants who enrolled completed the project	Q1,2,3,4

		<p>poorly paid jobs to get better paid work.</p> <p><u>Target participants</u></p> <p><u>Out of Work Participants</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job seekers with a resident location in the District • 18 to 24-year-olds unemployed 6+ months • 25+ year-olds unemployed 12+ months (long term unemployed) • 18+ year-olds economically inactive <p><u>Underemployed Participants</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Credit claimants who are in low paid employment and who want to increase their income • Those at risk of losing their job • Others that although not long-term unemployed are considered by the LMP to warrant the provision of intensive employment support services. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 51/64 and 80% of completers who reported satisfaction with the LMP project <p><u>Is anyone better off?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48/64 and 75% of completers gaining new employment • 32/48 and 67% of participants still in employment 6 months after finishing participation • 56/64 and 88% of completers who reported feeling more confident regarding their employability as a result of participation on the project 	
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		<p>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •75%: Job Entry Rate That is the proportion of all participants who secure employment by 31st March 2025. Employment must be for at least 16 hours per week at, or above, the National Minimum Wage. •66%: Sustained Job Rate The proportion of Job Entries which are sustained in employment for 12 weeks. •15%: Earnings increase In-work UC claimant participants to increase their earnings (with current or new employer) by over 15% by 31st March 2025. Measured by delivery agent. <p>Programme Components – 16 Weeks Maximum Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The duration of service a participant is entitled to will be a <u>maximum of 12 weeks</u> of intensive and personalised support to find employment. • For those that secure employment a <u>maximum of 4 weeks additional</u> follow-up 				
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		<p>advice will be offered, including in-work support.</p> <p>Implementation – Core services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one meeting with a Caseworker • Personalised Action Plan (PAP) • One-to-one review meetings with participants • Employability Skills Support • On-going Job matching support <p>Implementation – Wrap Around service</p> <p>Wraparound targeted services are provided on an “as-needed basis” to help participants overcome individual barriers to employment.</p> <p>Signposting</p> <p>Signposting and referrals will include DfE Career Service, DfC Work Coaches, health service initiatives and other community services as appropriate.</p>				
	2.2	Enterprise Pathways Programme provides	01 Apr 26	31 Mar 27	How much did we do?	Q1,2,3,4

	<p>Enterprise Pathways Programme</p> <p>specialised, mentoring and business support between 'Go Succeed' participation, establishing and growing a new-start business which offers more sustainable employment for the participant. (i.e. PT or FT self-employment for the business owner).</p> <p>A programme of mentoring support will be offered for up to 3 months along the business start-up journey.</p> <p>Eligible participants will have completed the Go Succeed Programme and be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economically inactive • Unemployed • Under-employed <p>(Under employed: those who would like to work more hours either in their current job, a supplementary job, or in a new job)</p> <p><u>Business Start-up Fund</u> To operate a start-up fund which provides financial</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 entrepreneurs enrolled on the programme <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32/40, and 80% of participants who completed the project. • 26/32, and 81% of completers who reported satisfaction with the project. <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall total 26/32, 81% of completers reporting they have commenced self-employment. • Overall total 21/26 and 81% of participants still in self-employment 6 months after finishing participation. 	
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		assistance towards business startup costs. Participants on the programme can apply for financial assistance to assist with start-up costs aligned to the business startup.				
Theme 2: Unemployment (Place to Work)						
Theme	Title of Programme	Key Activities, Project Aims and Description	Start Date	End Date	Performance Measures	Delivery Quarter
Unemployment	2.3 Employability Academies	<p>Identify, design and deliver a range of employment academies for skill interventions in sectors and occupations where opportunities for employment is identified with employers.</p> <p>Potential delivery of Academies to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warehousing and Forklift • Transport • Childminding Assistant • Digital Skills • Hospitality Academy • Health • Manufacturing <p>Final academies delivered will be determined following consultation with stakeholders</p>	01 Apr 26	31 Mar 27	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 94 participants enrolled <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75/94 and 80% of participants successfully complete the academy • 70/75 and 93% of completers reporting satisfaction with project. <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60/75 and 80% of completers who gained a qualification as a result of participation on the project 	Q1,2,3,4

		<p>and employers to ascertain demand.</p> <p>NMD LMP will also seek to include interventions which meet recommendations of regional LMP including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting action on climate change by enabling green jobs; • Consider growth sectors; • Addressing the disability employment gap; • Utilizing opportunities arising from City and Growth deals; • Supporting the aims and implementation of the Skills Strategy; and • Promoting diversity and inclusion <p>Target groups will be: unemployed; economically inactive; underemployed; at risk of redundancy.</p> <p>Mentoring support and guidance to be available to participants to support their engagement throughout their participation on the academy and follow on</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 56/75 and 75% of completers gaining new employment • 37/56 and 66% of completers still in employment 6 months after finishing participation 	
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		support to create a steppingstone into employment or further training.				
	2.4 A Place to Work	<p>A Place to Work aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the district as employment location • To create awareness of the key sectors • To create awareness of local employers • To create awareness of and access to career pathways • Promote NMD as a good place to work with opportunities for progression. <p><u>To deliver an engagement 'Place to work' Campaign that will</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of the range of career opportunities available locally and the pathways to access jobs. • Particularly targeting job seekers, economically inactive, students, and graduates. • Promote employers and showcase local employment opportunities across NMD. 	01 Apr 26	31 Mar 27	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 employers engaged • 250 attendees engaged <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12/15 and 80% of employers reporting satisfaction with project • 100/125 and 80% of attendees reported satisfaction with the project <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12/15 and 80% of employers who reported feeling more confident that their business would be more successful • 100/125 and 80% of attendees feel more informed of career opportunities • 75/100 attendees reported increased awareness of NMD LMP 	Q1,2,3,4

Theme 3: Disability						
Disability	2.5 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Employer Engagement Workshop	<p>Host a workshop to engage local SME employers from various sectors to explain to and update on disability employment issues and outline the variety of supports available to them.</p> <p>Provide advice and updates on disability legislation and employment issues enabling people with disabilities to gain employment.</p> <p>Workshop to highlight provisions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workable • Work Experience Programme • Condition Management Programme • Access to Work • Jobstart 	01 Apr 26	31 Mar 27	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 employers engaged <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8/10 and 80% of employers reporting satisfaction with project <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8/10 and 80% of employers have increased awareness of disability and employment issues • 4/10 and 40% of employers commit to supporting job seekers with a disability to access employment opportunities • 4/10 and 40% of employers participating reported the event would assist in filling vacancies 	Q3/4

	2.6 Inclusion Participant Programme	<p>Support unemployed or economically inactive participants with a disability closer to employment by identifying training needs and potential suitable employers.</p> <p>Participants to receive a dedicated personalized plan, one-to-one mentoring, to include CV development and identify potential placement opportunities.</p>	01 Apr 26	31 Mar 27	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 participants enrolled on programme <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8/10 and 80% participants who enrolled completed the project • 6/8 and 80% of completers who reported satisfaction with the LMP project <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6/8 and 80% of completers gaining new employment • 3/6 and 50% of participants still in employment 6 months after finishing participation • 6/8 and 80% of completers who reported feeling more confident regarding their employability as a result of participation on the project 	Q1,2,3,4
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Theme 4: Skilled Labour Supply (Skills for Work)

Skilled Labour Supply	2.7 Upskilling for Growth	<p>Employee Upskilling: Meeting employer needs and supporting career progression</p> <p>Supporting employers to upskill staff to enable career progression for those underemployed or employed and seeking career progression; creating employment vacancies and opportunities for those entering the labour market.</p> <p>Engagement Engage with local employers to identify their upskilling requirements and address their skills shortages via progression opportunities for existing staff.</p> <p>Support the upskilling of employees which enables job and career progression.</p> <p>Employers will be asked for the number of vacancies that may be realized.</p>	01 Apr 26	31 Mar 27	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 employers engaged • 108 participants enrolled <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32/40 and 80% of employers reporting satisfaction with project • 86/108 and 80% of participants enrolled who completed the project • 69/86 and 80% of completers reporting satisfaction with project. <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30/40 and 75% of employers have created new jobs as a result of the support received • 86/108 and 80% of participants gained a qualification as a result 	Q1,2,3,4
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		<p>Delivered in partnership with SRC, SERC and delivery agents, to include a range of upskilling/reskilling opportunities from L2 to L7 in response to employer need and demand.</p> <p><u>Examples of training may include</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Assistant • Transport • Leadership and Management • Strategic Management • Project Management • Reducing Carbon Footprint 			<p>of participation on the project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43/86 and 50% of completers moved into higher paid employment as a result of participation on the project 	
	2.8 Skills Conference	<p>Host a Skills Conference for businesses, careers teachers, school principals, training providers, recruitment consultants and academics from across Newry Mourne and Down District Council area and further afield, to develop a cohesive strategy to identify current and future skills gaps across all sectors to develop short, medium and long-term solutions to meet local skills and staff shortages.</p>	01 Apr 26	31 Mar 27	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100/200 and 50% attendees engaged <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80/100 and 80% of attendees reported satisfaction with project <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80/100 and 80% of attendees reported feeling more confident 	Q3

		<p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the development of a district-wide skills strategy through regular engagement between local employers and skills developers/schools and training organisations. • Provide a platform for information flow and discussion between employers and those tasked with meeting the skills need across the District. • Provide a platform for all stakeholders to hear details of the NMD LMP Strategic Assessment Research report compiled by Ulster University. • Enhance membership, engagement and scope of the NMD LMP, whilst outlining delivery of initiatives to date. • Provide opportunities for Industry Clusters to meet regularly to discuss 			<p>for their business/employment future</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80/100 and 80% of attendees reported increased awareness of NMD LMP 	
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		<p>potential solutions to recruitment and skills challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting NMD as a great place to work, in partnership with NMD LMP and provide exposure for NMD LMP. Create a Skills Forum tasked with implementing the outcomes and actions from the Conference. 				
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Strategic Priority 3: To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision either regionally or locally

Indicators		1. Increased awareness of existing regional/local employability or skills provision (LMP)				
Theme	Title of Programme	Key Activities, Project Aims and Description	Start Date	End Date	Performance Measures	Delivery Quarter
Increased awareness	3.1 Employment Pathway Events	<p>Support delivery of 3 Jobs and Careers fairs and events, including sectoral focused events where scope and opportunity exists.</p> <p>Opportunity to showcase key sectors, and career opportunities.</p> <p>Enhanced Career Guidance aligned to local opportunities:</p>	01 Apr 26	31 Mar 27	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2,500 attendees at events 140 employers participating <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 400/500 and 80% of attendees rated the events as helpful for finding work / training 	Q1&4

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Jobs Fair promoting NMD wide employment opportunities • Two career fairs for pupils, teachers and principles 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40/50 and 80% of employers reporting satisfaction with event <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 375/500 and 75% of attendees feel more informed of career opportunities • 38/50 and 76% of attendees increased awareness of existing regional/local employability or skills provision (LMP) • 38/50 and 76% of employers participating reported the event would assist in filling vacancies 	
	3.2 Promoting apprenticeships, traineeships and placements as pathways to employment	NMD LMP will work with DfC, DfE and Colleges, to increase the number of employers offering placements, traineeships and apprenticeship opportunities.	01 Apr 26	31 Mar 27	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 students attending events • 40 employers engaged <p>How well did we do it?</p>	Q4

		<p>NMD LMP will promote the benefits of recruiting through opportunity pathways, such as Apprenticeships, traineeships, and work experience placements, to employers.</p> <p>NMD LMP will aim to increase the number of school leavers considering apprenticeships as a pathway to employment. The campaign will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bust myths • Target parents & schools • Promote value of employer engagement. <p>Communication channels will include events, social media, print, and digital platforms.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200/250 and 80% of attendees at events report that the event was informative • 23/30 and 77% of employers reported the event was a good platform to showcase their sector <p>Is anyone better off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200/250 and 80% of attendees feel more informed of career opportunities • 200/250 and 80% of attendees reporting the events increased their knowledge of the work of the LMP/Employability NI 	
	3.3 Increased awareness of employability and skills programmes	<p>Increase awareness among job seekers and those who wish to upskill of the range of employability and training support there is available through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events targeting participants and employers 	01 Apr 26	31 Mar 27	<p>How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 attendees at supported events <p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80/100 and 80% attendees reporting satisfaction with events 	Q1,2,3,4

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular updating to local JBO's on NMD LMP Programmes 			Is anyone better off? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75/100 and 75% of attendees reporting the events increased their knowledge of the work of the LMP/Employability NI 	
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12. Action Plan 2026/2027 - Outputs

Outputs	Participants - directly supported	Employers - directly engaged	Events	Participants attending events	Value of financial support £	Comments
Strategic Priority 2						
Theme 1: Economic Inactivity						
2.1 Get Work Ready	80					
2.2 Enterprise Pathways Programme	40				20,000	Business Start Up costs
Theme 2: Unemployed						
2.3 Employability Academies	94					
2.4 A Place to Work		15	3	250		
Theme 3: Disability						
2.5 Employer Disability Advice Workshop		10	1	20		
2.6 Inclusion Participant Programme	10					
Theme 4: Skilled Labour Supply						
2.6 Upskilling for Growth	108	40				
2.7 Skills Conference			1	200		
Strategic Priority 3						
3.1 Employment Pathway Events		140	3	2500		
3.2 Opportunity and Apprenticeship awareness		40	2	500		
3.3 Increased awareness				100		
Outputs	322	245	10	3550	£20,000	